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CHANGING CHANGE MANAGEMENT

STRATEGY, POWER AND RESISTANCE

Darren McCabe

Changing Change Management

The literature on Change Management works from the premise that management possesses the power to achieve change and this is evident in that resistance is little more than a footnote in most textbooks. This assumption sits uneasily, however, with the high failure rate of Change Management interventions. This book seeks to explain this paradox by providing a critical 'relational' approach towards Change Management. What would a book on Change Management look like that takes resistance seriously? This book attempts precisely this by exploring how resistance is as much a part of change as the strategies of those that seek to enact it. The findings are drawn from a qualitative study of organisational transformation in a local government authority in the UK. Its detailed empirical insights enable readers to explore organisational change from many different perspectives considering issues such as the strategic use of metaphor and counter-metaphors; management and employee resistance; organisational politics and cynicism.

It will be of interest to researchers, academics and students interested in change management, organisation studies, human resource management and critical management studies.

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In memory of my father
John William McCabe
(1940–2011)

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Preface

As its name implies, Change Management places management both centre stage and in the driving seat of organisations. This is because the literature on Change Management largely works from the assumption that managers *possess* the power to change both organisations and the people who work for them. Change is all too frequently transformed from an uncertain process into a thing that can be planned, ordered, staged, sequenced and achieved. This book presents a critical 'relational' approach towards Change Management that sets out to challenge such assumptions that haunt not only the Change Management literature but also much of the mainstream approach to studying management and organisations. Hence if one peruses texts on strategy, accounting, operations, technology or innovation, the enduring and unspoken assumption is that management possesses the power to enact and deliver change.

The belief that power is possessed by management is most clearly evident in that these texts either are silent with regard to resistance or, in many cases, relegate it to just a few pages (or at best a sub-section). Indeed, I do not know of a single chapter that is dedicated to resistance in mainstream textbooks—such are the beliefs (1) that organisations are predominantly consensual, thus there is no expectation of opposition to management ideas, strategies or intentions, and (2) that management is the key player, able to dictate to or enrol others and thereby change cultures, strategies, structures, subjectivities, technologies, operations, etc. It is the contention of this book that such beliefs need to be radically re-thought and re-examined if we are to understand the way in which organisations actually operate and thus represent them so as to capture something of the everyday life that is experienced by those who manage and work in organisations.

My experience of organisations, both as an employee and as a researcher in manufacturing, financial services, retail and the public sector, is that they do not operate in the way that most textbooks suggest. It seems to me that many scholars of business and management either understand organisations to be rational, consensual and directed by those at the top or believe that they must represent them in this way. Doing so

may reflect that, in order to sell a text or secure a publication—especially in a prestigious American journal—it is considered necessary to present management as being able to pull the levers of change, be they strategic, structural, technological or cultural, and, in this way, deliver intended outcomes.

If management and organisations are represented in this way, legitimacy is conferred upon both academics, who have much to gain from offering their services as consultants/experts, and managers, who must present themselves as being able to effect change in a desired direction. I am not suggesting that this is a conspiracy or indeed an intended or a conscious misrepresentation but rather that it is the product of what has become an industry (business and management schools). Hence each generation of academics imbibes and reinforces certain assumptions and claims regarding the nature of academia, which increasingly reflects that it must serve a narrow set of economic goals and interests. These goals and interests are rarely made explicit and so it is not stated that the Change Management strategies offered by gurus, academics, consultants and managers are constructed to achieve control over or through others so as to maximise profitability. This may reflect that 'Domination cannot take place overtly' (Mitchell, 1990: 550) and so must be disguised, but this is not to suggest that domination or its disguise is the intention of those who reproduce such norms. Instead, it is part of the unseen and unremarked norms that inhabit the way in which many academics think, textbooks are written, articles are crafted and business/management is taught in many business schools.

The risk is that academia becomes an unreflexive 'training course' for future managers, whereby universities become 'enrolled in the process of (re)producing a particular social order' (Routledge and Driscoll Derickson, 2015: 392). This is apparent in the assertion of David *et al.* (2011) that 'Ideally, business schools' should 'provide students' with 'the necessary training to compete favourably for jobs in the business world' (op cit: 53). They lament the 'ongoing gap between what is being taught in business schools compared to what is actually needed by companies' and advocate that 'business schools should revise their mission to become more practitioner oriented. . . . [and] . . . revise curricula to provide more training on technical skills needed for graduates to get jobs' (op cit: 59). One problem with this view of education is that 'the purpose of training' is to ensure 'conformance' to the requirements for which one is 'being trained' (Enteman, 2007: 15). The goal is one of *conformity* for students who are required to 'park their autonomy at the door when they enter an organisation' (ibid) and indeed for academics who must 'closely align academic focus with corporate needs' (David et al., 2011: 60).

Rather than educating students to think, better understand or critically reflect upon the world; to ask how it has become what it is and to consider how it could be better for all, the suggestion is that they should

be trained to accept it as it is. If this came to pass, students would not be encouraged to question the immense inequalities perpetuated through the global economy that manufactures and markets products that are not meant to last, laying waste to the planet's scarce resources and destroying its environment. Instead, they would learn to become part of this system as change agents, strategists, consultants, operations specialists, information technology experts, marketeers, accountants or human resource managers. Indeed, students (redefined as consumers) are promised rewards for doing so on the basis of a 'learning-equals-earning' equation, leading some to argue that the current arrangement in higher education (HE) 'undermines the civic or public role of universities, restricts students engagement with learning and damages capacity for critical thinking and empathy' (Muddiman, 2018: 1).

Academia, then, risks becoming an arena where one must subscribe to the belief that there are managerial masters who are capable of imposing order upon organisations and others in the unspoken pursuit of control and profit. The assumption that certain groups possess magical powers to secure order and deliver outcomes is problematic. It is all the more problematic, however, when this silently advances and reproduces inequality—which is never acknowledged or explicitly stated—rather than serving society as a whole. Indeed, the needs of business are mistakenly equated with society, for the 'divide between the training provided at some business schools and the needs of business jobs' is argued to hurt 'business students, business schools, business firms, and society' (David et al., 2011: 52). To embrace and sustain this narrative, academics have to work from the assumption that management possesses power because to do otherwise would mean that everything would begin to unravel. It would mean that claims could no longer be made regarding what strategies, technologies, structures or cultures should be adopted to effect change and thereby deliver the often mute goals of control, growth, productivity and profitability.

If it were acknowledged that managers do not possess power, the ground that sustains such claims would begin to crumble, and all sorts of unknowns would emerge. New questions would begin to surface and struggle towards the light. These are uncomfortable unknowns and questions for those concerned to exercise power (i.e. gurus, academics, managers, strategists, consultants, change agents) over others because the basis of their claims to legitimacy would begin to be revealed as threadbare. A whole industry shudders at the thought and cracks appear in the carefully constructed edifice that certain managerial persons possess power whilst others do not.

If we challenge such assumptions, questions arise concerning how organisations actually operate, how they should operate and for whose benefit they should operate. These questions empower others that have been neglected or marginalised. The seemingly powerless are elevated

through these questions such that they cannot be ignored or consulted after the 'real' decisions have been made. These non-managerial others would no longer be a footnote, a paragraph, a sub-section or a secondary consideration to the main narrative of heroic managers changing the world, supposedly for the betterment of all. At the moment, these issues, problems, uncertainties and questions are choked and buried because of the unspoken premise that change is simply a means for managers to exercise power in the interests of society.

This book sets out to challenge three assumptions embedded in the belief that managers possess power. The first is that only managers exercise power. The second is that they do so in a rational, logical, ordered way. The third is that everyone gains from this exercise of power. If we open the lid of the black box of Change Management that these assumptions hold fast, much will become open for debate and scrutiny. It seems, however, that many scholars would prefer it remain shut. If closed, we can proceed as normal and continue to implicitly extol the view that managers, change agents, consultants and governments possess power and exercise power to advance the welfare of everyone. As educators, by keeping the lid of the black box shut, we risk 'producing generations of useful machines, rather than complete citizens who can think for themselves, criticise tradition, and understand the significance of another person's sufferings and achievements' (Nussbaum, 2010: 2).

This book offers a critical 'relational' approach towards Change Management as a means to open the lid of the black box. In doing so, it aims to empower others, as it will become evident through the text that organisations reflect the way in which everyone exercises power, albeit in a context of immense inequality where individuals have unequal access to vastly different resources. Power is exercised in this context through consent and conformity, rules and procedures, strategies and cultural interventions, opposition and defiance, cynicism and sabotage, metaphors and counter-metaphors. You are invited to peer inside the black box and examine the subterranean complexity that reflects and breathes life into the everyday world of work. Through exposing and subjecting this world to scrutiny, this book seeks to consider how things are and encourages reflection upon how they could be otherwise.

1 Introduction

This book is motivated by dissatisfaction with the way in which power is generally understood and represented in the literature on Change Management as something that is *possessed* largely by management. This assumption is embedded in the mainstream and even in some of the critical literature, to such an extent that it is often taken for granted. It saturates the Change Management literature and this is apparent in the extremely limited attention that is given to resistance in established texts. Hence it is rarely the case that a textbook on Change Management has a single chapter on resistance. This is so even when multiple editions of a text have been published and so there have been ample opportunities to reflect upon and revise the original text.

The fourth edition of *Organizational Change* by Senior and Swailes (2010), for example, runs to nine chapters not one of which focuses on resistance and not even a sub-section of a chapter includes the word resistance. One has to turn to the index to find that 'resistance to change' is discussed on seven pages of this 387-page book. The fifth edition of Carnell's (2007) *Managing Change in Organizations* includes nineteen chapters but not one on resistance, nor is resistance listed as a sub-section within a chapter; turning to the index we can find that resistance is mentioned on five pages of this 344-page book. The third edition of *Change Management: A Guide to Effective Implementation* (Paton and McCalman, 2008) includes seventeen chapters but not one on resistance. 'Resistance to change' is, however, listed as a sub-section of a chapter but it runs to less than three pages of this 385-page text. The fourth edition of *The Theory and Practice of Change Management* authored by Hayes (2014) includes thirty chapters in eight sections, not one of which is on resistance, nor is there a sub-section of a single chapter on resistance, but turning to the subject index we find that resistance is considered mainly in a chapter on 'Motivating others to change'.

The ninth edition of Cummings and Worley (2009) *Organization Development and Change* is a monumental tomb stretching to 25 chapters and 745 pages of text. It does not include a chapter on resistance but chapter 10, titled 'Leading and Managing Change', includes a sub-section called 'Motivating Change'. A sub-section of this sub-section is

titled 'Overcoming Resistance to Change', which amounts to little more than a page of text. The second edition of *Managing Innovation and Change*, edited by Henry and Mayle (2002), which includes chapters written by different authors, does not include a chapter on resistance, nor is resistance mentioned in the page index. This also applies to the third edition of *Managing Innovation and Change*, edited by Mayle (2006), which includes an entirely different set of contributors. In a relatively recent text, *Managing Change: Enquiry and Action* by Beech and Macintosh (2012), none of the thirteen chapters either focus on or refer to resistance. Resistance is not even mentioned in the index of this 264-page book on Change Management.

So what is happening here? The limited space devoted to resistance suggests that it is not an important consideration. Why does resistance not warrant more attention when we are discussing organisational change? It is my belief that this neglect reflects the unspoken assumption that those enacting change *possess* the power to change people, strategies, structures, cultures or technologies. If such managerial individuals or groups possess power then it follows that they only need to be instructed about how to introduce change in order to achieve successful change. This assumption is so deeply embedded in the management, organisation and Change Management literature that each new text book simply follows and works from the same premise.

In view of the reported high failure rate of change initiatives (see Beer and Nohria, 2000; Burnes, 2005; Kotter, 2008; Stewart, 1993) this neglect of resistance seems strange. I believe that it reflects the world view or perspective of Change Management scholars and how they understand power. This perspective that dominates much of academia infuses how management is generally taught in business and management schools. It coincides with the belief that managers are neutral and scientific, organisations are gardens of consensus and that change is introduced for the betterment of all. Those who teach or write about Change Management from this perspective do not acknowledge or reflect upon the fact that they are representing management, organisations and change from a particular perspective. As MacIntyre (1999) puts it 'Managers themselves and most writers about management conceive of themselves as morally neutral characters whose skills enable them to devise the most efficient means of achieving whatever end is proposed' (op cit: 74; quoted in Cutler, 2000: 310). This perspective continues to dominate despite the enormous inequality that exists in even the most advanced industrial nations. Indeed, the growing inequality in many Western nations has does nothing to dampen the belief that management acts in the best interests of all nor are economic calamities such as the 2008 global financial crisis (GFC) seemingly any basis for questioning the apparent impartiality and effectiveness of management.

What would a book on Change Management look like that takes resistance seriously? How would it need to be written to reflect what change

is actually like within organisations? This book attempts precisely this by recognising that resistance is as much a part of change as the strategies of those that seek to enact it. Resistance then becomes integral to the narrative whereby it is understood that each flag waved in the exercise power does so in a breeze of resistance; every voice of command is echoed in a cry of rebuke. In view of this, it makes little sense to relegate resistance to even a chapter, let alone a sub-section of a chapter, for both power and resistance are part of the living fabric of everyday organisational life (see Foucault, 1980, 1982; Jermier et al., 1994; McCabe, 2007b).

This book is organised as follows: Chapter 2 presents two perspectives on Change Management—the rational-technical and the processual—as a means to explain my position in relation to the Change Management literature. Chapter 3 then sets out a more critical position and explains what is meant by a 'relational' approach towards Change Management. This will help readers to make sense of the subsequent empirical chapters beginning with Chapter 5 and ending in Chapter 9. These empirical chapters explore the case of Copperdale City Council (pseudonym) a local government authority (LGA) in the UK. Chapter 4 sets the scene for the case study by elaborating the broader public sector and local government context in the UK. It provides background knowledge that will assist readers unfamiliar with this context to understand both the experience of working in Copperdale and the specific changes it introduced. Chapter 4 then goes on to introduce the case study followed by the research methods.

Chapter 5 is the first empirical chapter and it focuses on the role of metaphor during the strategic introduction of a change programme. It explores how Change Agents (CAs) drew upon central government documents—*Working Without Walls* (Allen et al., 2004) and *Working Beyond Walls* (Hardy et al., 2008)—as a basis for transforming work at Copperdale. It contributes to an understanding of change and metaphor firstly by focusing on how these documents drew upon a 'walls' metaphor to represent extant working conditions in the public sector in a negative light whilst representing change in a positive way. The CAs legitimised a subsequent transformation programme by referring to these documents but they also deployed a 'journey' metaphor to convey change and a new understanding of work/self to enrol managers and employees' in support of transformation. This 'journey' metaphor was part of an attempt to forge employees who are not tied to a specific role or place, who are flexible, transient, mobile and rootless. The CAs embodied this subjectivity and, like central government, appeared to see little value in jobs linked to stability, community and certainty around work location. This endeavour rubbed up against the culture, extant identities and established ways of working at Copperdale.

The second contribution of this chapter is to introduce the term 'counter-metaphor' to encapsulate the metaphors that were wielded by employees and managers in opposition to the CAs' strategic use of

metaphor. These counter-metaphors mocked and presented an alternative reading of the transformation programme. Overall, the chapter adds to our understanding of change by considering the role of metaphor in relation to how change is strategically introduced and represented. It also contributes to our understanding of how workplace struggles are bound up with both the metaphors CAs use and those employees wield in opposition to the power they confront. This opening empirical chapter illustrates that all exercises of power need to be understood simultaneously in terms of how resistance unfolds in relation to such power.

A key assumption underpinning Change Management is that managers enact and support change initiatives. Chapter 6 questions this assumption and argues that it is problematic because not all managers are instigators or agents of change. Indeed, they may equally be on the receiving end of change and seek to resist it. The chapter explores how bureaucracy became a medium through which managers and CAs endeavoured to control *and* resist each other. Bureaucracy, whether in its traditional or post-bureaucratic guise, is often seen as a form of control and yet this neglects how bureaucracy can be simultaneously a medium and means of resistance. Although scholars have previously identified isolated instances of resistance by specific groups of managers, this chapter argues that bureaucratic resistance needs to be understood as far more pervasive, varied and continuous. The management resistance explored in this chapter is presented predominantly as a struggle against the 'domination' of central government and CAs rather than a struggle against 'exploitation' or 'subjection' (Foucault, 1982: 212). As we shall see these are not mutually exclusive struggles nevertheless it is argued that exploring resistance in terms of struggles against 'domination', 'exploitation' and 'subjugation' (op cit) can help to bring into sharper relief different forms of resistance along with the differences between them.

Chapter 7 considers what happened when Copperdale relocated 1,500 staff to a new, temporary building and how it became a site for struggle. It considers the role that the CAs played in the creation of an open plan, flexible, 'hot desking' work environment and examines how they understood and sought to resist the resistance they confronted. In recent years, resistance has been presented as a 'tool' of management (Ford and Ford, 2009: 100) and as 'productive' (Courpasson et al., 2012) or 'facilitative' (Thomas et al., 2011) of organisational change. To date this has only been empirically explored in relation to inter-management struggles and, by contrast, this chapter focuses upon both employee and management resistance to CAs. The chapter provides a deeper understanding of resistance by exploring how CAs may understand and approach resistance in multiple ways that are often contradictory.

Cynicism has been presented as an individualistic means through which employees disengage with corporate cultures thereby protecting their identity whether through 'distancing' (Collinson, 1994) or 'defence'

(Casey, 1995: 175) whilst still *doing* what is expected of them (see Fleming and Spicer, 2003; Contu, 2008). Chapter 8 posits that cynical public sector workers may occupy a more ambivalent, complex and collectivist subjectivity than such arguments suggest. It explores how staff and managers at Copperdale resisted through representing corporate discourses as creating a shadowland of pretence, a surreal game of words and box ticking where appearance is more important than substance. The chapter highlights that while public sector employees may be cynical about change programmes and managerialism they may nonetheless act out of a collective identification with public service and/or each other. Although cynicism has been linked to a dis-identification with corporate discourses (Costas and Fleming, 2009; Fleming and Spicer, 2003), this chapter argues that cynical employees may simultaneously identify with certain aspects of their work. It posits that identification and dis-identification are not therefore total or mutually exclusive subject positions.

Chapter 9 is the final empirical chapter and it analyses three discourses on organisational politics (OP) in relation to organisational change—micro, meso and macro. It argues that each has limitations because the politics they identify largely contribute to the reproduction of the status quo. It then introduces a fourth, more critical OP discourse, which considers how individuals are produced as particular types of subject through corporate discourses (see Knights and Morgan, 1991). It is argued that this critical OP discourse can be extended and rendered more political by including within its analysis an appreciation of the role that party politics and the media plays in relation to OP. In this way, further insights are provided into how seemingly political discourses can fabricate us as apolitical subjects that take the status quo for granted. The chapter draws on a chess metaphor to argue that the literature on OP has tended to focus on politics in relation to how the organisational game is played rather than questioning the game itself.

Chapter 10 concludes the book and draws together insights from the different chapters. It makes the case for why a critical 'relational' approach towards Change Management is necessary and how it advances our understanding of change, management and organisations. It explains how an approach that considers resistance to be as much a feature of organisational life as the strategies needed to enact change, 'Changes Change Management'. Once this is understood then we cannot go back to a situation where resistance is ignored or marginalised because this simply misrepresents both change and everyday life. It does great damage because it renders silent the voices of those who may suffer due to Change Management and helps to erect walls whereby we do not hear those voices because we are under the illusion that they either do not exist or are unimportant.

2 The Landscape of Change Management

This chapter explores two broad perspectives on Change Management. It does not aim to provide an exhaustive list of all the available theories but rather to synthesise common strands from what are significant approaches namely the rational-technical and the processual. Although this means packaging together often opposing positions within a single perspective, the concern is to convey the broad thrust, contribution and limitations of a way of understanding Change Management. In doing so, the aim is to also set out my theoretical assumptions and perspective on Change Management. Through articulating criticisms of a 'rational-technical' and a 'processual' perspective in this chapter, my concern is to pave the way for the elaboration of a critical 'relational' approach towards Change Management that will be presented in Chapter 3.

Articulating my understanding of the Change Management literature, will provide insights into how I interpreted the events, actions and subjectivities at Copperdale City Council. My theoretical framework will continue to be developed in subsequent chapters but it is important to set it out in advance as it inevitably informs my representation of Copperdale. This is to recognise that 'Representations do not simply correspond to reality. Rather they are simplifying devices which enable us to deal with what would otherwise be an intractable reality' (Chia, 1999: 210). My representation, as with all representations, needs to be understood as 'filtered' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003: 31) and only offering a 'partial' (Clifford, 1986) rendition of change. This is due to the fact that one cannot be everywhere simultaneously either in time or in space and one cannot see with empty or neutral eyes. Even if this were not the case one would still have to be 'selective' (Gouldner, 1954) in terms of what one is able to say and so 'a process of abstraction and simplification is necessary' (Golding, 1980: 763) making all accounts a poor and partisan reflection of what has been.

The Rational-Technical Perspective

To help to understand a rational-technical perspective in terms of its key assumptions and limitations, we will now consider some of the influential

literatures in the field of Change Management. The rational-technical perspective has implications for understanding the role of management; why managers introduce change initiatives; the nature of change and the types of problems or obstacles managers might face when introducing change. It is the mainstream or a managerial perspective on change and reflects what can be regarded as a commonsensical view or our often taken-for-granted assumptions about managers and change programmes. It assumes, although this is rarely stated, that managers introduce change to maximise profits through improving efficiency, productivity, cutting costs, improving product quality or service delivery or a number of these interrelated goals. This perspective is grounded in the belief that managers and organisations behave in a rational, machine-like and ordered way.

The rational-technical perspective views change as a technical process or a series of steps or techniques that are adopted for successful change. In this way changing an organisation can be compared to fixing a mechanism because one has only to follow the instructions so as to achieve the desired outcome. The Change Management literature that subscribes to this perspective offers itself as an instruction manual that students or managers of change must and can master to produce successful change.

An Analysis of Lewin's Planned Approach

The rational-technical perspective is exemplified in the popular understanding of Kurt Lewin's (1947a) planned approach towards change. The established understanding of Lewin is that he viewed change as a 3-stage process of 'unfreezing' group life, 'moving' it to the new desired state and then 'freezing' it (Lewin, 1947a: 210). It has been argued by a number of scholars that this simplifies and misrepresents his work in a number of ways (Burnes et al., 2016; Cummings et al., 2015). Hence, far from being managerial, Lewin was concerned with the problems of 'disadvantaged groups' (Burnes, 2004: 978); the need to promote 'democratic values' (op cit: 979); the importance of addressing 'racial and religious prejudice' (op cit: 980) and combating 'violence' (op cit: 984).

The problem, however, is that the managerial disciples of Lewin (1947a) are not always concerned to address the 'ends' that preoccupied him such as 'the scourge of despotism, authoritarianism and racism' (Burnes, 2004: 987). Instead, they leap upon and embrace a stultified version of the 'means' that Lewin developed. It seems to me that the possibility for and root of this corruption of Lewin's ideas can be traced to his emphasis on natural science methods including a simple 'three-step procedure' (Lewin, 1947a: 12) so as to bring 'about a desired state of affairs' (op cit: 32). Elsewhere, he refers to this as 'the beginning', 'happenings' and the 'end' (Lewin, 1947b: 151). Irrespective of the 'ends' to which Change Management interventions may be deployed, Lewin's approach reflects a belief that some individuals *possess* the power 'to decide how best to bring about such an actual change' through studying

'The constellation of the social field as a whole' and reorganising it so 'that social events flow differently' (ibid). As Grey (2003: 10) puts it:

> The basic premise of the model is that there is a balance of forces which keeps a situation stable, and that the task of change management is either to increase the forces for change or decrease the forces against change. . . . the dominant metaphor here is mechanistic: there are 'forces' which operate to stabilize or de-stabilize the organization.

Lewin (1947a) understood that such change would require 'insight into the desire for and resistance to, specific change' (op cit: 14) but he also posited that resistance can be 'overcome' (op cit: 32) or 'eliminated' (op cit: 34) especially through focusing on groups and so resistance is presented as a variable that can be managed, controlled and removed. In view of this, once authors have jettisoned Lewin's concerns with authoritarianism and bigotry, what is left for many is a preoccupation with overcoming resistance (see Coch and French, 1948), which will be explored in subsequent chapters.

Burnes (2004) is a staunch supporter of Lewin's more critical and humanistic thinking and he states that for Lewin 'it is fruitless to concentrate on changing the behaviour of individuals because the individual in isolation is constrained by group pressures to conform. Consequently, the focus of change must be at the group level and should concentrate on factors such as group norms, roles, interactions and socialisation processes to create 'disequilibrium' and change' (op cit: 983). It is evident therefore that Lewin was concerned to produce change and whilst this is perfectly acceptable if the aim of such change is to foster democracy, combat authoritarianism or eliminate discrimination, the vast majority of organisational change programmes do not pursue such laudable or lofty goals. Torn from its humanistic moorings then we are left with a view of a manager, politician or social scientist who if sufficiently competent can understand, master and manipulate organisational 'force-fields' which 'implies a reliable and transferable kind of knowledge' (Grey, 2003: 10).

Lewin advocated a pluralist approach towards change through 'a participative and collaborative process' (Burnes, 2004: 985) but, even if there is negotiation and consultation during contemporary change programmes, this usually occurs after the key decisions have been taken. Moreover, it needs to be understood that organisational change surfaces through a context characterised by immense inequality (hierarchical, gendered, racial) that it reflects and does little to redress. In view of this, whether one is attempting to change individuals or groups *this* neglected unequal context needs to be understood as a condition and outcome of corporate change interventions. Participation or collaboration with those impacted by change initiatives rarely changes and, often masks, this enduring asymmetrical context (see Marglin, 1977). This means that

attempts to unfreeze, move and freeze individuals, groups or organisations need to be seen as an exercise power rather than a neutral intervention for the benefit of all (see Grey, 2003: 15).

Lewin (1947b) makes an interesting case for 'flexible plans' (op cit: 148), which recognises that 'the effect' of actions needs to be ascertained before further actions are taken. This relates to the type of learning proposed by Lewin's Action Research approach 'which is composed of a circle of planning, action, and fact-finding about the results of the action' (Lewin, 1946: 206). It is not assumed therefore that actions will have the desired effect and so Burnes (2004) is correct that issues such as power and politics were not ignored by Lewin. This is not just because of his political sympathies with 'the underdog, the disadvantaged and the discriminated against' (Burnes, 2004: 997) but because he recognised that actors other than management are apt to exercise power hence the uncertainty in relation to outcomes. Nevertheless, overall Lewin's approach is steeped in a traditional scientific model which assumes that there are 'laws which govern social life' (Lewin, 1947b: 151). A 'propertied' (Foucault, 1980) concept of power imbues such thinking for it is assumed that some individuals or groups possess the power to be able to manipulate others—even if this is for the greater good—through insights gleaned from experiments.

The most important point about Lewin's (1947a, 1947b) work for our purposes is that a *version* of his approach has become so established that it now forms the bedrock of much of the Change Management literature (see Hendry, 1996: 624; Cummings et al., 2015). It has become 'the template for most change programs' (Clegg et al., 2005: 376) and 'is regarded by many as the classic or fundamental approach to managing change' (Cummings et al., 2015: 33) even if this has more to do with 'others' repackaging and marketing' (op cit: 35) of his ideas than Lewin's actual ideas. Hence in a review of 15 models of change, Elrod and Tippett (2002) pointed out that 'The majority (13 out of 15) of these "change models" transition from normality through some form of disruption and then to a re-defined normality' (op cit: 285). Elrod and Tippett (2002) do not question this assumption but merely attempt to identify similarities and key insights within this literature. Indeed, they continue to follow a rational-technical line of reasoning for their concern is to 'ensure that time spent in the "death valley" of change is minimized' so that 'the individual/organization can reach the summit of increased performance on the other side' (op cit: 289).

Many models of Change Management follow a simplistic and managerialised version of Lewin (1947a) varying only in the number of steps they offer. They assume that managers or CAs possess power and so are able to follow a Change Management manual to effect change upon passive and powerless others. Cummings *et al.* (2015) trace how Lewin's work was corrupted through the work of Schein among others whereby

'changing as three steps' (CATS) became transformed 'from a way change may be observed to a lever for a change agent' (op cit: 42). In the process, the way in which power is conceived also became narrowly defined as something that is possessed by CAs.

The N-Step Approach to Change

The belief that managers possess power is evident in the assumption that management can enact change by following a number of steps and also deliver intended outcomes. Hence Ulrich (1998) outlines the role that HR professionals need to play, which includes adopting a 7-Step Change Model, described as 'a managerial tool championed by HR' (op cit: 132):

1. Leading change;
2. Creating a shared need;
3. Shaping a vision;
4. Mobilise commitment;
5. Modify systems and structures;
6. Monitoring progress;
7. Making it last.

The first of these steps can be understood, following Lewin, as an attempt to 'unfreeze' the organisation whereas the middle steps attempt to 'move' the organisation to the new desired state whilst 'monitoring progress' and 'making it last' can be seen as endeavours to 'freeze' the organisation in relation to the new change programme. Ulrich (1998) avers that HR professionals 'must create mechanisms so that business results quickly follow' (op cit: 134). This discourse of tools, mechanisms and models is bound up with the belief that certain individuals possess power hence they are able to wield change tools so as to start the corporate change engine and direct it to where they wish it to go. Similarly, Kotter (1995) posits that 'the change process goes through a series of phases' (op cit: 59) and he outlines eight of them as necessary to achieve organisational transformation:

1. Establish a sense of urgency.
2. Form a powerful guiding coalition.
3. Create a vision.
4. Communicate the vision.
5. Empower others to act on the vision.
6. Plan for and create short-term wins.
7. Consolidate improvements and produce still more change.
8. Institutionalise the new approach.

Once again, we can observe a similar pattern of thought whereby change begins with a process of unfreezing through creating and communicating

visions that are led by seemingly powerful leaders who possess the power to empower others to act. The organisation then moves to the new desired state before it is frozen through institutionalising the new approach. Quoting James (1909/1996: 234), Tsoukas and Chia (2002) make the important point that this type of approach does not actually focus on change because the phases or 'stages into which you analyze a change are *states*; the change itself goes on between them. . . . and thus eludes conceptual explanation altogether' (op cit: 571).

The assumption, underpinning much of the Change Management literature, is that change begins and ends in a steady state. Although Lewin (1947a) was more cautious in that he referred to this as a 'quasi-stationary equilibrium' (op cit: 16), whereby 'groups are in a continual process of adaptation, rather than a steady or frozen state' (Cummings et al., 2015: 36) his subtlety is often forgotten (see Burnes, 2004). The past, it seems, for those who view the world through a rational-technical lens, can be left behind organisationally, culturally and psychologically and this is most explicit in the Business Process Reengineering (BPR) literature (see McCabe, 2004). Hence according to Hammer and Champy (1993), 'BPR is about beginning again with a clean sheet of paper. It is about rejecting the conventional wisdom and received assumptions of the past' (op cit: 49).

The Assumption of Consensus

A belief that organisations are characterised by even a 'quasi-stationary equilibrium' (Lewin, 1947a: 16) both before and after change only makes sense if we believe that they are largely consensual. As has already been indicated, Lewin did not subscribe to this view but those who adhere to a rational-technical perspective tend to do so as the following quote illustrates:

> All change programs involve some loss. . . . During these transitions, employees move from immobilization to denial to anger. With the right type of information and motivation, however, they will return to a constructive path to change through bargaining, exploration and, finally, acceptance.
>
> (Schneider and Goldwasser, 1998)

In this extract, Schneider and Goldwasser (1998) present even the emotional experience of change in a rational-technical way as individuals are assumed to go through mechanistic steps moving from denial, anger through to acceptance. It appears that emotions are as mechanical and easy to manipulate as change programmes and these assumptions are shared by many approaches towards Change Management (see Elrod and Tippett, 2002). They reflect a belief that individuals go through similar phases to those Kubler-Ross (1969) created in terms of denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance or some variation of this cycle.

Ultimately, it is assumed that short lived emotional outbursts can be overcome, which tends to present resistance as an irrational and temporary condition. A steady state of consensus is envisaged both before and after change which ultimately results in 'acceptance'. Indeed, those who follow such mechanistic thinking (e.g. Carnell, 1995: 141–158; quoted in Grey, 2003: 12) have even applied it to resistance which has been argued to exhibit five stages:

1. Denial—there is no need for this change;
2. Defence—a realisation that change is going to happen, but trying to avoid it oneself;
3. Discarding—people begin to discard their attachment to the old ways;
4. Adaptation—both to the new system and in the new system in terms of fine-tuning;
5. Internalisation—the new way becomes routine.

This view of resistance also reflects a propertied concept of power hence powerful individuals are understood to instigate change. Once initiated, those on the receiving end may resist in a minor, emotional, irrational, fleeting and diminishing way. It is *as if* the power that employees exercise drips through a net that slowly bleeds out until they no longer thwart managerial intentions and instead become at one with them.

This type of thinking is cloaked in consensus for everyone is assumed to agree about the need for change, which change initiative to introduce, how it should be implemented and, of course, its benefits. In view of this, whilst ephemeral "emotional" disagreements may arise ultimately they fade away because the natural state is one of consensus. We can observe then that conflict is either ignored or played down for it only briefly disrupts change before consensus or normal play once more resumes. Kanter (1989a) is explicit about this for as she puts it 'Conflicts disappear into consensus' (op cit: 620).

A Circular Argument

The rational-technical perspective is often characterised by a circular line of argument whereby a change agent (academic, manager, guru, consultant, leader) presents a prescription for change that the patient then follows. It is assumed that the prescription will work but when it fails and successful change or the desired outcomes are not delivered then precisely the same type of prescription is offered hence the circularity:

> The failures failed because they [management] did it wrong. Success is virtually guaranteed for companies that go about reengineering with will, intelligence and passion.
>
> (Hammer and Stanton, 1995: 171)

Instead of examining why programmes fail or questioning the merits of the original prescription, Hammer and Stanton (1995) blamed the failures of reengineering on managers or CAs who are represented as incompetent or lacking the necessary 'intelligence', 'will' or 'passion' to follow their prescribed guidelines.

Likewise, Kotter (1995) offers eight-steps to transform organisations (listed on p. 10) and later in his article he presents eight errors of change, which explain why change programmes do not work. As we can see they merely repeat his eight prescriptions:

1. Not establishing a great enough sense of urgency;
2. Not providing a powerful enough guiding coalition;
3. Lacking a vision;
4. Under-communicating the vision;
5. Not removing obstacles to the new vision;
6. Not planning for and creating short-term wins;
7. Declaring victory too soon;
8. Not institutionalising the new approach.

It is evident then that those who view the world through a rational-technical perspective do not envisage or anticipate problems following the adoption of their prescriptions. It says do X and Y will result and if it does not then you need to do X again but correctly this time. According to Kotter (1995) 'skipping [his] steps creates only the illusion of speed and never produces a satisfying result' (op cit: 59). The rational-technical perspective therefore reflects Morgan's (1986) machine metaphor of organisations because CAs or managers are understood to be in control of the organisational machine that operates in predictable ways. They possess the power to shape the world as they desire it to be and have only to follow the correct recipe for this to be realised. Hence 'If the renewal target is the entire company, the CEO is key. If change is needed in a division, the division general manager is key' (Kotter, 1995: 60).

Rational-technical and circular thinking is also evident in W.E. Deming's (1986) quality management classic *Out of the Crisis*. He offered fourteen points to follow in order to achieve quality including point one 'Constancy of Purpose' whereby everyone continually works towards improving product or service quality and point two 'Drive out fear' of asking questions or expressing ideas. In a circular way, he identified 'Crippling Diseases' that inhibit quality, which include a 'lack of constancy of purpose' and 'fear'. Both of these points repeat his original prescription and are indicative of the limitations of such thinking. Hence point one is based on a flawed consensual and unitary (Fox, 1974) view of organisations, where everyone is thought to share the same goal. Point two emphasises fear (which tends to contradict point one) and what needs to be explained is why people might be afraid to ask questions or express

ideas? It is this type of issue that is generally neglected by authors who subscribe to a rational-technical perspective.

Tidd et al. (2001), in their account of innovation, which can be understood as change that is 'perceived' as new, they advocate post-mortems following corporate failures to diagnose the problems that occurred, which will allow one to avoid repeating past mistakes. This offers a highly rational view of managers nevertheless they acknowledge that post-mortems are rare. One explanation they offer for this is that people may be afraid to admit mistakes but once again we need to know why they are afraid. These allusions to fear make sense if one locates and understands organisations in relation to the wider context of inequality that they reflect and reproduce. Indeed, studies have found that inequality can be detrimental to change and the operation of organisations not least because it can provoke fear in others (see Lockyer and McCabe, 2011) but this context rarely surfaces and is often unacknowledged in rational-technical accounts of Change Management.

The inequality and insecurity, frustrations and fear, anger and conflict that Change Management engenders and provokes need to be understood as central to comprehending the condition and consequences of Change Management. Otherwise, there is so much that we cannot make sense of in terms of what happens within organisations when they embark upon a change initiative. We can make better sense of observations such as Drucker's (1985) that 'everybody in the organization always knows that the need exists' for innovation 'yet usually no one does anything about it' (op cit: 62) when we consider organisations in relation to the context of inequality in which they reside. This context must be acknowledged and inform our understanding of Change Management but the literature largely rumbles on unperturbed by such issues and concerns.

Denying or Playing Down Uncertainty

If we view Change Management from a rational-technical perspective then uncertainty tends to be eliminated or played down. Of course, from this perspective, there is no reason to expect outcomes to deviate from intentions because this would suggest that managers or CAs do not possess power and are subject to the will of others. This seems improbable from this perspective because the prevailing 'unitary' (Fox, 1974) belief in organisational consensus means that others are assumed to exercise power only to serve the wider corporate interest or vision.

Kotter's (1995) analysis of the problems facing change programmes implies that resistance may arise when 'the guiding coalition is not powerful enough' and, at such times, 'the powerful forces associated with tradition take over' (op cit: 66). Power is presented as a zero sum game, where some have power and others do not and so it is necessary for management 'to achieve the power that is required' (op cit: 62). This

line of argument acknowledges that change may be contested but Kotter asserts that if management follows his prescriptions and therefore avoids the problems he outlines then resistance can be avoided and successful change guaranteed. Power is linked to technical competence in terms of managing organisational change but, what is missed is that irrespective of whether a change programme is introduced or not, power will continue to be exercised by individuals and groups in ways that thwart and support corporate intentions as the subsequent chapters of this book will explore. This means that uncertainties are apt to arise whereby outcomes will fail to align with management designs.

An Emergent Approach

The rational-technical perspective should not be confused with only top-down or planned approaches towards change or as an approach that applies only under stable market conditions because it is not the approach that is at issue but the assumptions that are made about the nature of change programmes, management and organisations. Hence emergent approaches that are understood to be continuous, incremental, adaptive, bottom-up, evolutionary or unexpected can share similar rational-technical assumptions and beliefs about organisations, the process of change and the ability of managers to effect change. The difference is often merely the direction or stimulus for change because it is thought that ideas from below can be harnessed to achieve managerially desired organisational change (see Bamford and Forrester, 2003).

As we will discuss in the next section, the work of Mintzberg generally fits better with a processual perspective but still his emergent approach towards strategy shares much in common with a rational-technical perspective. Hence he argues that 'the strategy maker may formulate a strategy through a conscious process before he makes specific decisions [i.e. a planned approach] or a strategy may form gradually, perhaps unintentionally, as he makes his decisions one by one [i.e. emergent]' (Mintzberg, 1978: 935). We are left in no doubt as to who is in control, who is making the decisions and who is exercising power. Actions and decisions may be taken elsewhere in the organisation but it is the strategy maker or CA that 'makes his decisions one by one' as change evolves or emerges.

Although 'wary of excessively logical "how-to" approaches' (Kanter (1989a: 636), Kanter offers an emergent approach towards change, which slips into a rational-technical perspective. Hence it is argued that 'Creative visions combine with the building up of events, floor by floor, from foundation to completed construction' (op cit: 615). The 'ultimate skill' for 'change masters' or 'corporate leaders' is to 'conceive, construct, and convert into behaviour a new view of organizational reality' (ibid). The metaphorical allusion here is one of managers as architects or construction engineers who build from below and so power is still understood to

rest in managerial hands even if change is not understood as a simple top down 'mechanical process' (op cit: 617).

Weick (2000) also focuses on emergent change, which he associates with his concept of sensemaking and also Lewin's 3-steps. According to Weick (2000) 'successful change' (op cit: 233) requires a program that (1) 'animates people', (2) 'provides a direction', (3) 'encourages updating' and (4) 'facilitates respectful interaction in which trust, trustworthiness, and self-respect . . . all develop equally and allow people to build a stable rendition of what they face' (ibid.). These four activities are deemed necessary in order 'to build a consensual picture of what is happening' (op cit: 234) and this emphasis on consensus reveals affinities with a rational-technical perspective. Weick (2000) recognises that such activities are likely to be 'curbed severely in a hierarchical command-and-control system' (ibid) but the context of inequality, which endures irrespective of whether change is top-down or emergent, is not mentioned. Indeed, this context is omitted when Weick (2000) recommends 'a new "code of change" ', which avers that 'organizational change is not management induced. Instead, organizational change is emergent change laid down by the choices made on the front line' (op cit: 238). It is *as if* employees have free reign to create the world as they wish it to be. One can only conclude therefore that where emergent change exists, employees must be the willing architects of their own disadvantages, misfortune and suffering.

This blanching out of the inequalities that pervade organisations is also apparent in Kanter's (1989a) description of emergent change and 'participative methods' where 'an organization's *prime movers* see the impetus for change as internally driven, based on choice and responsiveness, rather than externally imposed' (op cit: 616; emphasis added). A belief in consensus pervades this understanding of emergent change. The managers who enact it are described as 'meaning makers' (Raelin, 2006) and their actions compared to a jazz band or a symphony where everyone operates in one accord *as if* hierarchical power is no longer exercised, unity prevails and inequality is seemingly an inconsequential or non-existent relic of the past. This is clear in assertions such as 'the task of the meaning-maker' is one of capturing 'the essence of what the community finds purposeful in its current work together' (op cit: 68). This emergent approach towards change is not, however, a 'letting go' (op cit: 67) of authority but rather a different way of exercising power. It is fallacious to compare either private or public sector organisations imbued with hierarchy, conflict, control and inequality with a jazz band or an orchestra. The making of meaning for and with others in organisations is not a communal or consensual activity for it reflects the conditions of exploitation, domination and subjugation that imbue the status quo (see McCabe, 2007b). Indeed, even 'members of a symphony orchestra are not invited to play whatever they think is suitable' (Enteman, 2007: 15).

The continual exercise of top-down power through emergent approaches is abundantly apparent when Kanter (1989a) presents the option of emergent change as an intentional act of manipulation by 'prime movers'. It is clear that Kanter assumes that these 'prime movers' will continue to possess power during and after emergent change:

> The use of 'power' is made possible partly by the power user's tacit agreement to keep his or her power invisible once others have agreed to participate. Others' participation may be contingent on a feeling that they are involved out of commitment or conviction—not because power is being exercise over them. Successful innovators know this, and so often they downplay their own role.
>
> (Kanter, 1989a: 619)

This quote is reminiscent of Lukes (1974) second dimension of power whereby the powerful manipulate others by concealing the power that they exercise. The Machiavellian implications are startlingly clear and Kanter's (1989a: 619) comments underline that 'emergent' change merely masks top down exercises of power although it is assumed incorrectly that power is a possession of management.

Indicative of the rational-technical perspective, Weick (2000) uses Lewin's language of 'unfreeze-change-refreeze' (op cit: 235) in an unproblematic way and in so doing confers considerable power upon management who are assumed to be able to unfreeze or refreeze others. In relation to emergent change, he presents 'management' as Zeus-like for management 'sees what the front line says and tells the world what it means' (op cit: 238). This sits uneasily with his observation that continuous and emergent change have an advantage because 'the system is already unfrozen' (op cit: 235) in the sense that everyone in the organisation is understood to be already improvising or coming up with their own ideas about how to do things. This clearly implies that it is not only managers that exercise power and yet it seems that during emergent change managers sit in judgement and tell the world what the frontline says and means. It appears that power is diffuse until such time as management reaches down to appropriate the improvisations of others.

In an emergent scenario, it is said that 'ineffectiveness lies not in inertia but in processes whose steps have gotten out of sequence' (Weick, 2000: 235). This slips once more into a rational-technical perspective because the implication is that there is a controlling hand that can align the 'sequence' of 'steps'. This thinking is redolent of Mintzberg's (1978) emergent approach towards strategy and it is also evident in Ford and Ford's (1995) statement that 'changes emerge, through diversity and interconnectedness of many microconversations, each of which follows relatively simple rules' (op cit: 560). The powerful change master seems

able to employ variety, flux and deviation for corporate ends as they put sequences of 'steps' together or apply 'simple rules' to deliver change.

A Deterministic View of Management 'Robots'

To conclude this analysis of the rational-technical perspective, one might ask how do managers, as human beings, fit into this way of viewing Change Management as it tends to equate managers with the wider corporation. From such a perspective, managers do not exist as human beings separate from the unitary corporate 'we' and are seemingly determined by the hierarchical or functional position they occupy. Managers are not human beings that may have their own views or interests in mind. Instead, they are rational, corporate clones; robots programmed by their role/position or corporate masters, to introduce change so as to increase profit, efficiency, control, customer service or productivity. The rational/technical perspective therefore tends to adopt a deterministic understanding of managers and change:

> Businesses, especially large ones, have little choice but to become information-based. Demographics, for one, demands the shift . . . Economics also dictate change, especially the need for large businesses to innovate and to be entrepreneurs. But above all, information technology demands the shift
>
> (Drucker, 1988: 45)

This quote from Drucker (1988) exemplifies what is meant by deterministic thinking. Referring to a form of organisation described as 'information-based', he suggests that managers have little choice but to introduce change because their actions are determined by demographics, economics or technology. In the interests of the organisation, management is presented as rationally scanning the environment, looking for signals that then lead them to act. Hence elsewhere Drucker (1985: 44) argues that 'innovation is organised, systematic, rational work' and he offers seven conditions that managers should monitor for successful innovation such as 'demographic' changes or changes in 'public perception'. Likewise, Tidd *et al.* (2001) present four phases of innovation the first of which involves 'Scanning' the 'environment for technological, market, regulatory and other signals'. Once these signals are identified it appears that managers have no choice but to respond in the desired way and so managers are presented as 'messengers—of a technical and economic system' (Wilkinson, 1983: 19).

Grey (2003) and Sturdy and Grey (2003) are critical of the 'pro-change bias' (Sturdy and Grey, 2003: 654) in the Change Management literature, which means that change is presented as both 'good' and 'necessary in (i.e. determined by) the current period of 'unprecedented' competition

and market change' (op cit: 655). In effect, this discourse takes choice away from managers and implies that they must change because the times demand it. This deterministic logic is also evident in the following quote from Hammer and Champy (1993) 'sellers no longer have the upper hand; customers do. Customers now tell suppliers what they want, when they want it, how they want it and, what they will pay' (op cit: 18). In Chapter 6, we will question the assumption that the actions and subjectivity of managers are simply determined by technology, economics, the market, customers or their position in the organisational hierarchy.

To draw this section to an end, it is interesting to note that claims of 'unprecedented' economic change have been made by successive management gurus such as Peters and Waterman (1982) in the 1980s and Hammer and Champy (1993) in the 1990s. These claims were made to justify their particular Change Management interventions and suggested that management actions are determined for they have no choice but to change—the environment dictated or determined it. Hence, in the 1994 Tom Peters seminar, Peters (1994) told us that 'Crazy times call for crazy organizations'. In retrospect, however, these periods seem relatively calm compared to the current era, which includes the 2008 global financial crisis, Austerity, the rise of social media, the widespread scientific acceptance of Global Warming as well as the shifting economic plates that have witnessed the ascendance of China as an economic force. There appears to be no respite in the demand for change and yet the imperative to change in the 1980s/1990s compared with the current era, seems to have been dramatically overstated.

According to Chia (1999), 'Western management academics' view 'organizational change' as a 'problem' which *needs* to be 'managed' (op cit: 214). As this section has illustrated, they also assume that the 'problem' of organisational change *can* be managed. Various top down and emergent Change Management models have been advanced which both assume and promise this end. This literature reflects the assumption that management possesses power and this is also evident in the more sophisticated processual Change Management literature, to which we now turn.

A Processual Perspective on Change Management

A planned approach towards Change Management, which clearly fits with a rational-technical perspective is often contrasted with a processual understanding or approach towards Change Management. A planned approach may, however, be a house built of straw and an orphan in that Lewin is its supposed intellectual father and yet defenders of Lewin (1947a) argue that he 'was an early promoter of process approaches' (Cummings et al., 2015: 52) rather than an advocate of 'n-step guides for change' (Collins, 1998: 83). The rational-technical and processual perspectives are different but there are also similarities between them. This

section will explore and contrast them by discussing different aspects of processual theorising that according to Pettigrew (1997: 340) includes the following features:

1. Embeddedness, studying processes across a number of levels of analysis;
2. Temporal interconnectedness, studying processes in past, present and future time;
3. A role in explanation for context and action;
4. A search for holistic rather than linear explanations of process;
5. A need to link process analysis to the location and explanation of outcomes.

There are a number of key writers that advocate and follow a processual approach including Andrew Pettigrew and Henry Mintzberg. Processual theorists prescribe a longitudinal method of research that is concerned to understand process 'as a sequence of individual and collective events, actions, and activities unfolding over time in context' (Pettigrew, 1997: 338). According to Pettigrew (1997) the 'overriding aim of the process analyst therefore is to catch this reality in flight' (ibid). To suggest, however, that processes can be caught evokes a tension because if the process bird is caught then surely its flight is lost. Indeed, if we think about change as movement and compare this to the flight of an arrow 'the arrow simply flies through the air and never is at any one point at an instant, because there are no instants in real processual time' (see Chia, 1999: 216). In view of this, the instant of a process that Pettigrew wishes to catch and represent is no longer a process. Indeed, processes continually evade the swoop of the representative net because if it were otherwise they would not be a process. A processual perspective nevertheless claims to reject 'the language of states' evident in the rational-technical perspective preferring 'an active language of becoming, emerging, developing, transforming, and decaying' (Pettigrew, 1997: 338).

Context Versus Agency

The importance of studying context is deeply embedded in a processual analysis and yet the context of inequality that change interventions emerge through and reproduce is rarely mentioned. The focus on context, for some, slips into a managerial line of reasoning whereby 'Change in organizations' is understood as 'a complex and multifaceted affair whose elements must be clearly delineated if it is to be understood in context and so managed effectively' (Mintzberg and Westley, 1992: 57). The concern to analyse change *in context* and in its complexity appears therefore to be a vehicle through which to aid the managerial exercise of power—reaffirming the assumption that managers possess the power to execute and deliver change. This seems to be Mintzberg and Westley's

(1992) intention and belief as they offer 'ideal types' that 'imply different roles for managers interested in guiding and encouraging or inhibiting change' (ibid), which is redolent of a rational-technical perspective.

A processual perspective works from the assumption that there are agents whose 'actions drive processes' (Pettigrew, 1997: 338) which is a shift from determinism but it implies that certain individuals possess the power to foster change. The 'actions' of such agents are nevertheless understood to be 'embedded in contexts which limit their information, insight and influence' (ibid). The power of CAs to 'drive processes' is therefore understood to be constrained by context. One can infer from this that we need to give serious attention to the condition and consequences of resistance that, as part of the context and content of change, is likely to constrain and constitute the possibility for and nature of change. This is the focus of Chapters 5 to 8, but resistance has received limited attention in the processual literature.

In contrast to approaches that view the world from a rational-technical perspective, which assume that context, the past or an older culture can be left behind (e.g. Hammer and Champy, 1993), processual scholars understand that 'The past is alive in the present and may shape the emerging future' (Pettigrew, 1997: 341). If the assumption of processual scholars is that there is a single context that can be identified, which will allow findings to be generalised from one situation to another, this raises problems. The problems are partly expressed in Dawson's (2003) more critical processual approach, which recognises that 'the coexistence of a number of competing histories of change can significantly shape ongoing change programmes' (op cit: 10). This line of argument indicates that 'there can never be a single authentic account of change' (op cit: 14) and these 'competing histories' provide the potential for conflict and resistance as there may be opposing understandings and memories of the 'past' and 'present' (see McCabe, 2004, 2010). This means that one cannot identify a single context that would allow one to generalise from one situation to another due to each context being contested and ineffable. Drawing on the philosophy of Bergson, Chia (1999) underlines the difficulties involved in identifying and generalising in relation to context for each context is understood to be unique. This is explained in the following way—'Each moment of duration absorbs the preceding one, transforming it and with it the whole, constituting at each stage of the process a novel and never-to-be-repeated occasion necessarily grounded in its past, but always projected towards a not-yet-knowable future' (Chia, 1999: 220).

These insights point to the complex, uncertain, unique, disputed and elusive nature of context and process that does not sit easily with managerial measurement and manipulation. The bow of context and process does not therefore yield or bend 'to the location and explanation of outcomes' (Pettigrew, 1997: 340). The managerial hunter may not string such a bow let alone release an arrow. And yet, the key for

some processual scholars is to first 'search for patterns' (Pettigrew, 1997: 339) and second 'to find the underlying mechanisms which drive the processes' (ibid), which implies that contexts and processes can be identified, understood and controlled. These 'underlying mechanisms' are thought to reflect 'the conscious intentions of key actors' (op cit: 339), which again moves us away from environmental determinism but introduces a deterministic argument in terms of the ability of 'key actors' to achieve or determine outcomes. It imputes power to certain individuals or collectives because it is suggested that they are able to mobilise and manipulate the 'underlying mechanisms' of change.

The claim to be able to link 'underlying mechanisms' with the 'intentions of key actors' is problematic because power is also ascribed to a 'more distant context' that is 'not part of the sensibility of local actors' (ibid). Here, power is linked to earlier contexts and conditions, which limit the power that 'key actors' are able to exercise. To acknowledge the grip of the past on the present is useful because it tends to be neglected by the rational-technical perspective on Change Management. It has to be acknowledged, however, that the influence of this unknown earlier context rubs up against the argument that processes reflect 'the conscious intentions of key actors' (op cit: 339). Overall then, we can observe a tension within some processual accounts between the voluntarist emphasis on active agents (actors) of change, which implies that certain individuals possess the power to enact change and the determining influence of a 'more distant context', which is unknown and limits the power of such actors.

The aim of processual analysis is not merely description but to identify causal relationships and so despite the relative sophistication this links back to the rational-technical perspective as both 'strive for generality' (Van de Ven and Poole, 2005: 1384) or 'search for general patterns of change' (Pettigrew et al., 2001: 97) and assume that there are 'mechanisms' (Pettigrew, 1997: 339) of causality. The implication is that interventions can be deployed to change organisations, which are developed through analysing change mechanisms in different contexts that can then be generalised from one setting or situation to another. Hence Van de Ven and Poole (1995) refer to what they call 'process theory' and explain that such theory 'should identify the generative mechanisms that cause observed events to happen and the particular circumstances or contingencies behind these causal mechanisms' (op cit: 512; see also Van de Ven and Poole, 2005: 1385).

It follows that change or what Chia (1999) refers to as 'time and movement' can be formulated 'as discrete, digitalized quantities amendable to mathematical formulation and logical manipulation' (Chia, 1999: 216). It also follows that power must be the possession of certain individuals or groups who can understand, identify and operationalise 'causal mechanisms' (Van de Ven and Poole, 1995, 2005) so as to effect change.

This is seemingly the case even though, as Pettigrew (1997) acknowledges, the context of change poses limits to the power that such individuals can exercise (see also Pettigrew, 1992: 173). The difference between a rational-technical and a processual perspective seems to hinge on the greater degree of complexity afforded to the issue of causality by processual scholars.

Overall, one can understand how the assumptions underpinning processual theorising can lead to the type of assertions evident in Mintzberg *et al*. (1976), who posited that opposition to change only offers 'delays, until the resistance subsides, or to political design activity, to remove' (op cit: 267) or 'eliminate the sources of resistance' (op cit: 262). This echoes Lewin's (1947a) assertions regarding the ability to 'overcome' (op cit: 32) resistance. Presumably, the managers Mintzberg *et al*. (1976) refer to, understand and are able to wield the causal 'mechanisms' (Pettigrew, 1997: 339) that allow for successful change. This elevates the actors or agents of change whilst negating the limitations posed by context and this tension between actors and context (voluntarism versus determinisim, agency versus structure) continually surfaces in the processual perspective.

The processual perspective shivers with tension because the emphasis on 'actors', 'causality' and 'causal mechanisms' implies that power can be possessed by certain actors whilst the focus on 'context' highlights limitations to the power that such actors can exercise. Hence the emphasis on context implies that actors other than change agents exercise power that reflects earlier and contemporary exercises of power by sometimes unknown others. The priority given to the agency of actors and causality rubs up against Pettigrew's (1997) beautiful metaphor of organisational life as 'a river basin where there may be several streams all flowing into one another, dependent on one another for their life force and shaping and being shaped by varieties of terrain each constraining and enabling in different intensities and ways' (op cit: 340). This highlights the complexity of context and the metaphor of organisational life as a river basin, suggests to me that organisations can only be partially described and never tamed in the sense of being able to fully understand and predict 'the links between context, processes and outcomes' (ibid). The processual approach nevertheless avers that such links can be identified, understood and applied to other contexts that are presumed to be similar. This assumption, given the complex and unique unfolding of each organisation, is problematic.

Processual Theorising and Managerialism

The previous section elucidates the tension between a processual understanding of organisations and the managerial aspirations/claims of *some* processual theorists. As Chia (1999) explains 'because reality is

ever-changing' it is 'resistant to description in terms of fixed categories' (op cit: 210). The assumption therefore that we can capture and represent change in a causal way is problematic but it is embedded in Pettigrew's (1997) context, content and process schema whereby change takes 'on 'thing-like' characteristics rather than as dynamic flux and transformation' (Chia, 1999: 212).

To understand change as a *thing* sits well with a managerial line of argument and the rational-technical perspective. Much like Peters and Waterman's (1982) claims regarding strong corporate cultures and excellent organisations, it enables one to assert that it is possible to distinguish the 'five key features' of 'high performing' organisations (Pettigrew, 1997: 342). This claim suggests that it is not only possible to provide a definitive account of organisations but also that causal insights or lessons can be inferred from them that can be learned and applied to different situations/contexts. If organisational contexts evade understanding in the sense that they are 'not part of the sensibilities of local actors' (Pettigrew, 1997: 339) then to make generalisable claims about them is problematic. Nevertheless, Lapsley and Pettigrew (1994) purport precisely this when they assert that they have identified 'the management of five interrelated factors' that account for and explain 'the relative performance' of firms including 'how firms assessed their environment, how they led change, how they linked strategic and operational change, how they managed their human resources, and the management of coherence in the overall change process' (op cit: 84).

The problem with the logic of generalisability as Grey (2003) points out is that it rests on the assumption 'that doing what another organisation did with a different set of people in a different place at a different time with yield the same results as those claimed for the original implementation' (op cit: 9). If we accept the view that 'the process of change and becoming is by no means a homogeneous, linear unfolding. Rather, becoming is essentially heterogeneous in character. It is infinitely varied and unique in each of its expressions' (Chia, 1999: 218), we can further understand the flaw in attempting to generalise from one situation to another. It is, however, for some processual theorists all a question of numbers. Hence it is the limited 'number of cases that can be collected' due to the 'depth of process data, and the complexity of processes' that limits 'confidence in the generalizability of the conclusions' (Van de Ven and Poole, 2005: 1385; see also Bamford and Forrester, 2003: 550), which tends to miss the point regarding the unique nature of each context, organisation and change intervention.

Although Pettigrew's (1997) processual approach offers rich insights into the complex processes involved in change, the managerial desire to offer applied insights with an eye to 'helping practitioners' (Whittington et al., 2002: 480) seems to suspend and contradict such complexity. Managerialism is predicated on the assumption of causality and the belief

that certain individuals/groups possess power. It is consistent with 'the process scholar' who 'searches for recurrent patterns in the process, for structure and underlying logics' (Pettigrew, 1997: 341). It is inconsistent, however, with 'the process scholar' who asserts that 'there is no assumption of predetermined timetables, of ordered and inevitable sequences or stages' (ibid). The former statement reflects a causal, rational-technical, managerial view of the world whilst the latter contradicts it and concedes that we can only attempt to represent, in a partial way, its complexity.

Pettigrew (1997) oscillates then between the demands of managerialism and the sophistication of processual theory. Managerialism resounds in the belief that 'there is scope to examine causal processes directly' (op cit: 341) thereby 'linking processes to outcomes' (op cit: 340) so as to identify 'ordered and inevitable sequences' (op cit: 341) of change. Similarly, managerialism is apparent in the work of Mintzberg and Westley (1992) who assert 'that a full process of change (at any level) proceeds through the steps of conceiving the change (learning), shifting the mindset (vision), and programming (where necessary) the consequences' (planning)' (op cit: 44).

It is interesting that despite the managerialism in Mintzberg and Pettigrew's processual approach, Pettigrew has been criticised for not being more applied or managerial. Hence according to Collins (1998) 'the theoretical, conceptual and methodological elegance' of Pettigrew's work 'seems to have been purchased at the expense of practical advice and practitioner relevance' (op cit: 71). Likewise, Buchanan and Boddy (1992) lament that it 'does not constitute a 'user friendly' guide to practical management action' (Buchanan and Boddy, 1992: 20). Pettigrew's theorising nonetheless aspires to being able to provide such insights and indeed he claims to have done so as his identification of the five factors or features of high performing firms, reveals. Moreover, Pettigrew is critical of non-processual accounts that 'develop inadequate descriptive theories of change which are ill-composed guides for action' (Pettigrew, 1985: 15). This implies that processual accounts are able to provide well-composed guides for action.

A 'Relational' Versus a 'Propertied' View of Power

Pettigrew (1977) rejects the view 'that because of structural position, an individual or group possesses certain power resources' (op cit: 84) and he refutes the idea of 'all-seeing and presumably omnipotent chief executives' (Pettigrew, 1986: 138). Elsewhere, he reiterates this, stating that 'No assumption is made by starting with position holders or formal groupings of individuals, that power lies with those at the strategic apex of the organization' (Pettigrew, 1992: 163). Indeed, he points out that 'the power and influence of senior position holders is constrained by the countervailing influence of others inside and outside their own

organizations' (ibid), which indicates that serious attention need to be given to resistance.

These arguments can be understood to be consistent with a 'relational' (Foucault, 1982) understanding of power whereby power is not the possession of any individual or group. Hence it is posited that we need to attend to how power is 'checked by nonelites inside the firm' (Pettigrew, 1992: 179). This relational conviction begins to evaporate, however, when it is argued that executives 'can use and change the structures, cultures, reward systems, and political processes in the firm to draw attention to performance gaps' (Pettigrew, 1986: 138). Similarly, the assertion that one can identify 'key attributes and processes of change which not only deliver successful outcomes for organisations but which afford the opportunity for sustainable programmes of change' (Lapsley and Pettigrew, 1994: 91) implies that corporate elites do possess power and can find the correct processual recipe to achieve desired outcomes. It is perhaps inevitable that one has to assume that management possesses power as soon as one steps towards prescription. Nonelites and the power that they may exercise then fades into the background and hence they have received limited attention in processual accounts of change. Instead, questions of 'how does the mobilization and use of power in and around the board impact on the major choices and changes faced by the organization' (Pettigrew, 1992: 179) are posed, which tend to rule out the nonelites. Yet it is precisely through focusing on nonelites that limits to the power that can be exercised from above can be exposed.

If we accept that power is not simply possessed by those at the top of an organisation as Pettigrew has argued, there is no reason to assume that outcomes can be determined or that consensus prevails. Nor should resistance be seen as a minor or short lived affair. Yet Mintzberg and Westley (1992), referring to change through visionary leadership suggest otherwise when they state that new visions 'can also be resisted and even confronted before they are accepted in a broader consensus' (op cit: 44). By contrast, this book aims to explore how the power that elites attempt to exercise is continually contested or 'checked' by nonelites. This sits better with the perspective of more critical processual writers who argue that 'shop-floor resistance is an integral part of the political process that requires examination and analysis' (Dawson, 2003: 9). As we shall see in Chapter 6, however, it is not only shop or office floor workers that resist but also managers.

Dawson (2003) is critical of Pettigrew's (1985) opus *The Awakening Giant* arguing that in this text 'there is a tendency to view strategic change from the perspective of management' (op cit: 21), which this book will attempt to counter. Dawson (2003) is correct that 'a fuller account of the lived experience and perspective of different employee groups' will 'provide a useful counterbalance to the main thrust of Pettigrew's argument' (op cit: 21). This is important because it helps to illuminate that

managerial elites cannot simply impose their will on others. It can elucidate limitations to the power that elites can exercise whilst empowering those who are written out of many Change Management accounts. This takes us in the direction of the 'critical processual perspective' outlined by Knights and Murray (1994) that is referred to in Chapter 9. This approach 'does not presume to present a definitive explanation of change' (Dawson, 2003: 25) and seeks instead to present a deeper understanding of Change Management. It adopts a critical perspective that aims to question the status quo rather than merely reproducing it and it is to such an approach that we now turn.

3 Towards a Critical 'Relational' Perspective on Change Management

There is no single body of work that can lay claim to being critical indeed a critical approach has many competing and sometimes incompatible strands and traditions but, if we put these differences aside, much can be drawn from critical approaches that can aid our understanding of Change Management. A critical approach offers a way forward 'which challenges, rather than confirms, established wisdom' (Grey, 2003: 2) or, as expressed by Alvesson and Willmott (1992), it is an approach that 'questions the wisdom of taking the neutrality or virtue of management as self-evident or unproblematical' (op cit: 1). A critical approach is not prescriptive in a narrow managerial sense. Instead, we can draw on it to encourage a different way of thinking about Change Management and organisations through challenging conventional ways of understanding the subject.

A critical approach may be seen as a worthless endeavour for some, given their emphasis on providing 'key lessons for practitioners' (Pye and Pettigrew, 2006: 583), 'practically useful research on change' (Pettigrew et al., 2001: 698) or being 'practitioner-oriented' (David et al., 2011: 59) so as to 'realign business school curricula with corporate needs' (op cit: 52). To adopt such a position, however, reflects a narrow managerial perspective and a "rational-technical" vision of what academia is or should be about. Hence one needs to ask, 'practically useful' for whom and whose interests are served by these 'key lessons'? If we did not live in a world of immense inequality and environmental destruction one might not need to ask such questions but this is patently not the case.

The mainstream approach towards researching Change Management focuses on how change relates to 'competitive performance' (Pye and Pettigrew, 2006: 583) and so 'practically useful research' (ibid) appears to be directed at and is meant to serve a managerial audience and presumably the shareholders who profit from their actions. Universities are not, however, funded by managers, business or shareholders. Those who study in and increasingly fund universities in the UK are not guaranteed secure, well-paid jobs as part of a managerial elite but are just as likely to become social workers or call centre employees and so why should research and education only seek to serve a narrow already privileged elite.

The aim of the mainstream Change Management literature is to benefit one organisation, sector, industry or country, which inevitably must be to the detriment of others. In this way, it merely sustains the status quo with all of its inequalities and risks to the environment. Academia, certainly in the UK and US, is increasingly being directed towards perpetuating this project through the emphasis on "impactful" research (see David et al., 2011; Pettigrew, 2011). Although impactful research does not have to pursue a managerial agenda (see Routledge and Driscoll-Derickson, 2015), it has to be recognised that those in positions of authority may be unwilling to provide access for scholarship that is critical of their actions. Indeed they may reject research that does not promise n-step programmes of change because it cannot be used as a tool to aid the exercise of power even if such tools are flawed.

Likewise, funding bodies and managerial reviewers are unlikely to fund research that does not lay claim to being able to show how X changes Y because it does not meet the 'challenge to develop knowledge in the image of science while also contributing to practice and policy making' (Pettigrew et al., 2001: 697). This does not mean, however, that research that does not subscribe to a narrow managerial view of the world or a particular model of science is unimportant. It is only unimportant if one subscribes to a rational-technical perspective where measurement and prescription, irrespective of their impact on those on the receiving end of the prescriptions, is seen as more important than understanding the organisations in which we work and the inequality and suffering that is perpetuated through them. "Impactful" research has become a dominant refrain in UK and US universities (David et al., 2011) and yet this call for impact all too often obscures the underpinning managerialism and inequality that is reproduced through 'practically useful research on change' (Pettigrew et al., 2001: 698). Indeed, it is ironic that those who now largely fund universities (students) may be on the receiving end of research that in order to gain funding must promise to deliver productivity improvements, which could subject them to work intensification, once they enter the labour market.

Labour Process Theory (LPT) offers a Marxist inspired body of work that does not start from the premise that organisations are arenas of consensus but instead places economic inequality centre stage in its analysis (see Braverman, 1974; Knights and Willmott, 1990; Thompson and Smith, 2010a). Although processual scholars 'place great emphasis on the role of context in the processual analysis of change' (Pettigrew et al., 2001: 698), it is remarkable how little attention is given to the inequalities that imbue this context. Processual research is said to face a 'choice' in terms of 'which processes should be included and which excluded' (op cit: 699) and it is evident that the processes which are excluded or silenced largely relate to those through which inequality is maintained or reproduced.

By contrast, 'critical approaches share a concern to examine the reproduction of power asymmetries and inequalities' (Collinson, 2005: 1437). Inequality is evident in that the vast majority of people in a capitalist society are required to sell their labour in order to economically survive be they managers, miners, checkout operators, doctors, drivers, academics, teachers, scientists, engineers or automobile workers. Only a very few possess the wealth or capital not to have to work. This insight exposes the limitations of a 'unitary' (Fox, 1974) or consensual rational-technical view of the world of work. It is also at odds with the more 'pluralistic' (ibid) assumptions of the processual perspective, where organisations and change are understood to be a product of negotiation between different groups, which involves 'bargaining, persuasion, and confrontation among actors who divide the power' (Mintzberg and Lampel, 1999: 4).

This pluralist approach towards Change Management implies that a balance exists whereby multiple interests are represented and taken into account during organisational change. It implies that organisations are mini-democracies operating through proportional representation and that the views of all 'stakeholders' (David et al., 2011: 52) are given equal consideration. Pluralism is useful because it does not imply that any single group exercises power, but it is problematic because it fails to acknowledge that not everyone has a voice, let alone an equal voice, in organisations despite the veneration of democratic values in Western societies. It neglects that where there is bargaining (and the majority of workplaces in the UK are now non-unionised) it is not played out on a level playing field because those without the resources of the organisation behind them are economically vulnerable and so they may feel forced to accept 'deals' that they might otherwise reject.

According to LPT, there is a division between those who possess or represent the interests of capital and those who do not. 'Antagonism' (Braverman, 1974: 47), linked to inequality, is understood to exist between these two broad groupings. The notion of 'labour power' or 'the human capacity to perform work' (Braverman, 1974: 51) can also help us to understand this antagonism. 'Labour power' refers to a person's capacity to work, which is indeterminate rather than fixed. Unlike the electricity, gas, water or buildings that an employer might purchase human labour does not come pre-packaged or predetermined. Employers do not know what they are getting when they employ someone for people cannot be plugged in like a machine or measured like a grain of rice. In view of this, employers and managers have to find ways to ensure that employees use their 'labour power' in ways that are productive for the organisation in return for the wages or salaries they are paid. Various Change Management programmes may be adopted to try to achieve this end, including Business Process Reengineering (BPR), Total Quality Management (TQM), Just-in-time (JIT), Six Sigma, Teamwork, Lean Production, Knowledge Management and Culture Change.

Through this type of analysis we can see that control through 'labour power' is essential to the role of management and there are many different ways that managers may strive to achieve control, for example, through deskilling (see Braverman, 1974). In this way, the 'tacit' knowledge (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995) of employees in terms of their understanding of how to do something is extracted through observing, measuring and breaking work down into standardised and specialised tasks. This is lauded in the ideas and practices of such historical managerial luminaries as Adam Smith, Fredrick Winslow Taylor and Henry Ford, and it remains today as technology and 'Scientific Management' (Taylor, 1911) are employed to disassemble jobs in previously prestigious occupations such as banking (see McCabe, 2007b) or the British Civil Service (Carter et al., 2011).

According to Friedman (1977b), there are two 'alternative strategies' (ibid, 1977b: 47) for the control of labour. Through strategies of Responsible Autonomy (RA), he argues that 'Workers are given responsibility, status, light supervision, and their loyalty towards the firm is solicited' (ibid, 1990: 178). This type of control is evident where work is designed so as to allow for employee autonomy, responsibility or in contemporary management speak—empowerment, which is increasingly espoused through corporate culture change programmes (see Willmott, 1993). By contrast, through Direct Control (DC), 'top managers try to reduce each individual worker's amount of responsibility by close supervision and by setting out in advance and in great detail the specific tasks individual workers are to do' (ibid). Friedman (1977a) considered these to be 'two major types of strategies which top managers use to exercise authority' (ibid: 78). Both are understood as forms of control because the aim is the same which is to maximise the use of 'labour power'. In recent years, a range of new forms of control have been identified in terms of teamwork (Barker, 1993), culture (Willmott, 1993), BPR (Grey and Mitev, 1994; Willmott, 1994) and TQM/JIT (Sewell and Wilkinson, 1992).

If we adopt a LPT perspective then, Change Management can be understood to reflect the antagonistic relationship between managers and employees, for managers have to continually find ways to harvest more from employees' labour power in order to maximise profitability. Employees are forced, through economic necessity, to do work that they may otherwise not be willing to undertake. Of course, this does not mean that employees would not continue to work if they did not economically need to but it is questionable whether the majority would continue to work for as long or as hard as they currently do. The potential for antagonism is also apparent in that what employees do when they are at work is largely subject to the demands and dictates of others. As Braverman (1974) puts it 'Having been forced to sell their labour power to another, the workers also surrender their interest in the labour process' (op cit: 39). Not everyone would agree with this statement and indeed

there is evidence to suggest that *some* employees continue to identify with what they do whether in relation to car production (Knights and McCabe, 2000a) or call centres (Knights and McCabe, 2003). Nevertheless, Change Management initiatives are integral to achieving control over and through labour power, which can be related to 'sweet stuff' (Roy, 1980) such as bonus schemes, attractive terms and conditions of employment, autonomy, empowerment or, alternatively, 'fear stuff' (Roy, 1980) such as discipline, redundancy, work intensification, monitoring and surveillance. Ultimately, both are different means to achieve the same end which is to maximise profit through controlling the use of labour power.

It is, in part, the 'indeterminate status of labour power as human, embodied, mobile and active' (Thompson and Smith, 2010b: 14) that necessitates the need for Change Management as a means to maximise the use of labour power. This also helps to explain the ongoing and widespread accounts of resistance, struggle or misbehaviour at work (see Knights and McCabe, 2000b) because individuals and collectives can use their labour power against management. Ackroyd and Thompson (1999) define misbehaviour as 'anything you do at work you are not supposed to do' (op cit: 2) and, as we will explore in subsequent chapters, it pervades the workplace taking many different forms that can be heightened when managers attempt to introduce change programmes. Although antagonism is central to LPT theory this does not mean that the employment relationship is simply characterised by conflict. Hyman (1972, for example, argues that 'The capitalist labour process is at one and the same time a co-operative and a conflictual activity' (ibid: 185). Moreover, scholars who assume a 'structural antagonism between capital and labour' (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999: 29) recognise that employees 'actively engage with their work, developing identification with workmates and the activities they undertake' (ibid: 74).

The antagonism between those who buy and sell labour can be related to what Baldamus (1961) called the 'effort bargain'. As Baldamus explained, the amount of effort one expends at work can be seen as a cost to employees whilst the wages that employers pay for such effort is a cost to them as it detracts from profitability. Both seek to reduce the costs [effort, wages] they expend in relation to what they receive in return. Employers will seek to hold wage costs down whilst seeking to maximise effort/profit and will introduce change initiatives to secure this end. Employees will seek to increase or at least maintain their wages [that threatens profit] relative to the effort they put in, which change initiatives often seek to increase. How much effort one is required to expend in relation to the rewards one receives is unclear and has to be determined, negotiated and, at times, fought over. Moreover, the perception of the 'effort bargain' will vary from individual to individual and can shift according to a whole host of reasons such as inflation, wage

comparisons, unemployment, labour supply and demand. This means that there is enormous potential for conflict in the workplace especially if the wage-effort bargain is perceived to be imbalanced. This is a condition of normal workplace relations but the potential for conflict increases when change initiatives are introduced that threaten jobs and established work patterns, rewards, effort levels, routines and norms.

A LPT perspective can help to illuminate the type of contradictions and tensions that can be found and remain unexplained in the work of authors who view the world from a rational-technical perspective. Hence Ulrich (1998) outlines the role that Human Resource (HR) Professionals should play in relation to change and he argues that 'HR staff must also be an advocate for employees—they must represent the employees to management and be their voice in management discussions' (op cit: 130). This is most certainly important for employees during change programmes who may find their jobs, living standards and quality of working life threatened especially in the absence of trade unions, which Ulrich does not mentioned. Ulrich (1998) asserts that HR can recommend ways to 'ameliorate morale problems' (ibid) due to staff shortages, downsizing, boring or repetitive work. Nevertheless, it is argued that HR 'must measure their effectiveness in terms of business competitiveness rather than employee comfort' (op cit: 134). Although Ulrich's (1998) words appear to be compassionate towards employees, it is clear then that 'business' not 'employees' remains the first priority. If 'business' priorities come into conflict with 'employee comfort' then business must come first and so we can observe that Change Management may well be a source of conflict, exploitation and antagonism.

Although the critical literature is extensive and there are numerous critical approaches, it is possible to present a division in terms of how power is broadly understood within this literature. Hence scholars influenced by Marx (1844) have tended to link power to the possession of wealth and so it is seen as 'the privilege of those groups which have attained control over the production process' (Marcuse, 1964: 222). Those who own or control the means of production (i.e. capitalists) and their managerial agents are understood to possess power. This understanding is reflected in the literature that is preoccupied with how managers control others whether through deskilling (Braverman, 1974) or more modern Change Management techniques such as Total Quality Management (Delbridge et al., 1992) and Teamwork (Parker and Slaughter, 1988).

A similarity exists between LPT and the rational-technical perspective insofar as both tend to ascribe power to elites whether explicitly or implicitly. The key difference is that the rational-technical perspective assumes that managers exercise power for the benefit of all, in an arena of consensus. By contrast, labour process scholars present managers as 'agents of capital', who exercise power to control and exploit the labour of others, in a relationship characterised by antagonism and

exploitation. Nevertheless, both work from the premise that power is largely the property of management and so their focus has tended to be on how managers exercise power. There is, however, a growing literature on resistance, and labour process theorists have made a key contribution to this debate (e.g. Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999; Bain and Taylor, 2000; Delbridge, 1995).

Another feature of a Marxist or neo-Marxist approach is that it views power in a repressive way (e.g. Lukes, 1974). Subjectivity or the way in which we understand and interpret the world and ourselves (see Knights and Willmott, 1985; Knights and McCabe, 1999), is understood to be constrained through the exercise of power by powerful others, which is most evident in Marx's (1844) concept of alienation. The self is repressed, shackled, stunted due to a capitalist system that thwarts human development. Hence theorists from the Frankfurt school averred that power is exercised in 'processes of restraint, constraint and repression' (Marcuse, 1956: 8) or in ways that deny our real subjectivity or consciousness. Traditional labour process theorists such as Braverman (1974) sought to omit an account of subjectivity from his analysis of the labour process hence it was argued that following scientific and technological advances 'The subjective factor of the labour process is removed' (op cit: 118). Braverman was too good a sociologist, however, to have followed this through for he also posited that 'since the workers are not destroyed as human beings but are simply utilized in inhuman ways, their critical, intelligent, conceptual faculties, no matter how deadened or diminished, always remain in some degree a threat to capital' (op cit: 96). In short, subjectivity and therefore the possibility for resistance endures.

The Contribution of Foucault

In contrast to LPT or neo-Marxist theorising, the work of Foucault presents power as productive of our identity or sense of self. According to Foucault (1977), we or our subjectivity is constituted through disciplinary power. Thus through health care, education, work and change initiatives, we are observed, measured, compared, rewarded or punished in relation to given norms that seek to define us as subjects. In turn, we may take up, reject or distance ourselves (Collinson, 1994) from these norms thereby defining ourselves as particular types of individuals. In the workplace, this disciplinary power is exercised through different discourses such as 'change' (Grey, 2003), 'teamwork' (Knights and McCabe, 2000a, 2003), 'culture' (Fleming, 2013; Willmott, 1993, 2013) 'strategy' (Knights and Morgan, 1991, 1995), 'human resource management' (Townley, 1993) or 'enterprise' (Du Gay and Salaman, 1992) that establish what it means to be a particular type of worker and person. It is through these discursive practices that 'the properties of a disciplinary regime, its norms and values . . . [merge] . . . with and become attributes of persons themselves'

(Rose, 1988: 188). According to Foucault (1980), power 'exerts a positive influence on life' and 'What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that *it doesn't only* weigh on us as a force that says *no*, but that it traverses and produces things' (op cit: 119; emphasis added). Elsewhere, he states that 'power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth' (Foucault, 1977: 194).

The point is not that power is productive rather than repressive but that the two operate in unison so we may be rewarded or punished through different disciplinary regimes (see McCabe, 2000, 2008). Those who comply are produced and produce themselves as particular types of subject as they seek to engage and secure the rewards that compliance affords. The individual who obeys and successfully lives the norms and meets corporate demands comes to understand themselves as and wants to be a particular type of subject—a first class student; a productive worker; a professor; an engineer; a nurse; a supporter of change or change champion. They (we) embrace the disciplinary norms of a given regime and are produced, in part, through them. Of course, we may not conform and so power may be exercised in repressive ways so as to discipline us for our lack of conformity, for example, by limiting career progression, withholding pay awards, dismissal, warnings or other sanctions. Power is simultaneously exercised in productive and repressive ways because the disciplinary regime says what we must do and be and what we must not do and be.

The Change Management literature is replete with prescriptions about how to introduce effective change through visions and leadership, communication or participation. What is not acknowledged in either the rational-technical or processual perspectives is that when Mintzberg and Westley (1992) refer to 'a common mission' or 'a revised mindset' (op cit: 44) or Ulrich (1998) advocates that HR Professionals should 'lead cultural transformation' (op cit: 134) such endeavours are bound up with power. They are attempts by management to exercise power (whether intentionally or not) so as to change employee subjectivity in terms of how people think and act thereby promoting certain actions, interests and subjectivities over others. Pye and Pettigrew (2006) are disarmingly frank in relation to this issue when they state that 'the purpose of strategizing and organizing is ultimately to change behaviours of people' (op cit: 585) in the 'pursuit of organization purpose and competitive advantage' (op cit: 588). That this is an exercise of power, which elevates certain managerial interests over others is rarely made clear but it is clear that these authors view organisations in a particular way and aim to serve particular interest groups, which they refer to as 'practitioners' (op cit: 583).

To explain these dynamics in relation to Change Management, Ulrich (1998) recommends that HR 'should become a champion for employees, vigorously representing their concerns to senior management' but HR

professionals are told that, 'at the same time', they should be 'working to increase employee contribution, that is, employees' commitment to the organization and their ability to deliver results' (op cit: 125). It is clear then that HR professionals are required to exercise power to align employees with corporate ends, which 'Championing' employees in no way detracts from. Ulrich (1998) does not refer to this as an exercise of power that serves corporate rather than employee interests, but this is clearly the case. As he states, 'every one of HR's activities . . . [must] . . . in some concrete way help the company better serve its customers or otherwise increase shareholder value' (ibid).

The 'productive' understanding of power advanced by Foucault (1977) could be seen as offering an equally 'propertied' approach or reflecting the view that elites' possess power hence those who are able to produce others seemingly hold all the power. This appears to be the case until one grasps that 'power' is not simply done to us (see McCabe, 2007a). We exercise power when we choose to conform or resist. Certainly, there are consequences that follow from the decisions that we take but still we have a choice. The world in which those choices are made is already saturated with power and inequality that imbues our understanding and actions but still we have a choice. We have learned to labour (Willis, 1977) and those in work are already imbued with the identity of an employee and the norms that go with it (Jacques, 1996). This includes imbibing many taken-for-granted assumptions such as the legitimacy of management prerogative or, in other words, the right of management to dictate where, how and when we work. This is rarely questioned or seen as a profoundly undemocratic exercise of power. Change Management merely reproduces this hierarchical order, irrespective of whether change is planned or emergent, top down or bottom up, coercive or consultative, autocratic or participative, empowering or disempowering.

Our workplace decisions are therefore made in a context that is imbued with power; that has already shaped us in particular ways, which those who subscribe to a rational-technical and a processual perspective tend to reinforce. As economic subjects we are vulnerable because our standard of living is dependent on our income and so this might limit our willingness to resist (see McCabe, 2011). We are also existentially vulnerable as our identities are open and are tied, among other things, to extant occupations (Knights, 1990; Willmott, 1990). This means that to resist we may have to resist ourselves or what we have become (Foucault, 1980) as builders who build, nurses who care or teachers who educate. We are also vulnerable to the extent that we cannot know what the outcomes of our actions will be. Nevertheless, despite being produced/repressed through power we have a choice in terms of how we act and think. We are all 'thinking beings' (Foucault, 1988) who can exercise power to challenge and change the conditions we confront albeit in ways

that are bound up with those conditions. To do so is far from easy in a workplace that is increasingly individualised, insecure, where metrics and measurements dominate and where trade unionism, that can help to counter such measures, has greatly diminished in recent decades.

A Relational Approach

A number of critical scholars have proposed a 'relational' approach towards power, which questions whether power is possessed by some and not by others and this can help us to understand why, contrary to mainstream representations and beliefs, resistance is central to both organisations and endeavours to change them. It has been argued that 'Change Management rests upon the conceit that it is possible systematically to control social and organizational relations' (Grey, 2003: 8; see also Sturdy and Grey, 2003) and so through examining change from a relational perspective, as this book endeavours to do, we can begin to subject this conceit to scrutiny.

According to Foucault, power is 'relational' and he posits that 'there are no relations of power without resistances' (Foucault, 1980: 142). Power is 'always' therefore 'a way of acting upon an acting subject or acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action' (Foucault, 1982: 220). This means that power is not the possession of any single individual or group because everyone is capable of exercising power. Resistance cannot therefore be managed, eliminated or overcome as academics who adopt a rational-technical perspective assume and even some processual scholars such as Mintzberg *et al*. (1976) have suggested.

If we understand power as 'relational' then its operation needs to be examined in the context of a social relationship. The implication of this is that managers do not *have* power if employees refuse to work and governments do not *have* power if citizens refuse to obey. Of course, there are enormous pressures on individuals to obey including state violence, incarceration, joblessness, homelessness, poverty and threats to one's career and income. The bonds that bind us to established identities (father, mother, homeowner, professional, care-giver) and the responsibilities that go with them can also limit our resolve to resist. A relational approach towards power is not therefore meant to suggest a pluralistic scenario where equal partners negotiate agreements. This is due to the fact that power relations operate in a context of inequality characterised by domination, exploitation and subjugation (Foucault, 1982) as we shall explore in Chapter 6. There is no point when power is not exercised, which the absence of overt conflict or resistance may be assumed to imply. Moreover, for those on the receiving end of change initiatives there is no point when they are not exercising power, irrespective of whether they conform and thereby exercise power in support of change or exercise power in ways that oppose managerial initiatives.

Although some processual theorists claim to 'see power as a relational concept' (Pye and Pettigrew, 2006: 586) this is difficult to reconcile with the broad thrust of their theorising which all too often places power in the hands of management or prioritises the power exercised by those in positions of authority. Hence these authors go on to argue that 'To achieve transformations, leaders need to both acquire sources of power as well as then use power skilfully to bring about effective strategizing and organizing' (ibid). Power then is presented as a commodity that one can acquire and use. Indeed, the whole direction of this approach is to aid 'practitioners' to exercise power and this inevitably means that one's starting point is that management can possess power to a considerable degree. It seems to me that there is an inevitable slippage towards a propertied understanding of power once one begins to prescribe actions that are designed to change the behaviours of others especially in ways that serve a narrow range of corporate interests.

Irrespective of statements to the contrary, power as a possession, is embedded in assertions such as 'the ability of senior managers to control the flow of information and to frame the way matters are considered' is 'key' to achieving 'transformations' (Pye and Pettigrew, 2006: 586). If it is not the actual *belief* of such authors that managers possess power then behind such statements there is a *desire* and *support* for a managerial exercise of power, which in turn urges managers to believe that *they* can possess power. That this can only be a *desire* reflects the practicalities of relational power because managers 'have no choice but to try and influence the behaviour of those without whose contribution they cannot do.' (Crozier and Friedberg, 1995: 82; quoted in Pye and Pettigrew, 2006: 588). It is central to managerial thinking that power is something that managers' possess for this sustains the belief that managers can control the present and the future. This understanding of power is essential to the rational-technical and processual perspectives hence their prescriptions promise control for their managerial audiences whether through n-steps or causal mechanisms.

Others have advocated a 'relational theory of power' including Gergen (1995) whose constructionist account, as he states, is congenial with Foucault as both 'begin with the presumption of human relatedness' or 'relational processes' (op cit: 35). Indeed, Gergen (1995) quotes Foucault (1980: 198) by saying 'power means a more-or-less organized . . . coordinated cluster of relations' or, in other words, 'power relations are distributed throughout society' (Gergen, 1995: 36). The first moment of power for Gergen (1995) is when 'conceptions of power arise within particular groups' (op cit: 47) leading to different relations and ontological understandings of power. These understandings lead groups 'to see themselves as possessing power in various degrees' (op cit: 45). To relate this to Change Management, we can think of senior managers viewing themselves as possessing power before initiating a change programme

or trade unionists seeing power in a propertied way following successful strike action, when an improved pay offer has been secured.

In view of the complexity of society, opportunities arise for comparisons with other groups, which leads to what Gergen describes as the 'second moment in the construction of power', which 'derives from the generation of a negative ontology, the necessary counterpart to the group's construction of reality' (ibid). It is at this point that a given group realises the limits to the power that they are able to exercise. This could follow from resistance to a particular change initiative. In view of this 'the stage is set for ascriptions of power differences, exploitation, and injustice' (op cit: 44) by one group in relation to another. Through these arguments Gergen (1995) aims to illuminate something of the 'contested' nature of power and its 'ambiguity' (op cit: 45).

How can these insights inform our analysis of Change Management? Gergen (1995) makes the point that 'the world looks different' (op cit: 46) to each group which we could see as a group of engineers, strategists, middle managers or shopfloor workers. This implies that Change Agents (CAs) would do well to understand that their world view may differ from those who are on the receiving end of their designs. Gergen (1995) also makes the point that 'those who lead only do so by virtue of a shared system of understanding in which others agree to do what is called following' (ibid). This means that those who seek to exercise power are dependent upon those who are tasked to follow. The implication of this is that power is not simply exercised by those in positions of authority but by all. It implies that caution is necessary on the part of those who might seek to roll out an n-step change programme because they alone do not exercise power and are dependent on others following them. This is to recognise that others can exercise power contrary to one's intentions, which is also Foucault's (1977) argument.

Gergen (1995) makes another point which is relevant to Change Management concerning the ongoing potential for conflict because as one group, let us say CAs, 'forms its realities, necessary for effective action, so do they unleash the forces for their own undoing' (op cit: 46). This is due to the fact that those whom the n-step programme impacts upon have developed their own ontological understanding and are apt to ascribe a 'negative ontology' to groups that threaten the security that they have developed through their group. Thus as the CA 'establishes a definition of the good and the powerful, so do they lay the groundwork for challenging their local ontology' (ibid) because each group is apt to define the 'good' or the 'powerful' differently. According to Gergen (1995: 46–47):

> As the firm listens to the angry voices of those who accuse them of exploitation, environmental pollution, unfair employment practices . . . they stand to gain. If they do not use such instances to bolster the validity of their internal realities, and incorporate these

> languages into their own, then they may increase their capacity to co-exist in a larger world of coordinated interdependence.

If this were a simple pluralist argument then the implication is that different voices need to be heard, concessions made and accommodations reached during change. The parties would continue to inhabit their own world view until the next conflict arises but Gergen goes further because he suggests that the 'internal realities' of each group need to change so as to 'incorporate' the 'languages' of others into their own. In short, CAs or senior managers need to think differently as a result of engaging with others rather than simply seeking to win them over or making a compromise.

Gergen (1995) asserts that a 'single reality system', which we could equate with corporate culture change programmes (see Willmott, 1993) leads to 'mutually annihilating competitions' because the 'grounds for question are always there, born of the negative ontology' (Gergen, 1995: 47). In other words, resistance will arise due to the imposition of one world view on another when the other world view is not taken into account. He delves deeper though by positing that extant cultural norms also include a single reality system such as 'striving for increased income' (ibid) and so he suggests that 'scanning of alternative realities' (ibid) and a 'co-mingling of perspectives' (op cit: 48) is necessary to avoid competitions and conflict. There is, however, a pluralism here which seems likely to fall upon deaf ears given the prevailing inequalities in society. Gergen (1995) is not oblivious to such asymmetries but without a profound change in the status quo his arguments imply that conflict and resistance will prevail and that change programmes are likely to exacerbate such conditions.

A Translational Model

Another way in which power can be understood as 'relational' is evident in the contrast between a 'diffusion model of power' and a 'translation model' (Latour, 1984: 264). Latour (1984) articulates that 'Power is not something you may possess and hoard' (op cit: 265), which is the assumption underpinning a 'diffusion model' where 'a successful command moves under an impetus given it from a central source' (op cit: 264). Likewise, this is the assumption underpinning the majority of the Change Management literature whether it offers a top down planned approach or a bottom up more emergent one. In other words, it is assumed that action either initiated or utilised by a CA or manager dictates and guarantees change. By contrast, Latour offers a translation model whereby 'a command, if it is successful, results from the actions of a chain of agents each of whom 'translates' it in accordance with his/her own projects' (ibid).

If we relate this translation model to Change Management, we can see problems in relation to planned approaches towards change, which assume like the diffusion model that plans from on high can be created, visions developed and communicated, which then generate action. According to Kotter's (1995) prescriptions this is achieved through empowering others but the very notion of empowering others implies that certain individuals possess power that they then bestow upon others. An emergent approach (Mintzberg, 1978; Weick, 2000) is clearly more sympathetic to the notion that power is not simply exercised from above but still it shares the assumption that once strategies or potential innovations are identified they can be sucked up or harvested and formalised by those in positions of authority who seemingly possess the power to do so.

A translation model suggests instead that the management of change must be understood as 'negotiable, a practical and revisable matter (performative), and not something that can be determined once and for all' (Latour, 1984: 264). It requires that we analyse change initiatives not simply in terms of the commands issued from the top or emerging from below but through attending to 'the action of others' (op cit: 265) because it is through these acts (compliance, indifference, distortions, modifications, resistance) that change does or does not come about. The acts of everyone therefore need to be taken into account at all levels of the organisation. Analysing such acts should not be seen as the means to decipher how best to enact change as some processual theorists (Pettigrew, 1997) suggest because this merely takes us back to causality and the belief that certain individuals possess power.

The translation model of change does not work from such easy assumptions because it posits that change that works how it is supposed to work or that amounts to a 'faithful transmission' of intended plans 'is a rarity' that 'requires explanation' (Latour, 1984: 267). In relation to 'successful' change, a translation approach asks how was it the case that everyone aligned with and acted in the way that was expected of them? There is no assumption then that a change initiative should work or that the actions of subordinates will correspond with the intentions of those in positions of authority. To adapt Latour's (1984) rugby metaphor, a rugby try [or desired change] is not achieved by the player [manager, guru, consultant, academic, change agent] who first passes the ball [the strategy, vision, initiative] but through all the intervening passers and passes and so the initial passer cannot be said to possess the power to have scored the try because it would not have occurred without the actions of all the other players, which were not predictable from the initial pass.

Of course, this risks over-simplifying matters in relation to Change Management because a rugby metaphor is based on a unitary consensus around winning a game, which is deeply problematic in organisations characterised by multiple interests, identities and inequalities. In such a context and to return to the rugby metaphor, one might ask,

'Why should I pass the ball when to do so might mean work intensification, redundancy or a pay cut?' This additional complexity reinforces the argument that change initiatives that work as intended need to be explained. Indeed, Latour (1984) makes a further point that adds even more complexity:

> Each of the people in the chain is not simply resisting a force or transmitting it. . . . everyone shapes it according to their different projects . . . [it] . . . changes as it moves from hand to hand.
>
> (Latour, 1984: 268)

To relate this to a change initiative, even if it continues to roll out which is by no means certain, as it unfolds it is unlikely to be that which was originally envisaged by its designers. It will be modified, appropriated, deflected, added to, dropped, resisted, reshaped and so changed along the way 'by many different people who slowly' turn 'it into something completely different as they' seek 'to achieve *their* own goals' (ibid; original italics). To adapt Latour's (1984: 271) arguments regarding power then, rather than thinking about a change initiative as a 'cause' of change, we can see it as the 'consequence' of all these actions, which renders outcomes highly uncertain and in need of investigation.

A Performative Model of Change

If we draw again on the metaphor of scoring a try in a game of rugby and insights from process philosophy (Chia, 1999), we also need to recognise that the initial pass of the rugby ball or change initiative was not the start of the process. This is due to the fact that the process was already in play and infused with prior passes, acts, events, interchanges, subjectivities, relations and materialities (i.e. the pitch, the weather, the physicality of the players). Moreover, the act of passing the ball, the try, the game and the ball itself only have meaning and make sense in the context of a game that has rules that were established through a prior process and so we can never say when the process began. Likewise, we cannot say when change begins or ends because it is part of a continuous process. There is no fixed point because change is always occurring and is informed by prior changes. In contrast to Pettigrew's processual approach, this implies that we can never trace the exact origin or cause of change as if before a change initiative the situation was static. All of the past relations, subjectivities and actions acting upon subsequent ones, creates a flow that is not predictable in its outcomes. This relational approach towards Change Management means that the:

> Outcomes of change can, in principle, be always 'other than' that which is expected. The element of surprise, and hence creativity

> and novelty, is necessarily built into the very core of change and transformation.
>
> (Chia, 1999: 223)

This element of surprise, for me, reflects that power is continually being exercised by organisational members and indeed materiality (see Knights and McCabe, 2016; McCabe and Russell, 2017) in and around the organisation, which makes outcomes uncertain. Tsoukas and Chia (2002) advocate a 'performative' model of change which understands 'that there are ongoing processes of change *in* organizations' (op cit: 580). They contrast this with 'synoptic accounts of organizational change' (op cit: 580) or approaches that view change as 'accomplished' (op cit: 570) or 'episodic events' (op cit: 569). Synoptic accounts fit with a rational-technical and a processual perspective. According to Tsoukas and Chia (2002), such approaches 'risk missing all the subterranean, microscopic changes that always go on in the bowels of the organization' (ibid). It is this underbelly of organisational life that provides much of the focus of Chapters 5 to 9.

A performative model of change has much in common with what I understand as a relational approach towards change. It is similar in that the authors assert that human agency and improvisation are integral to organisations and change programmes, which therefore 'need to be made to work on any given occasion, they do not work themselves out' (op cit: 568). This highlights that organisations are 'unstable' and that 'Change is always potentially there' (ibid). Tsoukas and Chia (2002) provide numerous excellent explanations and insights for their performative account drawing from earlier studies (Weick, Feldman, Orlikowski) including that the world is not predetermined nor does it speak for itself and so 'to the extent actors try to make sense of and act coherently in the world, change is inherent in human action' (op cit: 570). Change does not therefore just happen but has to be made to happen by everyone not just those at the top. Meaning making is understood to be ongoing in organisations, which reflects that organisations do 'not have total definitional control' (op cit: 573) over representations. The authors also draw on Orr's (1996) ethnographic study of photocopy repair technicians to illustrate how the instructions that organisations provide are insufficient in themselves to ensure outcomes and so the improvisations of others are required for organisations to be enacted. This indeterminacy means that there are always choices and decisions to be made and 'rules are constantly adjusted, modified, or even ignored in the carrying out of actual organizational tasks' (op cit: 577). Change is therefore an ongoing accomplishment that everyone participates in perhaps to thwart or support in a multitude of ways.

These arguments are consistent with a critical 'relational' understanding of Change Management but it differs from the performative model

in that Tsoukas and Chia (2002) hardly mention power. The performative model of change works from the unstated but implicit assumption that power is not simply exercised by those in positions of authority but power is not central to the analysis or explanation of the dynamics involved. What is also missing is any sense of organisations as arenas of inequality, which would help to explain why people do not always act as they are supposed to or why they might 'ignore' corporate rules. It is certainly the case that 'organizations do not simply work; they are made to work' (op cit: 577), which arises through people exercising power in ways that are supportive of corporate intentions but how this happens needs to be explained.

Corporations go to considerable lengths to try to win the 'hearts and minds' of employees through various change initiatives to try to ensure that they do work. We need to understand *why* employees 'consent' (Willis, 1977; Burawoy, 1979; Edwards, 1990) to such initiatives or do what they are supposed to do so as to make change work and this is missing from Tsoukas and Chias' (2002) analysis. In other words, if work was equally beneficial for all, which would be consistent with a unitary perspective on the employment relationship (see Collins, 1998; Fox, 1974) then one could understand why employees make the change programmes 'work'. To adopt a critical perspective, however, this is not the case and so consent needs to be explained rather than assumed (see McCabe, 2011). Economics has to be understood as a significant factor in this explanation because neither employees nor managers are in the happy situation of being able to work just because they want to. They are shackled to the mortgages and bills that they must pay and are slaves to the increasing debts that most people incur to purchase cars, homes and holidays among other things. This has to be understood as part of the context and process through which employees make change work.

According to Tsoukas and Chia (2002) 'change' is 'the reweaving of actors' webs of belief and habits of action' (op cit: 567) but this metaphor implies that someone is doing the weaving whilst others are having their beliefs and habits woven. The implication is that certain individuals possess the power to weave the actions and beliefs of others whereas others do not. There is a slip here into managerialism that reflects a belief that managers can control human agency even though the line of argument developed throughout their paper presents the opposing view. This managerial creep is evident when it is argued that managers need to 'help fashion a coherent and desirable pattern out of what is going on' (op cit: 579), which is reminiscent of Mintzberg's (1978) emergent approach towards strategy. It also raises the question of 'desirable' for whom and if the answer is everyone then this is problematic as the authors do not acknowledge extant inequalities.

The emergent approach towards change evident in the work of Mintzberg and Weick accepts that power is dispersed but it then slips back

into a propertied view through assuming that the various improvisations of others can be utilised for corporate ends. Likewise, Tsoukas and Chia (2002) argue that 'Change programs "work" insofar as they are fine-tuned and adjusted by actors in particular contexts' (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002: 568). The understanding of change as a process is presented as a superior tool that can be wielded by management because 'unless we have an image of change as an ongoing process . . . it will be difficult to overcome the implementation problems of change programs' (op cit: 568–569). This suggests that adopting a process based approach will allow managers to 'overcome' implementation problems and this slips once more into a propertied view of power and reflects a managerial worldview. By contrast, we need to ask for whom do change programmes 'work' and what does it mean when we say that a change programme works? Should we advocate ways to 'overcome' implementation problems without asking who benefits from change programs and what are the consequences and condition of them?

On the one occasion that Tsoukas and Chia (2002) refer to power, it is discussed in relation to management hence the authors refer to managers 'being endowed with declarative powers' or the power to declare. These declarations include statements such as 'you are fired', 'you do this', 'we will buy this system', 'we will adopt this reward system' (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002: 579). The authors argue that this refers to managers being in a 'privileged position to introduce a new discursive template that will make it possible for organizational members to notice new things, make fresh distinctions, see new connections, and have novel experiences, which they will seek to accommodate by reweaving their webs of beliefs and desires' (op cit: 579). The 'introduction of a new discursive template' is seen as 'only the beginning of the journey of change' (ibid) and this indicates that it is not only managers who possess power. Nevertheless, the authors tend to present a largely consensual or, at best, pluralistic scenario where organisational members 'accommodate' new discursive templates created by management. A 'new discursive template' can be compared to the managerial use of strategies and metaphors to effect change, which will be discussed in Chapter 5. It needs to be acknowledged, however, that introducing a 'new discursive template' reflects an attempt by one group to exercise power through others in a way that reinforces extant inequalities and attempts to manufacture new subjectivities. This is not something we should unquestioningly endorse or advocate without thinking about the potential consequences of doing so.

If we emphasise the more critical implications of a 'relational' approach towards change, organisations cannot be understood as gardens of consensus or pluralistic accommodation. Power is continually exercised but this occurs in a context characterised by immense inequality. Change initiatives do not work just because of the need to make sense or to improvise upon otherwise inflexible or inappropriate rules and expectations

as Tsoukas and Chia (2002) suggest. These dynamics arise in a context where people have to work because they have limited resources or choices due to economic necessity. Although humans are continually confronted with choices that can impede, facilitate or enhance change, these choices are not made in dreamy isolation. Each choice that is made has economic and career consequences that have a bearing upon the decisions taken. This context has to feature then in any explanation of 'actors constantly reweaving their webs of belief and actions to accommodate new experiences' (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002: 580).

The performative approach recognises that organisations and change programmes have to be made to work and a similar argument was made some time ago by Labour Process scholars when it was posited that not only does capital employ labour but 'labour employs capital' (Cressey and MacInnes, 1980: 13). What this means is that it is 'only by controlling the means of production in the sense of subjecting them to its own physical and mental operations, its own will, does the workforce actually expend any labour' (op cit: 14). Cressey and MacInnes (1980) therefore make a similar but different point to Tsoukas and Chia (2002) for it is asserted that 'workers themselves actually control the detail of the performance of their tasks, and the importance of this, though it varies with the production process, never disappears altogether' (Cressey and MacInnes, 1980: 14). It is similar because it is understood that ongoing actions ensure that change or indeed, everyday work life, continues but it is different because Cressey and MacInnes (1980) locate these dynamics in relation to the context of inequality between labour and capital (see also McCabe, 2007b).

As has already been indicated, traditional LPT is limited in a number of ways. Hence managers tend to be represented as the 'agents of capital' (Braverman, 1974) and 'the personification of economic categories, the bearers of particular class-relations and interests' (Willmott, 1997: 1334). The major preoccupation of 'corporate managers' is assumed to be 'costs and controls' (Braverman, 1974: 25). It is questionable whether this applies equally to every level of manager irrespective of their subjectivity and role. Indeed, the proliferation of roles with manager in the title highlights how problematic it is to identify who the managers are that are doing the control and who is on the receiving end of control. This is all the more complicated in a public sector scenario as will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 6 because managers are not capitalists nor can the complexity and ambivalence of their role and subjectivity be adequately expressed in terms of them being 'agents of capital'. Indeed, many public sector managers see themselves as public servants who care passionately about delivering services for desperate people such as the homeless and also for their work colleagues who deliver such services. These managers are subject to the demands of central government, which can be understood to act like the crack of the market whip on them.

Inequalities related to income and work experience are undeniable. Nevertheless, there is still a need to get close to what happens during change programmes in order to understanding how power is exercised and how it is resisted. Resistance is hardly mentioned by Tsoukas and Chia (2002) and yet if we adopt a relational approach towards change it needs to be understood as integral to organisational life and, of course, resistance is potentially heightened when management attempts to introduce change programmes. Tsoukas and Chia (2002) refer to earlier approaches towards Change Management that 'risk missing all the subterranean, microscopic changes that always go on in the bowels of the organization' (op cit: 580). The authors are certainly correct in their criticism but an integral feature of the 'subterranean' is the resistance that infuses both everyday organisational life and change, which we will explore in subsequent chapters. If we consider resistance to be a pervasive feature of organizational life then change needs to be understood as far more contested and messy than is often suggested in the Change Management literature. In view of this, even if managers and change agents develop 'new discursive templates' (op cit: 579) and understand 'change as an ongoing process' this will not 'overcome the implementation problems of change' (op cit: 568–569).

The primary attention that traditional labour process theorists give to inequality has to be central to our analysis of the condition and problems facing Change Management. Nevertheless, their accounts of managers versus workers are often inadequate in terms of grasping the complexity of workplace relations. Indeed, Marchington *et al.* (1993: 553) identified how the introduction of change initiatives such as Total Quality Management may be motivated by managers' *career* ambitions and a concern 'to be noticed' through 'impression management' rather than due to a preoccupation with control (see also Bamford and Forrester, 2003; McCabe, 2000; Watson, 1994a). Similarly, one of the managers in Watson's (1994a) ethnographic study of a telecommunications organisation stated:

> It has got to be a culture change but it has got to be change because the world and the customers require it, not because some swine decides they are going to have a change for their own sake, or for them to make an impression.
>
> (Watson, 1994a: 899)

Watson (1994a) outlines the 'double-control problem faced by all managers: the problem of managing their personal identities, careers and understandings at the same time as contributing to the overall control of the organisation in which they are managers' (op cit: 893). Identity then, has also to feature in a critical and relational understanding of Change Management because the command to change and the response to such

commands are mediated through the identities of managers and employees. Employee identity as much as work practices is often the target of corporate change management programmes (see Knights and Willmott, 1989). Even if identity is not directly the focus it will continue to play a significant part in understanding everyday life and Change Management. This is due to the fact that nothing happens without human input and interaction and identity is a condition of what it is to be human. The existential insecurities, identification, dis-identification, indifference, confusion and ambiguity experienced by managers and workers during change programmes need to be understood as integral to grasping how change plays out or is made to work.

Rather than a rational manager who sits down to plan a change initiative in a context of consensus as the rational-technical perspective would have it or an agent of capital who sets out to control and exploit others as presented by LPT; more irrational dynamics are apt to emerge when the situation involves fragile identities, careers, interests groups, departments and functions competing for recognition, control and resources. In such situations, managers need to be seen more as vulnerable human beings and, as Huczynski (1993) explained, potentially subject to manipulation by consultants who may play on their fears prompting them to consume new ideas that may be inappropriate or half-baked. This is not to suggest, however, that managers are so vulnerable that attempting to manipulate consultants and others (i.e. managers, employees) through change initiatives so as to elevate their own careers is beyond them (see Sturdy, 2011). Overall, this means that close attention needs to be given to both the official claims made in relation to change initiatives but also to their hidden underbelly, which will be probed in the case study chapters to follow. We will now turn to the wider public sector context through which a specific programme of change was initiated at Copperdale City Council before discussing the case itself.

4 The Contextual Landscape

This chapter explores the contextual landscape that is integral to understanding the unfolding dynamics of change at Copperdale City Council. It will help readers unfamiliar with this context to make sense of the change programme that the Council embarked upon and also the experiences of those on the receiving end of the change programme. Indeed, it is argued that we cannot make sense of the ever fleeting present without attempting to locate it in relation to the preconditions that are a condition of its existence. The chapter also introduces the case study followed by an account of the research methodology and methods, which was ethnographic in orientation.

As we explore the contextual landscape what will become apparent is a consistency between the circular logic that imbues mainstream approaches towards Change Management presented in Chapter 2 and both the New Public Management (NPM) and neo-liberalism advanced by UK governments of seemingly disparate political persuasions over the last forty years. In short, this circularity involves offering a 'solution' in the guise of Change Management, the NPM or neo-liberalism that perennially confronts problems and fails to deliver in terms of its promised land. Undeterred, the response to this failure is to prescribe variants of the same solution in terms of Change Management, the NPM or neo-liberalism hence the circularity.

It will be argued that this circularity reflects, in part, a failure of understanding on the part of those in positions of authority hence they believe that they possess the power to impose change and so the thought that others may not do their bidding is seemingly inconceivable. Moreover, it is assumed that the prescriptions on offer are unproblematic and despite repeated evidence to the contrary those in authority continue to impose similar prescriptions. At best, this is a form of managerial myopia and, at worst, those in authority can be seen as managerial addicts. Like an addict, the same solution is sought that has already wrought much damage and yet the addict is trapped in a cycle from which they can see no other solution (see Wray-Bliss, 2003).

The managerial addict pursues established paths of change believing themselves immune from the failures of their predecessors or that prior prescriptions encountered. The prescriptions are flawed being born of a consensual or unitary belief that everyone will agree with and benefit from them, which is so out of kilter with reality that it is risible. Ultimately, what is evident is that those at the top do not possess power and outcomes will continue to fall short of intended designs. This partly reflects that the prescriptions often do harm to those on the receiving end of them and/or fail to engage them. Those in authority are therefore doomed to repeat past failures and so need to recognise and reflect upon this vicious cycle. To do so, however, will not provide a panacea because panaceas reside in a world of solutions whereas Change Management dwells in a world where solutions and problems are wedded together. In view of this, the architects of change would do well to reflect upon the words of William Blake (2007: 76): 'If any could desire what he is incapable of possessing despair must be his eternal lot'.

Under Pressure: The UK Public Sector

The UK public sector was described over two decades ago based on research in the 1980s as a 'turbulent environment' (Lapsley and Pettigrew, 1994: 83). This reflected 'financial stringency and cutbacks in recessionary times' which gave 'an impetus to management strategies of cost reduction, efficiency and control', 'privatization' and 'the overlay of managerialism, in which private sector corporate management principles are seeping through the public sector' (ibid). The genesis of this turbulence was traced to the Conservative governments led by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher beginning in 1979 (see Hall, 1985; Jessop et al., 1984; MacInnes, 1987) but, as we shall see, such conditions are just as applicable, if not more so, today.

The dramatic upheavals and consequences of Thatcherism are so great and enduring that it is necessary to consider them as part of the contemporary context facing local government. One analysis of Thatcherism focused 'exclusively on the political-ideological dimensions of the emergence of the radical right' (Hall, 1985: 38). It argued that Thatcher played on the failings of the past period of social democracy during the post-war era (1945–1979) and attributed economic failure to obstacles to the free market, such as state intervention and trade unions. At the same time, Thatcherism emphasised themes such as nationalism, individualism, the Protestant work ethic, thriftiness, and law and order (Hall, 1985). Jessop *et al*. (1984) argued that Thatcherism needs to be understood both in terms of the ideological and the economic. Thatcherism's economic, political and ideological beliefs were entwined but, at its heart, is the individual and the importance of promoting individual entrepreneurialism. By freeing the economy of restrictions to free trade (i.e. trade

unions, regulations), the intention of Thatcherism was to promote a new work ethic that harped back to Victorian England.

According to Thatcherism, public ownership through nationalisation (e.g. of railways, coal, steel, electricity, gas, water) and public management is inefficient and bureaucratic, while the market is always more efficient and effective. This gave rise to policies in the 1980s such as privatisation, deregulation and the sale of council houses. It has to be acknowledged, however, that far from government stepping away and allowing the free market to reign, the Thatcher government intervened massively through, for instance, anti-trade union legislation, such as the Employment Act 1982 and the Trade Union Act 1984 so as to weaken the strength of organised labour. Moreover, the state strategically planned for and used the police during the 1984–1985 year-long Miners' strike (Allen, 2009), in a way that displayed a determination to defeat any challenge from organised labour. This, in turn, sent out a message that dissent would not be tolerated.

We can observe an inconsistency here which highlights that Thatcherism was not a consistent narrative—it did not appear 'fully formed and perfectly coherent' (McKinlay et al., 2012: 13). Thatcherism was not homogeneous economically and can roughly be divided into three parts—the recession of the early 1980s, the mini boom of the middle to late 1980s and the recession of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Moreover, as Pollitt's (2013) analysis of the white paper *Efficiency in the Civil Service* indicated, policy shifted hence the main solution offered in 1981 for the reform of central government was 'the application of modern business methods' but 'by the late 1980s a more radical agenda of widespread agencification and marketization had supplanted this "micro" level treatment' (op cit: 906).

It should not be assumed that the pre-Thatcher era was a utopia of pluralistic consensus or a period of stasis. According to Pollitt (2013), the UK public sector has been 'in more-or-less continuous modernizing motion since Mr. Heath became prime minister in 1970' (op cit: 900). Edward Heath's Conservative government, in the face of industrial unrest, had already attempted to reform industrial relations through the 1971 Industrial Relations Act. This sought to curtail the strength of trade unions and the Act was later repealed by the 1974–1979 Labour government. The Winter of Discontent (1978–1979) and the wave of strikes that it alludes to was a dispute between trade union members and their leadership as well as between trade unions and the government. It followed successive years of incomes policies that prescribed below-inflation pay rises (pay cuts) to curb inflation, which many trade union leaders supported as part of the then Labour government's Social Contract. The Social Contract promised full employment, intervention in industry and increased trade union involvement in government in return for wage restraint.

It is useful to mention this because through it we can question assumptions regarding the inevitability of Thatcherism for had the Labour government relaxed its call for wage restraint they may not have lost the 1979 election. The Labour government was divided in terms of how to proceed politically/economically and we cannot know the outcomes that may have emerged had, for example, a different political direction been pursued by the Labour government. Moreover, had Labour been elected in 1979 the enormous North Sea Oil revenues that subsequently began to flow could have been used for purposes other than to pay for mass unemployment, which would have been unthinkable for a Labour government. Thatcherism then and Tony Blair's New Labour governments (1997–2010) may never have existed. It is important to appreciate this in order to avoid 'teleological functionalism' or the assumption of 'that which becomes is that which *had* to emerge' (McKinlay et al., 2012: 13; original italics).

The Thatcher administration that, in part, spawned New Labour needs to be understood as walking a tightrope rather than being an unstoppable force. The 1982 invasion of the Falkland Islands by Argentina took the Thatcher government by surprise. The victory of British forces was by no means guaranteed. Nevertheless, the subsequent wave of nationalism contributed to the Conservative's election victory in 1983 despite levels of unemployment that had not been seen since the 1930s. Subsequently, a combination of recession; the Poll Tax; low public popularity; internal party wrangling; the personal approach of Margaret Thatcher and the prospect of an imminent election generated a leadership challenge in the Conservative party from which John Major emerged as Conservative leader in 1991. This change of leadership played a part in a fourth Conservative election victory in April 1992 despite the parlous state of the British economy. We can see therefore that serendipity and change played a part in the ongoing drive towards neo-liberalism, which 'is by no means a unified or singular concept' (Styhre, 2014: 283).

Lapsley and Pettigrew (1994) refer to the idea of 'contestable markets' that has influenced public sector policy since 1979, which asserts 'that the efficiency of a given industry or service might best be achieved by the threat of potential entrants into that market' (op cit: 90). An example of this is Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) where the public sector must compete to provide services with other service providers. Former British Prime Minister David Cameron, whose term of office was from 2010 to 2016, sought to extend this marketisation through his notion of the Big Society, whereby charities would become competitors and increasingly be brought in to deliver public services.

We can observe the type of reforms that Thatcherism initiated through considering the National Health Service (NHS). Hence customers (formerly patients), are encouraged to shop around in relation to how particular hospital trusts perform. The belief is that 'opening up of the market

will drive costs down and ensure efficiency of public sector organizations which might otherwise have been insulated from market pressures under previous regimes' (ibid). This elevation of the market and the customer or the 'enterprise discourse' (du Gay and Salaman, 1992) is based on extremely negative assumptions about public sector workers who are assumed to be lazy and inefficient bureaucrats. It is believed that public sector employees, like private sector workers, should continually face the threat of job loss and job insecurity that the market poses. This shift towards neo-liberalism continued under the New Labour governments (1997–2010) and a negative view of public sector workers is apparent in the New Labour white paper *Modernising Government* (1999), which stated that 'services had to be reoriented to "meet the needs of citizens, not the *convenience* of service providers" ' (paragraph 20) (Cowell and Martin, 2003: 159; italics added).

David Cameron, writing in the *Sunday Times* in 2012, extolled the virtues of his top down 'modernization programme for the NHS' whilst paradoxically criticising 'top-down targets' by stating that it is about 'choice, competition and transparency'. This echoes the Conservative Prime Minister John Major's 1991 white paper *The Citizen's Charter*, which applied to all public services and advocated 'the enhancement of choice and competition wherever possible' (Pollitt, 2013: 909). There was, of course, no choice for the NHS workers who were on the receiving end of Cameron's change programme, which was legitimised on the basis that 'There's too much bureaucracy' (Cameron, 2012: 27). This apes the discourse of Thatcherism (Jessop et al., 1984) and management gurus (Peters and Waterman, 1982; Hammer and Champy, 1993) because bureaucracy was and continues to be presented as an inherent evil and justification for reform:

> For neoliberalism, the market symbolises rationality in terms of an efficient distribution of resources. Government intervention, on the other hand, is deemed undesirable because it transgresses that rationality and conspires against both efficiency and liberty.
>
> (Munck, 2005: 61; quoted in Styhre, 2014: 283)

These market-oriented policies, practices and pressures are also apparent in Universities and neo-liberalism is increasingly dominating education in countries such as the UK (Parker, 2014), Canada (Hyslop-Margison and Leonard, 2012) and Australia (Anderson, 2008; Ryan, 2012). In the UK, market-based competition between universities has intensified due to reduced central government funding, which has increased the importance of income generated through student fees. League tables have proliferated that define both academics and the institutions for which they work. According to Ryan (2012) 'It is in the changing rules and the measurement regimes that we are most zombified, infected by measurement madness,

the audit culture, surveillance' (op cit: 5). This is exemplified by the UK's research assessment exercise (RAE) renamed the research excellence framework (REF) in 2009, which measures the quality of academic publications. This reflects and has fuelled a competitive, performance-driven culture, where academics become 'tradable commodities' (Parker, 2014: 290).

Overall, the changes initiated through Thatcherism reflect a form of neo-liberal governance that has 'sought to reposition the relationship between citizens and the state and to shape a new kind of *enterprising*, *individualised* and *consumer-oriented* citizen identity' (Muddiman, 2018: 3; original italics). It is important to recognise therefore that these developments are not merely structural or policy-based but are part of a project to produce a new type of subject or subjectivity. This has infected all aspects of society and students are not immune from it hence the emphasis on paying tuition fees creates consumers of students. They become the market that disciplines the academics who work in universities; hence students may 'choose' to study at institutions that achieve the highest position in the REF league table and in so doing threaten the jobs of staff in less highly ranked universities. Competition infuses an increasingly precarious university life for staff and the imposition of fees for students promotes an individualised orientation for both scholars and students. Education and learning are no longer an end in themselves or something to aspire to in terms of achieving one's potential as a human being but are merely a means to gain employment in a highly competitive job market—a development which many support and prescribe (e.g. David et al., 2011). In this way, neo-liberalism colonises the university and the identities of its denizens. Nevertheless, as the subsequent chapters will reveal, it should not be assumed that neo-liberalism, the NPM or Change Management is entirely successful in securing such ambitions.

Local Government in Context

In the UK, local government authorities (LGAs) are sites of enormous turbulence and transformation. Central government–driven initiatives over the last 40 years have aspired to reduce bureaucracy and introduce 'lean work reforms' (Carter et al., 2011: 88). This has coincided with attempts to impose 'standard measures of performance', 'competition' (Hood, 1991: 4–5), downsizing and decentralisation (Ferlie et al., 1996). The concern has been to make public sector organisations much more 'business-like' (Diefenbach, 2010: 892) through focusing on 'results, outcomes and accountability' (Lapsley, 2008: 81). These demands have taken on a greater order of magnitude following the 2008 global financial crisis (GFC), rendering the sector a cauldron of activity and so the impact of such change requires urgent attention.

Many of the developments in LGAs are consistent with the rise of the NPM (see Baldry et al., 1998; Bloomfield and Hayes, 2009; Fisher, 2004;

Foster and Hoggett, 1999; Hoggett, 1999, 2006; Hood, 1991; Pollit, 2007; Smith, 2008; Webb, 1999). Although Osborne (2006: 379) acknowledges that 'the nature and/or success(es) of the NPM has been contested on a range of grounds', he defines it as follows:

- An attention to lessons from private-sector management;
- The growth both of hands-on 'management'—in its own right and not as an off-shoot of professionalism—and of 'arm's length' organisations where policy implementation is organisationally distanced from the policy-makers (as opposed to the 'inter-personal' distancing of the policy-administration split within public administration);
- A focus upon entrepreneurial leadership within public service organisations;
- An emphasis on inputs and output control and evaluation upon performance management and audit;
- The disaggregation of public services to their most basic units and a focus on their cost management;
- The growth of use of markets, competition and contracts for resource allocation and service delivery within public services.

The political persuasion of central government has changed over the last forty years since the Conservative governments under Margaret Thatcher (1979–1990). Nevertheless, the New Labour government, under the premierships of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown (1997–2010), continued much of the Thatcherite agenda. This is evident in the 'local government modernisation agenda' (LGMA) beginning in 1997 that 'emphasised the need to ensure that "policy making is more joined up and strategic" ' (white paper, Modernising Government, Cabinet Office, 1999; quoted in Cowell and Martin, 2003: 159). It 'promoted the greater use of markets and a more mixed economy of service provision, imported private sector management practices and finance into the public sector, and installed new performance management, inspection, and audit routines' (Cowell and Martin, 2003 159). Lapsley (2008) warned of the unintended consequences that can flow from auditing linked to the NPM, including 'the adoption of a 'tick box' attitude on the part of managers in seeking to achieve compliance with audit templates' (op cit: 89). As we shall see in Chapter 8, this is not only a problem facing managers but one that has a corrosive impact on all of those who work in local government. It has created a surreal sense of gaming with both numbers and words.

According to Diefenbach (2010: 893) 'strategic objectives' is one of the NPM's core elements and strategy pervades the NPM discourse hence the Local Government Act 1999 also called for 'internal joining up at the strategic level' and local authorities were tasked to develop 'corporate strategies for tackling the key issues facing their areas' (Cowell and Martin, 2003: 161). The obstacles to promoting such joined up thinking

continue (see Levy, 2010: 238) and relate not only to local government but also central government including its functional Whitehall structures. Indeed, 'Writing in March 2008, just as the economic deluge was intensifying, Sir John Bourn, the former Comptroller and Auditor-General, argued that "Whitehall was still resistant to change" ' (Levy, 2010: 237). As Lapsley (2008) noted 'reforms of public sector institutions often do not take hold as intended by policymakers. This outcome—the unintended consequences of reform—is often attributable to the complexity of public service organisations' (op cit: 77). Another way of saying this is that power is not the property of politicians or policymakers and, as the quote from Levy (2010) indicates, the propensity to exercise power in opposition to both does not just apply to local government but also to senior government officials in Whitehall.

The inability of those in positions of authority to determine outcomes offers one explanation for why the emphasis on local authorities developing 'corporate strategies' seemed to go awry and indeed generated an about turn. Hence the 2001 local government white paper stated that central government needs to 'significantly reduce the number of plans and strategies that councils are required [by different government departments] to produce' (DTLR, 2001, sections 1.14 and 1.15; quoted in Cowell and Martin, 2003: 175). Strategy, it seems, was not a panacea. Nevertheless, like structural reforms in the NHS, 'which have failed to work' only to be 'replaced by yet another structural, high profile change' (Lapsley, 2008: 83) as illustrated by Cameron's 2012 'Modernisation programme for the NHS', it appears that strategy fails only to lead to yet more strategising. It is both a solution and an eventual problem that slumbers only to wake and stretch when the next government takes office. This indicates that neither central government nor the managers who are required to do its bidding are able to exercise power in a top down unproblematic way. As a consequence, although the NPM 'is embodied in innumerable deliberate attempts to invent, promote, install and operate mechanisms of rule . . . such attempts are rarely implanted unscathed, and are seldom adjudged to have achieved what they set out to do' (Miller and Rose, 1990: 10). It is in this sense that the NPM is and will remain 'a congenitally failing operation' (Rose and Miller, 1992: 190) and yet it is seen as the only solution and so its failures are apt to spur on yet more NPM interventions.

A stern critic of the NPM, Diefenbach writing in 2010, argued that 'Already at the level of strategic objectives NPM can barely deliver what it promises. NPM, with its strategic orientations and objectives, does not serve "the public" but artificially creates markets and parallel universes of vision statements and performance reports. It is simply alien to the public sector and to the idea of public service' (Diefenbach, 2010: 897). These criticisms regarding the inappropriateness and failure of the NPM allude to the 'artificiality' and 'parallel universes' of business-speak in

a local government context. The relevance of these comments and the potentially destructive consequences of the NPM, surface in the cynical remarks of employees and managers, in Chapter 8.

In terms of the implementation of public policy, Osborne (2006) has argued that in the 'worst' cases 'public managers and management are portrayed as the villain(s) of the piece, thwarting the resolve of their political masters and often subverting the intentions of new policy to their own end' (op cit: 380). It is *as if* the strategies of central government should work and power should be successfully exercised downwards but for the intransigence of management. Certainly, there is evidence of management resistance, which will be explored in Chapter 6 but, to suggest that local management alone are at fault, is absurd. It was absurd before the 2008 global financial crisis (GFC) given 'that public managers are human, with human frailties' and also taking into account 'the pressures to which they are subjected' (Lapsley, 2008: 93). But given the huge cuts in central government funding, it is laughable to attribute the problems of government to local management not least because of the role that central government plays both as the director of change and as the budget holder.

Lapsley (2008) argued that a 'distinctive feature of NPM systems is the role of the general manager as a single authority figure' and as 'change agents' (op cit: 78). Indeed, such managers have played a critical role in transforming the New Zealand public sector (see Boston et al., 1996) and, in the UK, in the 1980s, even before the term NPM was created (Lapsley, 2008: 79). As we shall see in the next and subsequent chapters, such general managers, specifically in the guise of Change Agents, played a significant role in the strategic introduction of change and transformation at Copperdale City Council. In Chapter 5, however, we will observe the problems associated with promoting frontline managers as general or generic managers in the sense that it creates ignorance in relation to the specific job, skill base and knowledge of the people that they are tasked to manage.

The notion of 'general management' is seen as instrumental to delivering the NPM and 'the underlying assumption of the general manager approach is that of a unitary organisation' which indicates that it 'is likely to continue to, lead to implementation problems' (Lapsley, 2008: 79). In the chapters to follow, we shall observe just how significant this statement is and how problematic it is to assume a unitary consensus within public sector organisations. This is not, however, to suggest that they are arenas of pluralism as Osborne (2006) suggests because both employees and managers are tied economically to their jobs and are pressured to accept interventions such as the NPM over which they have little input or control as we will explore in relation to cynicism in Chapter 8. The NPM is concerned to 'convince' both management and staff 'that their problems or goals are intrinsically linked, that their interests are

consonant, that each can solve their difficulties or achieve their ends by joining forces or working along the same lines' (Miller and Rose, 1990: 10). The folly of this unitary discourse is evident in Chapters 5 through 8. It is evident in the voices and experiences of those subject to the demands of the NPM although this also needs to be considered in relation to the additional impact of the GFC. Nevertheless, these chapters indicate that many managers are opposed to initiatives linked to the NPM and so they share some common interests and insights with frontline employees.

Economics militate against resistance and the discourse of the NPM also strives towards this end. Indeed, it is predicated on the necessity for change: 'Hence, the primary objective of NPM is to give public sector organizations a new orientation and, in so doing, change the way they operate' (Diefenbach, 2010: 894). As Diefenbach's (2010) comments suggest, it is not only how organisations *operate* that the NPM endeavours to change but also how employees and managers think about and view the world and themselves. In short, their *subjectivity* is to be transformed as this is integral to achieving the desired operational changes. This is to be achieved through the discourse of metrics, markets, customers, competition, efficiency, productivity, cost-effectiveness and enterprise (du Gay, 1996; du Gay and Salaman, 1992) that now saturates all walks of life from the private sector, including banking (McCabe, 2009), retail (du Gay, 1996) and manufacturing (McCabe, 2000) to the public sector including, health care (Doolin, 2002), public services (Thomas and Davies, 2005) and education (Garrick and Usher, 2000). This discourse is wielded so incessantly that it generates the impression that it is the only option and so 'solutions', such as downsizing, de-layering, outsourcing and privatisation are seen as 'inevitable, irresistible, and irreversible' (Diefenback, 2010: 895).

The NPM discourse is redolent of the Change Management discourse highlighted by Grey (2003) and Sturdy and Grey (2003) in Chapter 2. Hence it says that 'Public sector organizations "must" change in order to fit to the ever-changing business environment. . . . And, crucially, they can only change in the way NPM and its proponents think is right' (Diefenback, 2010: 895). This is also the discourse of reengineering apparent in the endorsement by Peter Drucker (1993) on the cover of Hammer and Champy's (1993) *Reengineering the Corporation* that reads 'Reengineering is new, and it has to be done'. Both discourses attempt to rule out opposition. As we have already explored in Chapter 3, however, they work from the mistaken premise that only those in positions of authority are able to exercise power. In the name of choice, they seek to take choice away but 'in the realm of social actions, institutions and society, there is no such thing as ' "inevitability". . . . human beings "always" have a choice' (Diefenback, 2010: 895). In view of this, they can choose to be compliant, to resist, to ignore, to slow things down, to twist and warp the instructions they receive as we shall see throughout the following chapters.

Although the NPM is likely to be a congenitally failing project, this is not to negate the damage that is wrought through its implementation, often in contexts, where it is highly inappropriate to implement it. Diefenbach (2010) expresses this clearly in the following critique of the NPM and, as we shall see, his critique is echoed in the experiences of those who work in local government, which is clearly evident in Chapters 5 through 9:

> While creating new value along the lines of abstract quantification and monetarization at the same time, it ignores, reduces, damages or even destroys many other values; the traditional public service ethos and its commitment to impartiality, social equality, integrity, equity and communitarian values, as care for the qualitative dimensions and the uniqueness of each individual and individual case, the socio-philosophical ideas of citizenship, representation, neutrality, welfare and social justice.
>
> (op cit: 895)

Governmentality and the Will to Govern

The NPM can be understood by referring to Michel Foucault's concept of governmentality. Gordon (1991: 2) defines governmentality as 'a form of activity aimed to shape, guide or affect the conduct of some person or persons'. It works through 'diverse mechanisms through which . . . [the] . . . actions and judgements of persons and organizations . . . are . . . linked to political objectives' (Miller and Rose, 1990: 2). It is a technology of power 'through which authorities of various sorts have sought to shape, normalise and instrumentalise the conduct, thought, decisions and aspirations of others in order to achieve the objects that they consider to be desirable' (op cit: 8). It is important to recognise 'that governmentality—as discourse and practice—cannot be restricted to the state' (McKinlay et al., 2012: 8) and so it needs to be understood as operating through many different organisations, mediums and institutions (see du Gay, 1996; Knights and McCabe, 2003; Russell and McCabe, 2015). The next chapter adds to an understanding of governmentality by considering how metaphors can be drawn upon as a medium and means to express, facilitate and resist governmentality.

To examine how power is exercised through governmentality is not to assume that power is totalising for it reflects 'assorted *attempts* at the calculated administration of diverse aspects of conduct through countless, often competing, local tactics of education, persuasion, inducement, management, incitement, motivation and encouragement' (Rose and Miller, 1992: 175; italics added). It has to be recognised that because power is not a possession of any individual or group 'we do not live in a governed world so much as in a world traversed by the "will to govern" '

(op cit: 191). This is the case irrespective of the attempt to audit, measure, cost, quantify and control everything through the NPM. Once this is recognised then, as the following chapters will illustrate, the 'will to govern' can be 'understood less in terms of its success than in terms of the difficulties of operationalising it' (Miller and Rose, 1990: 11).

According to McKinlay *et al*. (2012), 'The task for governmentalists is to go beyond the manifestos and manuals that construct new images of individuals, organisations and societies. That is, the task is to draw together the politics that inform the making of particular governmentalist regimes with the "witches" brew' of everyday practices' (op cit: 9). This is a challenge that this book sets out to meet and it does so in a multi-faceted way. Hence this chapter explores the national political strategies and setting (Thatcherism, NPM, neo-liberalism, austerity) through which 'new images of individuals, organizations and societies' (ibid) emerge and circulate but the book goes further by exploring how they are operationalised in a particular context. Hence Chapter 5 examines how 'new images of individuals, organizations and societies' (ibid) are rolled out in a local government context through attending to the ways in which central government documents and metaphors are drawn upon locally to define place, organisation, work and subjectivity in ways that are consistent with the NPM and neo-liberalism.

Moreover, Chapter 5 scrutinises the discourse that the CAs deployed, including their use of metaphor, so as to create new images of individuals and organisations. This and the subsequent chapters go still further by examining how this exercise of power is taken up, turned around, modified, warped, twisted and resisted. As we shall see, the NPM and neo-liberalism as expressions of governmentality are far from uniform and are taken up, embroiled in and resisted by local politicians, managers and employees. The competing and clashing politics that imbue such endeavours are most directly examined in Chapter 9. It needs to be understood, however, that despite being challenged, the forces of neo-liberalism continue to advance albeit in a way that is uneven and continually contested. Neo-liberalism is perennially subject to challenge and so its dominance is illusory but it has to be acknowledged that it imbues the current terrain upon which political struggles are fought. This book is therefore something of a travel lamp for those explorers of 'unchartered territory' that McKinlay *et al*. (2012) refer to when they say 'Governmentalist research need not remain at the level of the schemes of system architects but look at how broad concepts are translated into practices on the ground. This is an invitation to ethnographic and historical research that remains largely unchartered territory' (op cit: 10).

Diefenbach (2010) provides an alarming insight which is that whilst the NPM may be seen as a failing project 'stressed and de-motivated, 'unable' and/ or 'unwilling' employees fit quite well into the ideological framework of NPM. Such aspects underline the necessity of *more*

policies and procedures, of *more* systematic performance measurement and appraisal, of *more* monitoring and advising, of *more* 'leadership' and 'motivation'—for the whole arsenal of managerial concepts and methods' (op cit: 904; original italics). This cyclical thinking is also evident in Levy's (2010) insight that according to Sir John Brown, the former comptroller and auditor-general, resistance to change in Whitehall was understood to require 'more performance/results management . . . more effective financial management and cost control' (op cit: 237).

The circularity of thinking and practice that was criticised in Chapter 2 as a key feature of the more managerial strands of the Change Management literature connects then with the rationality of governmentality. The type of resistance discussed in the chapters of this book, just as those in Whitehall, will therefore be 'seen by the proponents of NPM and Change Management simply as another reason and justification for yet another change initiative—and for the roles *they* play' (Diefenbach, 2010: 895). There is certainly evidence for this especially in Chapter 7 where resistance to Change Management generated change strategies to resist this resistance and, in Chapter 9, when a new initiative was justified partly by referring to the limitations of a previous change initiative.

The Age of Austerity: 'We Are All in This Together'

The global financial crisis (GFC) that began in 2007–2008 needs to be understood as the backcloth to the events represented in this book because it served both as a catalyst for change but also derailed change at least in terms of how it was supposed to be rolled out at Copperdale City Council. The UK Coalition government (2010–2015) introduced a white paper in 2011 titled *Open Public Services* that proffered familiar neo-liberal 'solutions' such as 'choice' and 'decentralization' just before the Treasury was to announce 'historically unprecedented expenditure cuts, averaging over 20% of total programme expenditure over the subsequent four years' (Pollitt, 2013: 913). This reflected the enormous costs associated with 'bailing out the finance industry' in the wake of the GFC, which 'has been estimated, by the IMF, as 12.7 per cent of GNP in the USA and 9.1 per cent in the UK' (Callinicos, 2009: 88; quoted in Styhre, 2014: 290).

As Clark and Newman (2012) argue, although the GFC began in the private sector and specifically the financial services sector (that can be traced in the UK, in part, to deregulation initiated through the 1986 Financial Services Act) through a reworking of the issues the focus shifted to 'the unwieldy and expensive welfare state and public sector, rather than high risk strategies of banks, as the root cause of the crisis' (op cit: 300). This sleight of hand ushered in the 'austerity strategy' (op cit: 300) that has subjected local government and other areas of government to huge budget cuts. This discursive shift is entirely consistent with the discourse

of neo-liberalism hence the veneration of free enterprise, deregulation and marketisation was not called into questions by the private sector financial crisis instead the problem was redirected to the public sector.

Interestingly, Clarke and Newman (2012) relate this to 'magical thinking' for at the 'heart of this austerity strategy is a belief that strategies of fiscal constraint can, counter-intuitively, produce expansionary effects in national economies, increasing private consumption and investment and producing growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP)' (op cit: 301). Despite evidence to the contrary, whereby UK government debt has continued to increase both the Coalition government and subsequent Conservative governments (2015 to present) have continued to prescribe the austerity strategy. This magical or circular thinking includes 'the belief that if one says things often enough, they will come true' (op cit: 301) where 'apparent failure leads not to reconsideration and reassessment but the imposition of more of the same' (op cit: 302). According to the UK's Office for National Statistics, despite massive cuts in public sector spending and a reduction in the deficit (the difference between spending and tax receipts), since the coalition government took office in 2010, government debt has risen each year from £1.194 trillion in 2010 to £1.837 trillion in 2019. The austerity strategy is redolent of the NPM and the rational-technical perspective that dominates the Change Management literature hence it is believed that reiterating the same prescription can generate the desired outcome because it is thought that there is nothing wrong with the prescription itself.

Despite the neo-liberal emphasis on 'choice' there was no choice in relation to the Austerity strategy. Just like Thatcherism and the justification for BPR propounded by its gurus (Hammer and Champy, 1993), there was apparently no choice but to follow the path of austerity. Hence it was argued by former Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron that 'We are not doing this because we want to, driven by theory or ideology. We are doing this because we have to, driven by the urgent truth that unless we do, people will suffer and our national interest will suffer' (Cameron, 2010: 5). This seems to be a perennial political ruse where one inevitably acts politically and yet claims to be doing so for apolitical reasons. Hence in his foreword to the 1997 *Modernizing Government* white paper, then-Prime Minister Tony Blair, claimed that 'old arguments about more or less government were over: that basically the issue was now the apolitical one of seeing that everyone would have access to high-quality, convenient services' (Pollitt, 2013: 911).

A fundamentally flawed and circular line of argument is evident in the belief that those at the top can exercise power in more or less the same way so as to deliver outcomes irrespective of their continued failure to deliver. Indeed, despite continuous change what remains is 'the elusiveness of the impacts of management change' (Pollitt, 2013: 916) and also 'evidence underpinning the reforms proposed' (op cit: 917). In other words, change is the *solution* on offer but no evidence is provided

to support the measures that are to be adopted and no evidence is offered to suggest that the previous changes worked. Indeed, the need for change is predicated on the failure of previous changes as will be explored in Chapter 9. In this sense, change may be the *problem* or at least the type of neo-liberal and NPM changes that have been adopted because change only begets the need for more change. This seems absurd, even laughable, if the changes were not so damaging. Indeed, 'The cuts to income and public services at the heart of austerity policies' have been 'disproportionately borne by those with intersecting disadvantages of poverty, disability, ethnicity and age (young and old)' (Durbin et al., 2017: 2). Moreover, 'it is acknowledged that women bear the brunt of austerity' (Craddock, 2017: 69). If we add to this increased levels of poverty, inequality, homelessness, incarceration, household and government debt in both the UK and the USA (see Styhre, 2014: 286) with the advent of neo-liberal policies then it is obvious that neo-liberalism has failed unless measured in relation to the wealth of the few.

As discussed in Chapter 3, this circular thinking reflects the belief that those in positions of authority possess the power to effect and deliver change. This belief is explicit in the coalition government's white paper *Open Public Services* (2011) that referred to the entire public sector. In its foreword, then-Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron and Liberal Democrat Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg stated, 'it is only by publishing data on how public services do their jobs' that we can 'wrest power out of the hands of highly paid officials and give it back to the people' (Pollitt, 2013: 912). Power, it seems, can be held and distributed like coins by those in authority. Yet again, public servants were presented as *the problem*, not cuts in public spending or the continuous onslaught of neo-liberal change. All governments over the last forty years have 'encouraged large scale contracting out and the widespread use of purchaser/provider splits and market-type mechanisms. They have all developed extensive systems of performance measurement and target setting' (Pollitt, 2013: 918). None have stepped back to question whether these are appropriate solutions for the public sector. All are implicitly critical of those who work in public services hence where possible they must be removed or made insecure through the market and competition; they must be watched, monitored, observed and measured. Public sector workers are therefore assumed to be lazy, feckless, untrustworthy, inefficient, dishonest souls lacking in dedication and commitment to the pupils, students, patients, public and travellers that they spend their lives serving.

The claim, that goes back to Margaret Thatcher, of there being no choice in relation to neo-liberalism and now austerity is deeply political and invidious because 'This process of defining a problem in terms of what works also makes the issue one of administration, not politics. By such processes, matters as diverse as health, poverty and productivity are depoliticized, the proper province of experts not active, questioning citizens' (McKinlay et al., 2012: 9). Likewise, the NPM and Change

Management are presented as apolitical inevitabilities that seek only to serve the wider interest, birthed through and seeking to promote consensus. As we shall see, despite this political onslaught, the power exercised through these connected discourses is continually contested; always striven for but never realised.

The Case Study

Reflecting the magnitude of the 2008 global financial crisis (GFC), I sought to explore and understand the complex processes that this might engender, which necessitated the use of qualitative research methods. Access was sought to a large organisation (1,000+ employees) that would be willing to provide in-depth research 'access' (Stake, 2000: 446). Copperfield City Council is an LGA located in the north of England and it employs approximately 10,000 people. It is organised around four major divisions including children, adult and neighbourhood services plus the corporate core. The corporate core provides central services such as human resources and finance, and also includes a transformation team. At the time of the research, the transformation team comprised 100 full-time Change Agents (CAs) who were recruited to lead and facilitate change as has been found elsewhere (Hood, 1991; Smith, 2008).

The transformation programme was developed, in part, to prepare for budgetary cuts following the 2008 GFC. Plans were developed to prepare for cuts of £100 million over three years. Rather than a simple cost cutting exercise, the concern was to re-design services in order to improve service delivery. The aim was to reduce costs and staffing but with a promise of no-compulsory redundancies. At the time of the research, the most tangible part of the transformation was the refurbishment of a Victorian back-office building. This involved relocating 1,500 staff to a temporary new building and, in the process, redesigning working practices along with the organisational culture. How this was achieved and its implications for those on the receiving end of change, provides the focus for much of this book. It has to be understood that research is a 'journey' (French et al., 2014: 193) and the production of a book, along with collecting and analysing data, are all part of this journey. It is not an end destination whereby one is able to 'tell all' because one can only collect, grasp, include or represent so much, one only sees and understands so much and so even a book is not an end to the journey.

Entering the Field

While I was driving along the motorway in the late summer of 2010, the political leader of Copperdale City Council was being interviewed on a radio station. He was explaining how his LGA was attempting to transform its services. This was deemed necessary because cuts in public sector spending following the 2008 GFC would inevitably mean having to

do more with less and so a transformation was required so as to protect local services. An Internet search for this individual provided his email address and this led to a telephone conversation followed by a visit to Copperdale to talk to both him and the director of transformation. The following extract is from 'fieldnotes' (Van Maanen, 1988) written during the first visit to the 'City Hall' to discuss the possibility of conducting research:

> One is immediately struck by the Victorian grandeur and beauty of the building. . . . Trying to gain entry proved a little more time consuming than I had planned because there are numerous entrances each equally grand . . . it is a glimpse of the vast industrial wealth that was once available to produce such opulence.

The internal splendour of the building was recorded in other fieldnotes, where it was written that there are 'marble statues' that 'peer down at me, hands at rest on marble chairs', floors of 'mosaic tiles', walls of 'granite blocks', 'polished brass hand rails' and 'stone steps that echo' with one's footsteps.

The problem with 'equally grand' entrances is that it is difficult to find the main entrance and therefore the reception area and also the room for one's research appointment. Eventually, I was directed by the receptionist to the 'Smoke room'. Evidently, there had been some confusion for upon entering the room I found that a meeting with 30–40 individuals was taking place. I apologised and exited. I knocked at the next available office. Here two members of staff were in a meeting and whilst remaining seated they verbally directed me to where I had to go. I could not, however, find the room and so I went back only to be 'led' to the interview room, on a completely different floor from that which the 'Smoke room' was on.

It is clear that the city hall building speaks of a different epoch than the contemporary one. It is a world which reflected the industrial and military might of the British Empire and the industrial revolution. The building was built from the proceeds of this wealth and it is a silent witness to the industry and empire that have long since departed. The 'Smoke room' is redolent of a bygone, masculine world, where men smoked cigars as they discussed cotton factories, steam engines and railways. This is a world before motorways, de-industrialisation and the Internet, but it lives on in the material magnificence of the building. Having finally met with and negotiated research access with the political leader of the council and the director of transformation, I moved on to the next task—to understand the transformation.

Research Methods

The research approach was ethnographic in intent as the concern was to understand how transformation 'emerges as sets of meanings constructed

and imputed to organisational events by various groups and interests in pursuit of their aims' (Young, 1989: 190). It endeavoured to come to terms with a complex reality that one 'must contrive somehow to first grasp and then to render' (Geertz, 1973: 10). The focus was on accessing 'meaning, both shared and unshared, unearthing conflict and paradox and observing how it is dealt with and accounted for by organizational members' (Linstead, 1997: 88).

The research followed an 'ethnographic orientation' (Watson, 2010: 216) where one's focus is on culture or 'the meanings and practices produced, sustained, and altered through interaction' for 'ethnography is the study and representation of culture as used by particular people, in particular places, at particular times' (Van Maanen, 2010: 221). The value of this approach is that 'The universal' can indeed 'be found in the particular' (op cit: 227) but this requires that one looks at the world in a particular way and seeks to understand how various aspects are interlinked and interlaced in a fluid and seamless way. It demands that we attune ourselves to the connections between the very large and the minutiae of everyday life. It at once requires what Watson (2010) refers to as 'the sensitivity of the novelist or dramatist' (op cit: 209) with a grasp of the commonplace cultures that we all inhabit. In short, we need to see what is already there, hiding in the light, but then try to represent this complexity albeit partially.

Data Collection

Data was collected in three ways, first, through conducting in total 39, hour-long, semi-structured interviews, between August 2010 and August 2011. I explained to the interviewees that I am an academic interested in the processes and impact of transformation. After gaining permission from the interviewees, all interviews were recorded and transcribed. This included interviews with the political leader of the LGA, the director of transformation and four middle and senior level managers from neighbourhood services and human resources. The interviews then branched out to include twelve CAs with the aim of understanding the content of the transformation programme; its method of implementation and the obstacles encountered during change. This was a 'snowball sample' (Marshall, 1996: 523) in that interviewees were asked to recommend individuals who were involved in the strategic design and implementation of the transformation programme.

In 2011, following an introductory email explaining the nature of the research, 21 employees volunteered to be interviewed each for an hour, including front-line staff, first line and middle managers from adult, children and neighbourhood services, which can be understood as a more 'purposeful' sample (Coyne, 1997) because the concern was to understand the impact of transformation. The overall approach can

be understood as 'sampling for meaning' where the 'rationale is that of the discovery of the insider's view of cultural and personal meaning and experience' (Luborsky and Rubinstein, 1995: 11). At the start of each interview, I explained that in any materials produced through the research not only would Copperdale's identity be concealed but also that of the research participants. I also explained that the recordings would not be shared with management and that only I would have access to them. A flexible interview guide was used that included open-ended questions, such as 'what sort of an organization is Copperdale?', 'what was your first impression?', 'how would you describe the culture?', 'what is it like to work here?', 'has it changed?', 'how do management and staff get on?', 'how was change implemented?' and 'what are the major problems or obstacles facing transformation?'

The organisation was visited over a period of a year and this included day long visits when multiple interviews were conducted. Interviews were held in three buildings and a second method of data collection involved recording observational notes during the intervals before, between and after each interview. This involved writing accounts of first impressions, the layout of offices, colour schemes and the general decor. Observation was facilitated because the majority of the interviews were conducted in break-out offices. The walls of these rooms, which look out onto open-plan offices are clear glass and so it was like sitting in a fish tank whereby one was able to observe the goings on in the wider office whilst waiting for interviewees to arrive and after they had left. Although this may seem invasive, I could not overhear conversations and a poster was attached to the door, which informed everyone who I was and why I was there. It stated that I was not a consultant but an independent university researcher. All staff had already been emailed and that email explained my identity along with the purpose of the research. Moreover, my concern was not to eavesdrop but to examine the physical work environment.

The final method of data collection was through documents and these enriched the understanding of the research site because many key texts such as strategy statements, the minutes of council meetings and reports are available to the public on-line. It was also possible to gain access to internal documents such as newsletters and Copperdale's staff intranet site, which was especially useful when trying to understand how change was communicated to employees. These documents greatly enhanced my understanding of the change process and the discourse through which it was being discussed. I was able to read these documents both historically and, as the research progressed over a period of a year. The documents informed my understanding during each interview as my familiarity with the organisation gained in depth. Often, I was able to ask about issues that the interviewees were unfamiliar with because they had not read these documents. I was also able to access newspaper reports and local radio news reports about Copperdale City Council.

Data Analysis

Analysis began immediately through writing notes during and after the interviews. Documents were analysed on an ongoing basis for as new committee minutes and documents became available they were read and analysed with a view to understanding the unfolding process of change. They informed each interview as my understanding of the empirical setting grew in depth. Observational notes were recorded and analysed with a view to making sense of the material aspects of change, which both the CAs and employees alluded to. This meant paying attention, for example, to whether a 'clear desk' policy was being followed.

The particular empirical focus of each chapter arose through the empirical research because I was surprised by many different facets of the change programme. Each chapter deals with a different theme including metaphors, management resistance, employee resistance, cynicism and organisational politics. Identifying these themes amounted to the second step in the analysis because they created a spark and a focus that facilitated the translation of 'experience . . . into the intellectual sphere . . . [whereby one] . . . gives it form' (Mills, 1959: 199). The themes became a means through which to analyse and manually code the transcribed tape-recorded interviews that allowed for 'a reduced set of data as a basis for thinking about its meanings' (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 428).

Through the analysis of first-hand accounts, the third stage of the analysis involved extracting all references to the themes for the purposes of comparison and they were contrasted in terms of the different meanings they conveyed. Through this 'fine-grained, line-by-line analysis' of interview transcripts (Emerson et al., 1995: 160) patterns and sub-themes emerged and these were synthesised through developing categories, for example, the next chapter included categorising data around (1) the strategic metaphor of change as a journey, (2) how CAs understood their careers and employment as journeys, (3) how this journey involved reshaping employee subjectivity and working practices, (4) how employees engaged with and interpreted the journey metaphor and (5) how employees used counter-metaphors when depicting the corporate strategy, change programme and their working lives.

Whistle-blowing has been represented as a form of resistance that involves going outside the organisation to government watchdogs or to the media as a means to besmirch 'an organization's image and reputation' (Gabriel, 2008: 311). Yet managers and employees may also exercise power in this way during interviews whereby they seek to challenge the conditions they confront and seek to use the interviewer as a means to voice their discontent. Interviews then can be seen as a potential medium of resistance not for the purposes of destroying an organisation but to reform it. In view of this, it is necessary to avoid simply accepting

interviews as mirroring reality because they are a construction achieved through interaction between the interviewer and interviewee. If one conducts multiple interviews with numerous sources overtime and uses other sources they can, however, provide a fascinating, albeit partial and never neutral, glimpse into a way of life. To adapt the words of Albert Camus (1955) the resulting ethnographic account 'is but a piece cut out of experience, a facet of the diamond' (op cit: 90). In line with previous qualitative research, the aim of representing the following material is not to establish 'generalizability' (Dick, 2005: 1376; See also Karreman and Alvesson, 2009) but to explore dynamic power relations. In this way, the book seeks to provide and represent a critical relational understanding of Change Management.

5 *Metaphors-as-Power*

Introduction

This chapter explores how the Change Agents (CAs) employed by Copperdale City Council drew upon central government documents—*Working Without Walls* (Allen et al., 2004) and *Working Beyond Walls* (Hardy et al., 2008)—to transform work at Copperdale. These documents employ the metaphor of *walls* in a way that represents extant working conditions in the public sector in a negative light whilst representing change in a positive way. In short, the present is dark, penal, repressive, confining, inflexible and bureaucratic whilst the future is light, airy, free, flexible and open. The CAs legitimised the transformation programme by referring to these documents but they also deployed a metaphor of their own—the 'journey'—to represent change and a new understanding of work and self.

Despite a growing interest in metaphor in organisation studies, we know little about its role in relation to workplace struggles. As we shall see, metaphors are far from neutral for they are bound up with power (Gabriel et al., 2011). Hence the metaphors employed by the CAs in this case promoted a particular type of subject—individuals who are no longer tied to a specific role or place, who are flexible, transient, mobile and rootless. The CAs embodied this subjectivity and, like central government, appeared to see little value in jobs linked to stability, community and certainty around work location. This attempt to forge a new subject rubbed up against extant identities, cultures and established ways of working. The chapter introduces the term 'counter-metaphor' to explore and encapsulate the way in which different metaphors were used and wielded, by both employees and managers, in opposition to the 'journey' metaphor, the new working practices and self that were being imposed upon them. These counter-metaphors resisted, mocked and presented an alternative, critical reading, of the transformation programme.

Using Metaphor to Study Organisations

In the management and organisation studies literature, metaphor has been used as a means of analysis, in different ways (Cornelissen et al., 2008;

Palmer and Dunford, 1996). One way of understanding metaphor can be described as the *'metaphors-in-here'* approach and this is evident in Morgan's (1986) seminal text on metaphor—*Images of Organization*. According to Morgan (1986), 'the use of metaphor implies *a way of thinking* and *a way of seeing* that pervades how we understand our world more generally' (1986: 12). In Morgan's (1986) text, this 'in here' or perspective approach towards metaphor directs us to different ways in which organisations can be seen or understood, for example, as machines, brains or as domination. It highlights that we can understand organisations in different ways depending on the metaphor we use to analyse them. Others have suggested that organisations can be understood as Theatre (Mangham and Overington, 1987; Cornelissen, 2004) and, more recently, this approach has informed the introduction of new metaphors such as the Ice Hotel (Pinto, 2016) and Wonderland (McCabe, 2016).

A second way of understanding metaphor can be described as the *'metaphors-out-there'* approach, which uses metaphor more as a descriptive device to depict the world 'out there'. Hence Atkinson (1984) used the metaphor of the flexible firm and Arthur (1994) refers to the boundaryless career to suggest, respectively, that organisations and careers are becoming more flexible. As with the *metaphors-in-here* approach, these metaphors are academic constructs that inevitably simplify the world and they are often subject to critique, based on empirical observations. Hence the flexible firm was criticised by Pollert (1988) on the basis that it overstated changes in the workplace and likewise the boundaryless career has been argued to provide 'oversimplified accounts of changes in career patterns' (Rodrigues and Guest, 2010: 1160). Cornelissen *et al.* (2008) summarise both of these approaches towards metaphor as being ' "projected" onto an organizational reality' (op cit: 9). They are described as 'decontextual' (Cornelissen et al., 2008: 10) as they involve creating a 'second order construct' that is then imposed upon the organisation.

A third way of understanding metaphor as proposed by Cornelissen *et al.* (2008: 7) is the *metaphors-in-use* approach, which refers to metaphors that 'emerge' (Hatch and Yanow, 2008: 25) through empirical research. Metaphors-in-use differ from those in the first two categories, which theorists tend to use 'to draw a point' (Hatch and Yanow, 2008: 25) because they are ' "inductively" derived' (Cornelissen et al., 2008: 9). They can be understood as 'contextual' (ibid) because they are first order constructs rather than second order constructions imposed by academics (see Grant and Oswick, 1996). In contrast to these three approaches, the way of understanding metaphor in this book will be termed the metaphors-as-power approach. It resonates with a *metaphors-in-use* approach but it also differs from it as we shall now explore.

Metaphors-as-Power

A *metaphors-as-power* approach focuses on how power is exercised in relation to metaphor. This differs from the analysis of Cornelissen *et al.* (2008)

because power does not feature in their discussion of how we might understand and use metaphor. Gabriel *et al.* (2011: 370) have argued that 'power issues' have been neglected in relation to metaphor and so a *metaphors-as-power* approach aims to remedy this neglect. It has been argued that we need to attend 'to managers' use of metaphors' in the context of organizational change' (Palmer and Dunford, 1996: 706). Similarly, but more recently, Latusek and Vlaar (2015) have focused on how managers talk about 'meaningful issues for managers' (op cit: 213) and how an analysis of metaphors can result in 'studies that have high operational validity for managers' (ibid). We need to go further, however, by considering the metaphors used by those on the receiving end of change and how they engage with the metaphors they confront. The concern of this chapter is to understand metaphor in relation to workplace struggles that encompass both attempts to exercise power and the resistance that arises in relation to such endeavours (Jermier et al., 1994).

The neglect of power is an important omission in the literature on metaphor because, as we shall see, metaphors are not neutral expressions of language. Indeed, the implication of Sackmann's (1989) argument that metaphors can 'influence employees' thinking, feelings, and their construction of reality in ways that facilitate organizational transformation' (op cit: 469) is precisely that power can be exercised by management so as to change employee subjectivity. As to whether this can be realised is questionable (see Koch and Deetz, 1991; Sinclair, 1994) not least because such arguments are grounded in a propertied concept of power whereby metaphor is seen as something that management can wield to reshape others. A propertied concept of power is also apparent in Marshak's (1993) assertion that 'knowing how to understand, use, and align these metaphors can be a powerful tool in any change effort' (op cit: 49). Likewise, Kendall and Kendall (1993) assert that there is:

> true power behind metaphors, power to shape reality and structure the thoughts of the people who are caught up in a particular metaphor and its entailments.
>
> (op cit: 149)

It is not the case that power has been entirely neglected in relation to metaphor (see Mitchell, 1990). Indeed, Fleming (2005) has explored 'metaphors of resistance' and he focuses on two metaphors of cynicism including 'cynicism as the *defence* of selfhood and *distancing* of selfhood' (op cit: 47; emphasis added). Both are popular ways of understanding how workers resist culture change programmes that attempt to reconstitute employee identity in relation to corporate values. Fleming (2005) also refers to a 'metaphor of production' (op cit: 48) to suggest 'that cynicism might also entail the ongoing production of subjective space rather than just its defence or distancing' (ibid). Although he refers to empirical research to

illustrate how employees cynically resisted paternalism, the metaphors that Fleming (2005) uses are 'projected' (Cornelissen et al., 2008: 9) in that they are metaphors that he and others (Collinson, 1994; Fleming and Spicer, 2003) use to discuss cynicism. Rather than impose metaphorical constructs, this chapter is concerned to identify the metaphors that central government and CAs used to exercise power and the counter-metaphors that employees and managers used to subjectively resist them.

As we shall see, the counter-metaphors are bound up with cynicism and it will be argued that attending to counter-metaphors can help us to understand 'the ongoing production of subjective space rather than just its defence or distancing' (Fleming, 2005: 48). This is due to the fact that they can elucidate ways of understanding and producing self and work for those on the receiving end of change in contrast to corporate discourses and metaphors. It has been argued that the advantage of attending to *metaphors-in-use* (Cornelissen et al., 2008) rather than imposing metaphors on others is that it adds colour, richness, variety and authenticity to our understanding of the experiences of others. In addition, a *metaphors-as-power* approach can also help us to understand how power is exercised, the agendas of those seeking to exercise power, what is resisted and the concerns those on the receiving end of change. It takes these issues seriously and potentially provides a way to begin to address those concerns.

The term *metaphors-as-power* will also be used as an approach towards metaphor that seeks to transcends the distinction between a projected/de-contextualised versus an emergent/contextualised metaphor. Hence the metaphors referred to in this chapter emerged through the empirical research but they were also 'chosen' (Manning, 1979: 668) or 'selected' (Gouldner, 1954) to assist the process of theorising and understanding once they were identified. They are inductively derived through ' "first-order" lived experiences' (Cornelissen et al., 2008: 9) or, in other words, by drawing on the language of those who use them but they are also understood to reflect my theoretical interest in power struggles. Hence, a researcher with different interests or a contrasting theoretical approach may not have selected these metaphors or identified them nor would they necessarily understand them in the way that I do. This is to recognise that the empirical and the theoretical are not separate but rather merge in the author's mind as they attempt to make sense of and represent a particular situation. It is also to recognise that one cannot nor does one necessarily have to explore every *metaphor-in-use* in a given situation not least because language is imbued with metaphors (see Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Due to the ubiquity of metaphors and the complexity of the empirical world 'a process of abstraction and simplification is necessary' (Golding, 1980: 163).

Morgan (1980) asserts that 'any one metaphorical insight provides but a partial and one-sided view' (op cit: 611) of organisation and

methodologically this fits with 'constructivism' (Hatch and Yanow, 2008: 29) or a '"perspectival" view of social analysis' (Manning, 1979: 660). It also coincides with what I understand as a *metaphors-as-power* approach. This sits uneasily with positivism, which metaphorically represents researchers as bone collectors and, in so doing, separates authors and data as if scholars of business are palaeontologists reconstructing extinct creatures. Instead, the *metaphors-as-power* approach better aligns with a 'craft' (Watson, 1994b) metaphor of research whereby academics are understood to produce 'partial' (Clifford, 1986) representations of the world through their research and analysis. These representations are informed by their theoretical understanding of the world as scholars attempt to make sense of a complex reality (see Hatch and Yanow, 2008: 24). Instead of reflecting a mechanical set of procedures then or a 'proper way in which facts must be selected and presented' (Manning, 1979: 660), empirical analysis is understood to proceed through an ongoing, creative, fluid, imaginative, iterative process that is not separate from the academic.

The Case Study

The Influence of Central Government Documents

Rather than first representing a change programme as if it appears pure and uncontested this book aims to analyse how the exercise of power continually meets with resistance such that together they shape the ongoing context and content of change programmes. In this way, power and resistance 'interpenetrate one another in a unity of opposites' (Burrell, 1992: 77) because 'resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power' (Foucault, 1979: 95). Resistance therefore imbues each chapter and the aim is to explore resistance not as a bolt-on, an aftermath, an effect or a reaction but as integral to how power is exercised.

It is difficult to trace the source of a particular change programme because initiatives/ideas often merge with and inform each other or their origins are obscured or mediated by consultants. This is the situation in this study because the change programme was preceded by another initiative, which will be discussed in Chapter 9. Nevertheless, the CAs played a significant role in the programme of transformation and their ideas can be traced, in part, to two central government publications—'Working Without Walls' (Allen et al., 2004) and 'Working Beyond Walls' (Hardy et al., 2008). An analysis of these central government texts in relation to the change programme can therefore contribute to an understanding of what the CAs sought to achieve but also the under-researched genesis of new management ideas (see Heusinkveld et al., 2011).

In the titles of both of these central government documents, a 'walls' metaphor was used to prescribe a more flexible, mobile world of work.

The use of a 'walls' metaphor is similar in each document as both imply that 'walls' are negative and need to be removed. It is implicit in the need to work *without* or *beyond* walls. The use of the wall metaphor in relation to extant ways of working conjures up dark associations of prison, division, constraint, repression, restraint, inflexibility, denial and immobility. The implication is that removing walls is an entirely positive action as it represents light, freedom, choice, movement, mobility, and flexibility. We can see then that the use of a particular metaphor is bound up with an attempt to exercise power, whether consciously or not, whereby one is urged to think and act in this way rather than in another way.

This exercise of power is apparent in that a negative association with walls can be turned on its head for the wall metaphor could just as easily have positive connotations signalling safety, home, security, shelter, privacy, family, warmth, protection, community, belonging, support and comfort. If we think about the wall metaphor in this way then the last thing we would want to do is to remove walls but the use of the metaphor in these documents suggests otherwise. To turn it around and use the wall metaphor in a positive way can be seen as counter-metaphor. Here one takes an existing metaphor and reinterprets it and re-represents it in ways that effectively resist the initial exercise of power. One usage says this is how the world is and should be whilst the counter-metaphor says no this is how it is and could be. Counter-metaphors need not use the same metaphor for they can use a different one to represent a contrasting vision of the world of work.

The *Working Without Walls* document promotes a 'business-driven focus for change' and the connection with neo-liberalism/enterprise is clear because it elevates subjects who are free to 'choose alternative work settings' (Allen et al., 2004: 22). The exercise of power is apparent because certain ideas and ways of thinking are fostered (i.e. choice, flexibility) whilst others are played down, silenced or excluded (Lukes, 1974) such as continuity and community. *Working Beyond Walls* draws on a Chartered Management Institute report that promotes subjects who are 'free to operate with greater personal flexibility and business agility' (Hardy et al., 2008: 60). This emphasis on 'freedom' and being able to 'choose' (Allen et al., 2004: 22) advances the notion that 'work is no longer necessarily a constraint upon the freedom of the individual to fulfil his or her potential' (Miller and Rose, 1990: 27). Instead of 'a painful obligation imposed upon individuals', working without or beyond walls presents work 'as a vital means to self-fulfillment and self-realization' (du Gay, 1994: 662).

Enterprise, in line with neo-liberalism, can be understood as an espoused form of government, a way of organising (e.g. deregulated, flexible, decentralised) and an attempt to promote a particular subjectivity (see du Gay and Salaman, 1992). Hence individuals are urged to become an 'enterprise' whereby they work on themselves, compete with

others and assume 'active responsibility' (Burchell, 1991: 276) both for themselves and customers (internal and external). Individuals are 'represented' as free, autonomous and empowered even though change is often imposed in ways that reinforce hierarchical relations (Doolin, 2002; Willmott, 1993). An analysis of the application of the enterprise discourse as initiated and advanced through central government documents such as *Working Without Walls* and *Working Beyond Walls* and the metaphors they use can add to our understanding of governmentality or how governments and managers are endeavouring to reshape organisations, work and identity in enterprising/neo-liberal ways.

The Journey Metaphor

> You will realize that to make a voyage is only an idea, that there is nothing in life but voyage, voyage within voyage. . . . all a vast, silent and perpetual movement.
>
> (Miller, 1939: 102)

In the case of Copperdale City Council, a journey metaphor was also used as part of the attempt to *produce* a subject that is flexible, always becoming and permanently on a journey. According to Dunn (1990), 'the journey metaphor is concerned not with social *change*, but social *continuity*. The needs of the group, as represented by points of departure and return, are static. It is the individual who, through the journey, learns to conform' (op cit: 18). This underlines the danger of the journey metaphor for despite its emphasis on fluidity, movement and change, it is the individual or group rather than the status quo that is tasked to change. As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, this is also a problem with many change models that subscribe to the rational-technical perspective. Hence their prescriptions tend to be divorced from the wider contextual inequalities that change programmes emerge through, take up and reproduce.

Burnes (2004) states that Lewin (1947a) shared more in common with a processual approach towards change than many have assumed and both can be said to understand change through a journey metaphor. Hence Lewin:

> viewed change not as a predictable and planned move from one stable state to another, but as a complex and iterative learning process where the journey was more important than the destination, where stability was at best quasi-stationary and always fluid, and where, given the complex forces involved, outcomes cannot be predicted but emerge on a trial and error basis.
>
> (Burnes, 2004: 993)

Theories of the self have long emphasised a processual understanding of the subject and this also chimes with the journey metaphor. Hence according to Ibarra (1999), identity work is 'The process by which people negotiate, with themselves and with others, what identities they craft as they assume a new work role' (ibid: 766). Likewise, Watson (1994a) views the self as 'always emergent; it is part of a continuous process through which we come to terms with our changing world through a process of shaping our "selves" ' (op cit: 59). Whilst Thomas and Linstead (2002) state that 'identity is in flux, in a permanent state of becoming as various social and linguistic constructs (or discourses) vie with one another for supremacy' (op cit: 75).

This theorising of change and identity seeks to aid understanding but it was mirrored at Copperdale by the way in which power was exercised as a means to reconstitute management and employee subjectivity. Hence both the process of change and the 'new' employee self were represented through the metaphor of a journey. This reflected the way in which the CAs understood change, their careers and self but, as we shall see, it jarred with how many employees understood their lives and the programme of transformation. Although power 'doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no' (Foucault, 1980: 119) power may nevertheless say 'No'. Indeed, power was exercised by the CAs so as to say 'No' to ways of being and working whereby one is wedded to a particular community, location, office or desk.

Inkson (2004) used the journey metaphor as one way in which we can understand career. He describes it as 'an exercise in mobility and immobility, ongoing travel through occupational and organizational space' (op cit: 100). This resonates with how the change programme was represented at Copperdale and the new transient subjects it attempted to create. As the quote from Miller (1939) at the start of this section indicated, this is not a new way of understanding the self or the world. It echoes the ideas of process theorists such as Bergson (1912/1999) who philosophised over the ceaselessly changing process and 'perpetual becoming' (op cit: 41) of time and self whereby:

> Every feeling, however, simple it may be, contains virtually within it the whole past and present of the being experiencing it, and, consequently, can only be separated and constituted into a 'state' by an effort of abstraction or of analysis.
>
> (op cit: 31)

Styhre's (2001) metaphor of the 'nomadic' organisation is similar to the journey metaphor as it depicts 'an organization that is always on the move' (op cit: 2). This is a projected (Cornelissen et al., 2008) or metaphors-out-there approach as it was argued that 'postmodern society, with its emphasis on continuous, ongoing change and its inability to provide stable,

predictable meaning-creating structures of necessity, creates nomadic organizations' (ibid). It was posited that 'The nomadic organization is a conceptualization of the organization that is based on a process ontology' (op cit: 4), where the organisation is 'becoming' and 'always in a state of change, or creation, of novelty' (op cit: 6). Styhre (2001) does not offer this metaphor in a prescriptive way but as a means to 'create new possibilities for speaking of, and speaking about, organizations' (op cit: 7).

A danger arises, however, when this process philosophy and way of understanding self, change or organisations becomes a means to exercise power so as to reshape others. It connects with and reinforces neoliberal thinking, which is evident in Costas's (2013) comment that 'the nomadic approach, contra to its intentions, does not sufficiently manage to distance itself from a neo-liberal stance on mobility, which rejects any notion of place/stability, seen as uncompetitive and bureaucratic, and celebrates fluidity and movement—seen as emblematic of opportunity, choice, innovation and creativity' (op cit: 1473). The journey metaphor as it was used by the CAs at Copperdale reflected these dangers not least because it posed a threat to extant work communities that can provide a basis for belonging, community, solidarity and resistance.

The journey metaphor the CAs employed differs from the archetypical heroic journey that 'involves leaving a safe, familiar place (home), enduring privations, facing temptations and dangers, prevailing over them, and returning' (Dunn, 1990: 18). This heroic journey is exemplified in Homer's *The Odyssey* (Lawrence, 1932/1992), in which Odysseus eventually returns home after the fall of Troy and his subsequent trials. In the journey metaphor expressed by the CAs, however, which is also implicit in central government prescriptions, the walls of home are torn down and 'there is no homecoming' (Dunn, 1990: 19). Indeed, one is never to return home but must permanently set sail on a perpetual journey of mobility. As we shall see, these attempts to use metaphor to exercise power did not run smoothly and employees and managers resisted through subjecting the 'journey' metaphor to mockery (Collinson, 1992), 'cynicism' (Fleming and Spicer, 2003) and counter-metaphors.

The aim of this chapter is to explore two intertwining questions: (1) how is power exercised through metaphor by central and local government and CAs so as to reconstitute management and employee subjectivity? and (2) how do employees and managers engage with such endeavours and resist through metaphors of their own? It is organised as follows: in the next section, the use of central government documents that the CAs drew upon to legitimise the transformation programme is explored. As we shall see, these documents use the metaphor of walls to represent extant working conditions in a negative way thereby making the case for change. We then examine the journey metaphor that the CAs used to promote change and consider how this reflected the subjectivity of the CAs. In subsequent sections, we consider how employees and managers engaged with the change programme and how they employed

counter-metaphors that presented an alternative representation of the change programme, which includes a consideration of the 'dark side' of the journey metaphor. Finally, the main findings of the chapter are drawn out in a conclusion.

Working Without and Beyond Walls

> We've adopted some of the principles that central government have taken up about *working without walls*. . . . it's all the stuff around open plan offices, about managers not having offices, about hot desking, about flexible working, about mobile working. . . . The days are over where you have a desk, a phone, a computer and it's yours.
>
> (Philippa, head of transformation, emphasis added)

In 2004, the *Working Without Walls* document was co-produced by the Office of Government Commerce and the consultants DEGW, which specialises in the design of office environments. In its foreword Sir Andrew Turnbull, the then cabinet secretary and head of the Home Civil Service discussed UK government workplaces that have 'the potential for much greater flexibility'. The document reflects a deterministic belief that through changing physical space one can change the subjectivity of those who work within it. Hence it argued that '"place" has the strongest psychological impact on people' (Allen et al., 2004: 12) and that 'The way a building looks' has 'a profound affect on what people think about the organisation' (op cit: 13). Changing the physical space was represented in an entirely positive way as it was linked to achieving a 'better work/life balance' (op cit: 12) and an 'empowered workforce' (op cit: 13).

Philippa, who is one of two heads of transformation at Copperdale, also represented change in a largely positive light. Roughly 1,500 employees had been relocated to a new temporary building while the back office was being refurbished, and were said to be working in a 'completely differently' way than before. The use of a new temporary building was seen as an 'opportunity' to 'start the new world'. Reflecting the impact of *Working Without Walls* on the change programme, Paige, the director of transformation, asked:

> Have you seen the publication *Working Without Walls*? . . . what we were doing was saying that if you break down walls you can bring about the big transformation and attitudinal change, which is more important'.
>
> (emphasis added)

Karen, a project manager, who is a CA and a member of the transformation team, explained that 'Initially it all came from' these government

documents. Michael, also a CA and a project manager, articulated that these documents required *him* to change how *he* thinks:

> One of the big cultural changes is this thing of more flexible working and sharing space. There is a document called *Working Beyond Walls* which is a government [document], I think it was Treasury, it was about how changing your working environment can improve your organizational culture and there's a great line in there about working being what you do not where you go erm. . . . that's at the heart of the culture change.
>
> (emphasis added)

Michael quoted the words of Sir Gus O'Donnell, a former cabinet secretary and head of the home civil service, which are in the foreword of *Working Beyond Walls* (Hardy et al., 2008). O'Donnell states, 'Work is what you do, not a place you go. The next generation of workforce will know that and be ready and able to work anywhere. Work has migrated beyond the conventional boundaries of time and space'. We can observe that re-defining space is linked to a belief that through such endeavours a more mobile way of working and a transient subjectivity can and must be achieved.

Nevertheless, Rose, a senior project manager, explained that change has not been without resistance and one expression of this relates to issues around 'confidentiality' in an open plan working environment. She also referred to the central government documents and explained that:

> we have benchmarked against other public services, the Treasury, the Ministry of Defence [laughter], we've been able to demonstrate how they've overcome the confidentiality issues. There's a document *Working Without Walls*, *Working Beyond Walls*, which addresses all the issues that we're coming up against but it's just embedded.

The central government documents were employed as a means to justify change and Rose's comments suggest that they also provided a way to 'overcome' resistance or 'the issues that we're coming up against'. She conceded, however, that resistance is 'embedded', which implies a far more problematic situation. We will now turn to the 'journey' metaphor that the CAs deployed.

Initiating the Change 'Journey'

> Five years ago . . . when everything was brilliant, we were saying 'No, everything is not brilliant, we're on a journey to improve the service', so this journey goes back five years.
>
> (Carl, head of programme)

In 2009, Copperdale initiated a council-wide change programme, called the Copperdale Organisational Transformation (COT) programme. Philippa (head of transformation), explained in relation to COT that change has been represented as a 'journey'. The logic for this was that using such a metaphor would secure employee support:

> if you call it a journey and involve people in that journey, you're going to get buy-in and you're going to make life easier for yourself. (Philippa)

The COT programme involved redesigning services across the council and decanting 1,500 staff from an existing building whilst it is refurbished. The move in 2010 to a temporary building was seen as an opportunity to develop new working practices and change the workplace culture. The rationale for this move was presented to the staff through an intranet site called *The Journey* which, according to Ian, a programme manager, 'was set up to realise that for the staff we're taking them on a journey'. Although Philippa's comments suggested an involving or participative approach towards change, the implication of Ian's statement is that power is being exercised by management through the 'journey' metaphor hence 'we're taking them on a journey'. The running title of the staff Journey intranet website reinforced the journey metaphor hence it read in capital letters 'JOURNEY TO THE NEW WORLD' and its opening heading again in capital letters is 'YOUR JOURNEY BEGINS HERE'.

The staff journey intranet website set out office protocols or behavioural requirements that everyone must adhere to including a 'clear desk' policy. It states, 'What this means in practice is that at the end of each day, all personal and work related items are removed and placed in storage'. Storage refers to the use of 'hotboxes' in which staff are required to place any personal belongings when they finish work; the aim of which is to ensure that staff no longer have a fixed place of work. This is known as 'hot desking'—a trend which is increasingly common (see Felstead et al., 2005: 428). A presentation to senior managers in May 2011 titled 'Programme Overview' discussed progress with the transformation and one of the slides was titled 'Bringing people on the journey' and so we can observe that this metaphor imbued the change programme and was clearly intended to present change in a positive way.

The journey metaphor relates to change, new working practices and the need to create spatially flexible subjects. It is more than a means to depict the process of change or new work practices because it also refers to a new way of being. The metaphor fosters a view of work where one is in movement and so there is no place to call home. Instead, employees and management are required to become transient and continually flow from one place to another as required. It reflects the discourse in the

central government documents and also the subjectivity of the CAs as we will explore in the next section.

Change and Change Agent Subjectivity as a Journey

Philippa (head of transformation), had worked at Copperdale for ten years at the time of the research. She had previously been a head of service and, at that time, was critical of change:

> I was one of the moaning Heads of Service who didn't like change programmes and suddenly I've kind of crossed over to the dark side except that it's not the dark side anymore. At first people thought you were mad. 'What are you doing? Why are you going over there? You've got a nice little empire over here'. Well, I want to try something new, I think I can make it better.

Redolent of the journey metaphor, Philippa described a self in process. First she was a head of service and a critic of change, now she is a change agent, an advocate and leader of change. The metaphor of the 'dark side' (see Linstead et al., 2014) was used to describe how change was once understood but she asserted that she no longer views change programmes in this way. This statement nevertheless indicates that COT is seen by some in terms of the 'dark side' of organisational life. Philippa linked her experience of change to her approach towards managing change, which in turn was linked to the journey metaphor. Hence you:

> kind of learn those things along the way really that change is about people and you have to bring them on the journey with you.

These remarks suggest that change cannot simply be done to people and so they have to be enticed and brought along on 'the journey' and this is indicative of a 'relational' (Foucault, 1980, 1982) understanding of power. Nevertheless, insisting that others join a journey that is determined and designed by others is more in keeping with a 'propertied' (ibid) view of power. It also reflects a belief that through powers of persuasion, CAs possess the power to effect change. Transience appeared to define the CAs way of working, careers and subjectivity hence Karen, a project manager, felt that impermanence defines the COT team:

> I'd say that very few people in COT are in a union because a bit more transient, bit more come in for a couple of years, do work on a few projects, move on.

The CAs embraced flexible careers, which fits with the journey metaphor and they sought to promote or impose this transient way of working and

being on others. The comments of Michael (project manager), are indicative of a subject who embraces the journey and change. Like stations on a railway journey, his career is populated by a series of projects:

> I was a graduate management trainee and I did two years and my second placement, my third, my fourth all involved working on projects. Erm, so I think from fairly early on, I was attracted by the idea about a project. . . . it changes a lot and I quite like change. I think that keeps your job quite fresh.

According to Michael, it is uncertainty and a sense of being on a journey that appeals to him because 'I like the unknown, the new challenges arriving'. Like the consultants Costas (2013) describes 'the absence of a designated workplace is largely understood as an exciting opportunity of spatial flexibility, discursively set against 'normal' and 'dull' nine-to-five jobs, fixed to a certain place' (op cit: 1476). The new transient or processual subjectivity has, however, met with resistance from those who do not share this worldview. Interestingly, the CAs viewed this resistance as part of the 'journey' through which both the change programme and *they* are evolving. Hence the transition to the new building has encountered resistance in relation to the 'clear desk' policy as Karen explained:

> it's kind of like part way through a journey. We're not at the end of the journey yet so there's just been some interesting things which I thought would of been easier that are proving more difficult.
>
> (project manager)

Karen's insights suggest that 'at the end of the journey' there will be an absence of resistance. Although resistance for Karen was unexpected and enduring, her comments are indicative of a belief that CAs possess the power to eradicate resistance at journey's end.

The CAs that were interviewed did not express any caution or caveats about their ability to reconstitute working lives in relation to the 'journey' metaphor nor were any reservations expressed about the consequences of doing so. They were less 'ambiguous' (Costas, 2013: 1481) in their accounts of their lives than Costas' (2013) found in relation to 'external' consultants who were attracted by the glamour and freedom of being a consultant but experienced 'mobility as alienating and unsettling' (op cit: 1478). These ambiguities and negatives were not voiced by the CAs but then they were not physically travelling in the way that Costas' consultants were. The CAs welcomed, advocated and sought to impose a transitory workspace on others. This was not linked in a negative way to 'a sense of instability' (op cit: 1479) either for themselves or others but as something to be unequivocally embraced.

Embracing the Journey Metaphor and the Spatially Flexible Self

According to Gabriel (2008) 'salesmanship, showmanship, and acting are the essential virtues of the flexible individual, able to sail through today's flexible organizations in a way that optimizes benefits' (op cit: 317). Sennett (1998) refers to such individuals as chameleon-employees who adapt to their surroundings, do any job and play any part the work requires. It could be argued that these chameleon-employees, who sail through contemporary organisations, embrace the journey metaphor but whether they do so out of choice or necessity needs to be investigated. The CAs displayed this chameleon subjectivity apparently out of choice and they were not alone in their support for the new work regime as we shall explore in this section. Hence a number of individuals commented on the benefits of flexibility including the ability to interact or network with colleagues; working in different locations; logging on to your computer from home and from different work stations. Open plan working was argued to have reduced the number of emails people send due to the physical proximity of being seated together:

> The positive side of it is there's a lot more informal kind of networking going on. . . . And that's been really helpful because we work on the next bank of desks. . . . so there's a lot of informal discussion and updates
>
> (Nigel, adults coordinator)

According to Rob, a finance manager, 'various' pods located around the building are 'fantastic for ad hoc meetings' and he appreciated this because 'they are quite useful just to get away from the noise'. This allusion to noise will be returned to later because not everyone found the new way of working so easy to accommodate. Catherine, an officer in housing, felt that hierarchical divisions were less evident now and that inter-staff relations had improved:

CATHERINE: the Director of Housing, he had a little office and it was like if you want to go in you have to get past the secretary and blah blah blah, and now I could, if I want to, just go up and start talking to him. He could still just tell me to go away, but I think that's good, you have a bit more sort of banter, even if it's just hello and goodbye.
DARREN: Are people working differently as a consequence of being here?
CATHERINE: Possibly, a little bit. I think it's better. Sometimes you get into an email thing with somebody and you don't really know who they are and you don't really know what they do. And here, someone will say 'Well that person's sitting over there', and because they're not behind a door you just go up to them.

Catherine nevertheless acknowledged that not 'everyone would feel that way'. Other individuals, who embraced the new way of working/being liked the idea of having a 'hot box' where personal belongings are stored each evening, so that one can physically work anywhere:

> I used to have piles of stuff on my desk. I've completely gone the other way. I put everything in the hot box at the end of the day and I'm quite fastidious about it. And I like the idea of you've got to be ready to move, especially at the moment because I could be working in another team in a couple of weeks. I've just got to pick up my hot box and off I go. And I quite like that. I like the idea that I can go and grab a desk on level 5 because I want a bit of peace and quiet I can go up there. I like the flexibility of it and I like that feeling of not being rooted in the same office and stuck in your own little four walls and you only see your own team.
>
> (Tim, manager, strategic housing)

As Tim's remarks indicate, this is more than just a way of working for it requires a different subjectivity whereby one is not 'rooted' and has to be 'ready to move'. Tim has clearly changed and aligned himself with the journey metaphor. Rob, a finance officer, alluded to the way people have changed due to the surveillance embedded in open-plan working. He remarked 'there's perhaps less scope for people to stamp around shouting when they could do that in their old offices, whereas here they would be immediately apparent across the floor'. In this way, he indicated that people have had to modify their behaviour and subjectivity because what they do is more visible and open to scrutiny. This change in the organisation of work has generated a panoptic pressure to internalise the watchful eye of both peers and the hierarchy (Foucault, 1977). Despite the positive associations with open plan, flexible, hot desk working, even its supporters indicated that it has not been universally embraced, hence Tim referred to the planning department:

> if anyone ever says why do we have to keep our desks tidy, and keep the area clear of stuff and I say that's why, because they've not embraced the change. There isn't room for all that stuff. It's not their fault they don't have enough room for all that stuff. Something's gone wrong over there because they don't have enough room for all these files and they've got to have all these paper files apparently to do what they do, literally in piles on the floor, so there is an example what happens if you don't embrace the change. And over there, generally speaking, in my corner, what happens if you do.

There is a curious contradiction and ambiguity here because, on the one hand, Tim elevated himself as someone who embraces change and vilified

those others in planning because they do not. His criticisms regarding the 'files' in 'piles on the floor' suggest that planning are resisting the clear desk policy. On the other hand, however, Tim suggested that there are certain types of work, which sit uneasily with transient working due to the nature of the work they do ('It's not their fault'). This contradiction was also played out during a conversation between Tim and Anna, a print manager:

ANNA: Nobody's managing that, nobody's controlling it. Somebody in that area should be saying 'This doesn't go'. That's going to sound bureaucratic, telling them off, but look around the building. We have an incentive—we're having a Tidy Friday—and encouraging people to clean up.

TIM: Maybe it's the sheer amount of paperwork. . . . if you look at the files that they've got, because it's Planning, they can't scan it all in—how long would it take to scan all that lot.

ANNA: If you were to get them in and ask them can you have a generic office, they'd say 'No way, because we've got more of this', and it's the same in terms of our department. We need a different facility. We need a ground floor with different loading areas. We can't have everybody in one type of office.

Tim suggested that the lack of conformity with the clear-desk policy reflects that planning' requires a huge amount of paper, which has not been electronically stored. Anna initially attributed this to poor management and resistance ('no way, because we've got more of this') but then stated that the work of planning and her own work does not fit with a clear-desk, generic, transient way of working. In view of this, even those who seemed to support the journey metaphor and the spatially flexible subjectivity acknowledged that the new ways of working are not without problems, resistance and limitations.

Counter-Metaphors: Opposition to the 'Journey'

> They used to send really catty emails when we were in the old building about coming here that I used to get so frustrated replying to. . . . Once, the subject line was, 'Journey to the New World'. Jesus Christ! We're going down the Street. Not everybody thinks of this as being a great experience.
>
> (Julie, contracts officer)

Julie 'mocked' (Collinson, 1992) the metaphorical discourse of a 'journey to the new world' and this can be understood as 'resistance at the level of subjectivity' (Merilainen et al., 2004: 558). Likewise Bob, a community officer, criticised management for 'continually re-badging things to make

a difference'. He suggested that the changes are superficial and amount to little more than a renaming exercise. Hence the personnel department has been re-labelled the employee life cycle team:

> It's like, we are changing, we are becoming—you know, our life cycle, saying the right things. We are, you know, we are butterflies—that we can go into the stratosphere and improve our lot whilst we're improving the rest of the city. You know, that's all well and good for PR but the impression it creates to ordinary members of staff who've been around long enough to hear all the different words, where people are just changing to say 'Oh if we change the name it'll be better' without getting to the nitty gritty of it.

Bob criticised the discourse of change by suggesting that it is merely a public relations exercise rather than anything substantial. He wielded a counter-metaphor of employees as 'butterflies' that can flit from job to job, always in process, always becoming that is clearly critical of the journey metaphor. It has been theorised that organisations, self and change can be better understood as a process (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002), however, when this process philosophy is used as a means to exercise power by imposing change and a new identity, the experience appeared to be unsettling for some. Elona, was an officer in the homelessness team at the time of the research and she introduced another counter-metaphor. Hence she argued that staff feel like 'office nomads' whereby one has 'no identity as a person'. Elona referred to the threat that the new way of working poses to how people establish their sense of self in relation to the communities in which they work and the spaces they inhabit. Similarly Ian, a programme manager for housing, argued that:

> It's actually disturbing. It's like anti-psychology. I think what people like, rightly or wrongly, is that how people function is they work as families, so you need their little nest, your little working area with your things around you, and that kind of security is really valuable and I think there is a value to be able to go anywhere in the organization and sit down and log on, so the hot-desking idea has a value, but also what's important is your place as well, and not being disturbed. I think open plan working and the corporate uniformity, everything being identical wherever you are, whatever floor you're on, is actually fundamentally wrong for people. It may be great economically, because you can just order everything exactly the same. We have these little boxes and you're supposed to clear your desk at the end of the day. People have stopped doing it.

Ian used the counter-metaphors of 'family' and 'nest' in a way that challenged the 'journey' metaphor and the spatially flexible subject. His

insights, identified long ago by Trist and Bamforth (1951), regarding the importance of group belonging, appear to have been forgotten by advocates of spatial flexibility. Ian's insights reflect the tension between a 'fluid career' of 'freedom and self-direction' versus the need for 'stability and security' (Baruch and Vardi, 2015: 7). This does not just make 'employees vulnerable in regard to their ability for future planning' (ibid) but potentially threatens their identity, community and sense of belonging. These employees mocked the journey metaphor and indicated that staff were resisting through not complying with the clear desk policy ('people have stopped doing it'). Others, such as Christine, a design officer, expressed their opposition in more managerial ways:

> When I first came here, I didn't like it first of all. We were hot-desking. We didn't have enough desks. The Manager said people can sit anywhere and even though we were a team of 30 people and we were in three distinct work streams with a team leader, it doesn't matter where you sat and I was team leader. I might have one person in my team sat with me. Other people who didn't like their team leader would be sat with my team and then they would be chatting and I'd think, 'What's going on here?', and I had to try and keep on top of what was happening with my team. . . . I was having to shout across the office, and in the end we just said to the manager 'This isn't working', so we went in our little teams because our work was quite confidential, in parts.

These remarks criticise the practicalities of spatial flexibility and implicitly the journey metaphor from a management perspective. The fluidity of movement made managing Christine's team more difficult and generated new problems due to the lack of a cohesive group that sits and works together.

Christine referred to the need for confidentiality in relation to her work and Elona made a similar remark in relation to the need for privacy when talking to homeless people in her unit. Elona stated that 'We feel we have to be very mindful of what's being overheard because of the nature of our work'. As has already been indicated, the CAs dismissed or resisted the legitimacy of complaints about confidentiality by drawing on government documents such as *Working Without Walls* (Allen et al., 2004). Moreover, they pointed out that there are private rooms that individuals can use and that documents can be locked away. Nevertheless, employees continued to express opposition to the spatially flexible subject in relation to issues around confidentiality:

> It creates problems for us as a team and for me because of a lot of the information that we are likely to be sharing or discussing, particularly with other agencies—so over the phone like the police, staff, or

> on occasions members of the public. It's very sensitive, personal, confidential information. . . . you then have to make a decision about—you know, do I have this conversation when there could be 20 or 30 people around that can hear it, or do I stop the conversation, take myself off and run the risk of not getting hold of the person when I try and get back to them
>
> (Nigel, adults coordinator)

Laura is a manager who works for the Corporate Core Services and although she felt that hot desking works well for her because 'I'm out and about a lot', the open plan office was more problematic:

> it's very difficult to concentrate at times when you're in this kind of environment, and also you can't 'hide' so if someone wants to find you. Some days I just don't ever even get to type because you have so many people queuing up to come and see you, whereas I think if people were in their own offices then it didn't happen as much, but you're a bit exposed here and people think they can interrupt you all the time, which is quite difficult.

The notion of a transient workforce that continually interacts and does not require a specific location or privacy is clearly problematic for Laura. There are efficiencies associated with spatial flexibility but, as we can see, it also generates inefficiencies. Mike, a homelessness officer, was also critical of open plan working due to issues around privacy:

> We're expected to perform interviews about domestic violence, about issues of child neglect, issues like that, in an open forum where anyone can hear it—there are rooms available but they're not always available.

It was evident that for some workers being an 'office nomad' was not positive and nor was it a practical option for some services and so the clear desk policy was resisted:

> The other day I found this folder that had been secreted in a storage area that was supposed to be got rid of, and this guy had been carrying round with him and he'd found a place to hide it, so he'd stuck it in this cupboard.
>
> (Allistair, data officer)

It appears that objects such as a 'folder' and 'piles of paper' provide a comfort blanket for some individuals. They provide safety/security and so in this sense they are an important means through which these employees resisted the journey metaphor and affirmed who they are. This

reflects the traditional way in which these people have worked and so they resisted by adhering to established work norms and practices.

The Dark Side of the Journey Metaphor

According to Ian, a programme manager for housing, the new management discourse attempts to create a particular type of person through:

> the idea of constant change, constant reviews, constant honing, people being interviewed on a regular basis. I've got colleagues who have been interviewed three or four times now and it's quite rigorous processes as part of ongoing redesigns.

Ongoing service redesign means that the journey never ends and people are continually re-interviewed for the jobs that remain. Although survivors can develop and display 'resilience' (Baruch and Vardi, 2015: 9), Ian indicated that this constant change and movement generates 'stress' (ibid).

There has been a move toward more generic roles to facilitate the journey of change. Laura (research manager), explained that 'the jobs are all slightly changing and becoming more generic' whereby one metaphorically becomes 'Jack of all trades and master of none'. This metaphor can be read as a critique of generic roles due to the threat that they pose to knowledge/expertise/skills. The shift to a more flexible or generic role is impacting on managers and staff and, although it is consistent with the NPM and the journey metaphor, it concerned a number of individuals, as they felt that their managers are no longer able to understand what they do:

> On numerous occasions, if a customer has said to me 'I want to speak to the manager', I've had to say 'The manager won't be able to help you because they don't know the subject matter'. . . . I think it's led to the managers' under-appreciating what the requirements of the job are as well. They don't appreciate how much knowledge it takes, how quickly you can do something, how much you can do in one go. . . . And then there's a feeling of resentment between management and staff because of that
>
> (Hayley, benefits officer)

The intention is for managers to be generic in terms of being able to work anywhere and manage any service. This is consistent with the NPM and journey metaphor and yet their lack of technical knowledge and general understanding of what it means to do a particular role, potentially undermines' their ability to manage. Hence staff cannot approach generic managers for advice because they lack both 'explicit' and 'tacit' knowledge (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995) regarding the job. It means that

management expectations of a job may be unrealistic. Hayley suggested that this fosters tensions between managers and staff. It also appeared to impair the ability of managers to improve processes as Peter, a housing officer, explained:

> I think the modern view of management is . . . it's just generic management skills, but actually it's crucially undermined if you're trying to supervise people and you don't actually know what's supposed to be a good way of doing the job that they're doing.

The journey metaphor and the discourse around spatially flexible subjects implies empowered workers that are not tied to a specific task or physical location. This development can, however, be seen as a means to intensify control. Hence Allistair, a data officer, who has gone through three internal interviews following continuous organisational restructuring, explained:

> the service redesign was to try and make people more flexible so you can move people around the organisation to where they're most needed, or where they're best fitted, so they want you to have generic skills because then you'll be more easily fitted into whatever role is required.

Allistair's remarks suggest that flexibility facilitates control as it enables managers to move employees around the organisation as demand requires. This provides an economic justification for such changes but it threatens extant communities and the sense of identity, which is bound up with such communities. The shift towards a generic worker irritated Allistair because he believed that it marks a move away from job specific abilities and skills towards ambiguous values such as whether one demonstrates 'quality' in their work. Dominic, a support officer, was equally critical of this dilution of skills or substance in favour of *appearance*. He referred to the internal interviews one goes through following a service redesign:

DOMINIC: When you go for an interview you know what job you're going for. They'll say, 'give an example of this, that', etc., but this was very wishy-washy. It was like, give an example of how you've helped somebody out, or give an example of what you think of change, or what do you think of Copperdale, and it's like what's that got to do with the job? It's more like an informal conversation. Like an informal chat which you have down the pub. It's not an interview for a proper job.

DARREN: What's the idea about it being generic?

DOMINIC: They just want everybody to be the same really. It's not really about giving people more skills or developing them, everybody's the

> same. So you can do this particular role, not just in this building, I could go to another office in the City Centre or another office in the authority.

Dominic's comments are redolent of the 'boundaryless' career, which according to Inkson (2006) is a 'variant' of the journey metaphor. Jobs that once defined who you are, your skills, career path, what you do, where you work, which provided a sense of security, community, skill and progression are being eroded. Advocates of flexible working (e.g. Hammer and Champy, 1993), often contrast it with a Taylorist/Fordist work environment where everyone is regimented and standardised. A curious contradiction arises, however, when flexibility amounts to the same thing. The following staff used a counter-metaphor of 'numbers' to present a critical understanding of the self that is emerging through the journey:

LAURA: Yes. We all have prison numbers on our desks. All our desks are numbered (Research Manager).
IAN: Yes. We are numbers (Ian, Programme Manager).
DARREN: And what is the purpose of that?
IAN: The idea is that you can be assigned potentially. So you could come in, in the morning, and I think this is the vision for the future. Because you come in, in the morning and you'd log on and it would say 'OK, today you're number 1145', and then you go there, and that's your desk for the day, and then tomorrow you come in and 'You're 3748 today', so you think right, that's third floor then, but it doesn't really matter because it's all the same, same chair, same colours, same Ian.

The notion that you are a 'number' is redolent of Morgan's (1986) machine metaphor and other staff made a more specific link to the machine metaphor. These can be understood as counter-metaphors that stand in opposition to the positive representation of the journey and the spatially flexible self as advanced by the CAs and in central government documents:

> This is an organization to me that is so different to the organization that I joined that it seems almost like a corporate machine now and everything seems not so much about the service and the quality of service but more about the cost.
>
> (Tracy, contracts officer)

Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter has sought to add to our understanding of Change Management by exploring the role that metaphors play in relation to change. It considered the metaphors that central government

and CAs used to effect change. Metaphor infused Copperdale's strategic representations but, as we saw, this attempt to exercise power met with opposition from employees and managers who wielded their own counter-metaphors. Metaphor then is a condition of the struggles that emerge during change. The chapter suggested that using a journey metaphor to promote spatial flexibility may be a flawed project. Rather than a utopia of transient, empowered, skilled, enriched workers, the 'journey' which managers and staff were urged to embrace appeared to result in a loss of control. The promotion of generic skills consistent with the NPM meant a loss of knowledge and understanding for managers and staff plus constant insecurity as redesign followed redesign. It also promoted individualisation (Foucault, 1977; McCabe, 2007a) as communities were broken apart and a nomadic existence as one wanders from floor to floor, job to job, building to building as and when required. More research is required to assess how widespread this is and to examine its consequences over time but what is clear is that advocates of spatial flexibility have paid insufficient attention to the potential 'dark side' of such transience. Moreover, there are real dangers for employees and management that can stem from change linked to such harmless metaphors as the 'journey' or 'walls' because the resulting fragmentation can lead to a loss of knowledge/skills/experience, a lost sense of work community and an inability to resist such pressures through the splintering of the potential for solidarity.

6 Management Resistance

Introduction

A key assumption underpinning the Change Management literature is that managers will support endeavours to change organisations. This chapter questions this assumption and argues that it is problematic because not all managers are instigators, beneficiaries or agents of change and so, as recipients, they may seek to resist it. The chapter explores how bureaucracy became a medium through which the managers and CAs at Copperdale endeavoured to control *and* resist each other. Bureaucracy, whether in its traditional or post-bureaucratic guise, is often seen as a form of control and yet this neglects how bureaucracy can be simultaneously a medium and means of resistance. Although scholars have identified isolated instances of resistance by specific groups of managers, it will be argued that bureaucratic management resistance needs to be understood as far more pervasive, varied and continuous than such accounts suggest. The management resistance explored in this chapter is presented as predominantly a struggle against 'domination' by central government and CAs rather than a struggle against 'exploitation' or 'subjection' (Foucault, 1982: 212). As we shall see, however, these are not mutually exclusive struggles. It is argued that categorising resistance in this way can help to bring into sharper relief different forms of resistance along with the differences between them.

In the UK, as organised workplace resistance has waned in line with declining trade union membership, interest in informal forms of workplace resistance has flourished (see Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999; Collinson, 1994; Fleming and Spicer, 2003; Iedema et al., 2006; Knights and McCabe, 2000b; Prasad and Prasad, 2000; Symon, 2005; Thomas and Davies, 2005). Jermier *et al.* (1994), in their book *Resistance and Power in Organizations*, and Thompson and Ackroyd's (1995) subsequent article, 'All Quiet on the Workplace Front', provided a rallying call for research into resistance that continues to reverberate (see, for example, Contu, 2008; Ezzamel et al., 2001; Karreman and Alvesson, 2009; McKinlay and Taylor, 1996).

The majority of this literature focuses on how employees resist management (Hodson, 1995) or 'limit managerial control' (Prasad and Prasad, 2000: 387) and other forms of struggle have tended to be displaced or neglected. According to Collinson (1994) 'Resistance constitutes a form of power exercised by subordinates in the workplace' (op cit: 49) but it is not only subordinates who resist, for as Fleming and Spicer (2008) note 'Those in positions of power also resist' (op cit: 304). Our analysis of resistance then should not be limited to employees or seen as exclusive to the labour-management nexus as a number of scholars have argued (see Fleming, 2007; LaNuez and Jermier, 1994; Larson and Tompkins, 2005; Prasad and Prasad, 2000; Real and Putnam, 2005; Russell and McCabe, 2015; Thomas and Davies, 2005; Zald and Berger, 1978). Indeed, if we only focus on 'employee' resistance then there is a danger of reinforcing negative stereotypes of workers as blockers of change or luddites. It can lead us to neglect that many managers are also on the receiving end of changes, which they may seek to resist.

It is appropriate to use Foucault's (1982) term 'struggle' to grasp the way in which the managers and 'internal' consultants or Change Agents (CAs) resisted each other at Copperdale City Council. This reflects his 'relational' understanding of power whereby no single group or individual is believed to possess power. It also avoids focusing on isolated acts of resistance by a single party as if resistance exists in a vacuum and it helps to avoid 'talk of victims and perpetrators and the reduction of complexity into simple terms' (Deetz, 2008: 387). It is also useful because the struggle between managers and CAs does not easily sit within the traditional categories of workers versus management; change agents [usually management] versus the recipients of change or power versus resistance (see Collinson, 1994; Fleming and Spicer, 2008; Jermier et al., 1994). Indeed, even the singular notion of management resistance is problematic because different layers of management resisted in different ways. It has been argued that we need to expand 'common visions of who resists' (Ashcraft, 2005: 74) and so including struggles between managers and CAs is a fruitful place to begin based on the findings that emerged from this study.

The central questions that this chapter explores are (1) how is resistance currently conceptualised?, (2) does this help us to understand management resistance? and (3) how would resistance and specifically management resistance need to be reconceptualised to better understand the events in the following case study? The chapter is organised as follows. The next section positions the empirical findings in relation to the literature on resistance and it explores the limited literature on management resistance. We then return to the case of Copperdale before drawing out the main insights of the chapter in a conclusion.

The Resistance Landscape: Distinguishing Between Forms of Resistance

> Generally, it can be said that there are three types of struggles: either against forms of domination (ethnic, social, and religious); against forms of exploitation which separate individuals from what they produce; or against that which ties the individual to himself and submits him to others in this way (struggles against subjection, against forms of subjectivity and submission).
>
> (Foucault, 1982: 212)

The distinction between struggles against domination, exploitation and subjection offers a useful means to distinguish between different forms of workplace resistance and to advance our understanding of it. Hence labour process and industrial relations scholars have tended to focus on struggles against economic exploitation whereby resistance is understood to be 'shaped by the oppressive nature of capitalist modes of production' (Putnam et al., 2005: 7). Scholars have analysed individual and collective forms of resistance, trade union disputes and strikes (see, for example, Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999; Allen, 2009; Bacon and Blyton, 2006; Edwards, 1986; Hyman, 1972; Turnbull and Sapsford, 2001). These accounts situate resistance in relation to the exploitation of labour by capital and its managerial agents. Although this does not preclude a focus on management resistance, scholars in this tradition have understandably been drawn to disparate forms of employee resistance.

A separate body of work that is more post-structural in orientation has drawn our attention to resistance to subjection and focuses on struggles in relation to subjectivity (Jermier et al., 1994; Ezzamel et al., 2001; Knights and McCabe, 2000b; Putnam et al., 2005). Hence scholars have focused on distance (Collinson, 1994); cynicism (Fleming and Spicer, 2003); irony (Fleming and Sewell, 2002; Real and Putnam, 2005); memory (McCabe, 2004, 2010); being unreasonably reasonable (Ezzamel et al., 2001); disidentification (Holmer Nadesan, 1996) and humour (Collinson, 1988, 1992) as forms of resistance. Although this literature is informed by different theoretical assumptions than LPT, it has also largely focused on employee struggles but in relation to subjectivity.

The concept of resistance can be fruitfully unpacked if we distinguish between struggles that relate largely to economics (exploitation), subjectivity (subjection) and the domination of certain groups by others. It is quite common for authors to blur these distinctions hence Morgan (1986) refers to organisations 'as instruments of domination' (op cit: 275) and argues that 'The domination metaphor encourages us to recognize and deal with perceived and actual exploitation in the workplace' (op cit: 317). Here, domination is conflated with exploitation. Similarly, Costas and Fleming (2009) state 'as organizational domination

seemingly becomes increasingly geared towards constituting the identities of employees, a growing body of research has focused on workplace dis-identification' (op cit: 353). Here, domination is conflated with subjection. Moreover, Edwards (2010) argues that 'workplace struggles' are 'about the meaning and value of work as well as wages' (op cit: 33), which links struggles against exploitation to struggles against subjection.

This blurring and lack of clarity should perhaps come as no surprise when one considers that these terms are not mutually exclusive, for example, one resists subjection in a context of economic exploitation. Moreover, Foucault, at times, conflated these struggles. Hence he refers to 'technologies' of 'power, which determine the conduct of individuals [i.e. subjection] and subject them to certain ends or domination, an objectivising of the subject' (Foucault, 1988: 18). This obscures the difference between domination and subjection. At other times, Foucault separates domination and subjection when he explains 'that if one wants to analyze the genealogy of the subject in Western civilization' one 'has to take into account not only the techniques of domination but also techniques of the self' (Foucault, 1993: 203–204).

Of course, Foucault (1982) makes it clear that struggles against domination, exploitation and subjection are entwined and are likely to be implicated in any single act of resistance. Nevertheless, although 'subjection cannot be studied outside' of its 'relation to the mechanisms of exploitation and domination' (Foucault, 1982: 213), it can be argued that each offers a distinctive way in which to grasp the dynamics of different struggles. To separate them is therefore useful for analytical purposes not least because it can help us to surface forms of struggle that do not easily sit within the labour-management nexus.

In particular, separating domination from subjection and exploitation can help to elucidate different forms of *management* resistance that have tended to be neglected in labour process / industrial relations accounts that largely focus on employees' economic struggles (e.g. strikes) and post-structural accounts that have mainly attended to employees struggles against subjection. Domination is a useful term to grasp the types of struggle that emerge when managers and CAs resist each other in a context of central government public sector spending cuts. The following sub-section explores the limited literature on management resistance.

Management Resistance as a Neglected Topic

This section focuses on the literature that has attended to management resistance, which remains limited despite Brower and Adolafia's (1995) assertion that 'little systematic examination of managerial resistance has been offered' (op cit: 150). Subsequently, Dent and Goldberg (1999) argued that 'The greatest need for change in order to overcome resistance is in the manager' (op cit: 36). As has already been pointed out, it

is problematic to assume that resistance can be overcome nevertheless this alludes to the need for greater attention to be given to management resistance.

In an interesting article, Prasad and Prasad (2000) attended to the way in which managers constitute employee resistance but they did not consider how managers themselves may resist. Other accounts have identified isolated instances of resistance among different groups of managers. Hence Bresnen *et al.* (2004) considered how 'project managers' may resist new initiatives when they are perceived as a threat to their autonomy and Smith (1990) found that middle managers may subvert calls from top management to reduce the workforce. Spreitzer and Quinn (1996) identified how middle managers attribute blame to executives for resisting change and Badham *et al.* (2003: 715) examined senior management resistance in terms of their failure to fully support a culture change programme. Brower and Abolafia (1995) explored how managers may use informal networks to resist in ways that support rather than challenge organisational goals, whilst Ashcraft (2005) discussed how airline pilots, who were in a position of managerial authority over flight crews, discursively resisted what they perceived as their 'declining control' (op cit: 85).

Managerial resistance can be at times be extremely subtle as when managers effectively resist through 'ambivalence' (Larson and Tompkins, 2005: 16). Described as 'resistance through devotion', managers may use the discourse of a 'successful past to effectively counter arguments' (op cit: 17) calling for change. Although many employees and managers were devoted to their jobs at Copperdale the resistance was not always as subtle or as singular as these findings suggest. Instead, it took on a variety of forms and expressions some of which were more overt than others.

More recently, Thomas *et al.* (2011) have highlighted that middle managers may resist culture change programmes through contesting the meaning of the customer and Courpasson *et al.* (2012) have explored how an 'enclave' of branch managers, resisted what could be described as the domination of marketing managers. Ford and Ford (2010) provided an example of directors in a Local government authority resisting the ill-conceived ideas of CAs by asking them to engage in a more in-depth programme of consultation. These accounts point towards isolated and episodic instances of managerial resistance.

The research to-date then suggests that management resistance is a temporary or isolated event that relates to single issues among specific groups of managers. These findings and arguments diverge from the situation at Copperdale, where management resistance was far more pervasive and enduring. In the study by Courpasson *et al.* (2012), management resistance did not reflect 'a contest based on systematic adversarial positioning from threatened occupational communities' (Courpasson et al., 1012: 813) but, at Copperdale, it did and so this can help us to understand the degree and extent of the management resistance that was observed.

Other studies have focused on the potential for management to sabotage corporate initiatives (Zald and Berger, 1978) and this has been linked to the division between the interests of 'capital' and those of 'management' (LaNuez and Jermier, 1994). Additional complexities arise in public sector organisations, however, where managers may identify with the services they provide and the case of Copperdale offers a useful illustration of such complexities. Hence managers resisted organisational transformation in a variety of ways and for a variety of reasons linked to self-interest; the extant way of life; the approach adopted towards change; identity; bureaucratic groupings; a commitment to established service provision; politics and anti-austerity sentiments. These issues meant that managers were often at odds with the CAs or 'internal' consultants who were tasked to implement change.

There has been virtually no research into how managers resist 'internal' consultants or CAs. Sturdy (2011) identified how managers may use 'external' consultants as 'scapegoats' to deflect criticism from themselves, which can be understood as a form of resistance. Indeed, he suggested that 'external' consultants may collude in this resistance because to be 'scapegoated' was considered to be part of their role. A different set of dynamics emerge, however, in relation to 'internal' consultants or CAs and there is a need to understand how managers and CAs resist each other. More generally, there is a need to unpack the notion of management resistance and to distinguish between the different forms it can take.

It has been asserted that management are not simply 'passive victims' (Sturdy, 1997: 389) or 'dupes' (Kitay and Wright, 2004: 3) of consultants and Wright (2008) notes that 'internal consultants' face 'being seen by other managers as simply the agents of senior management' (op cit: 311), which might spark opposition to them. Rather than consultants manipulating management, this can be related to what has been described as the 'exploitation-reversal theory' (Heller, 2002: 268). This postulates that managers may 'deliberately or unconsciously' exploit or resist 'consultants for their own advantage' (op cit: 266). According to Backlund and Werr (2008) in response to consultants, 'Employees might refuse cooperation, hide information, express cynicism, etc.' (op cit: 760) but we know little about how *managers* might resist 'internal' consultants/CAs and even less about how CAs might resist management.

Merilainen *et al.* (2004) posited that 'external' consultants talking about work/life balance to their superiors is 'a form of resistance' (op cit: 554). This is due to the fact that consultants are supposed to embrace work demands irrespective of how this impacts upon their non-work life. Nevertheless, this suggests that resistance is a relatively minor part of a consultant's life. By contrast, this chapter explores how the lives of 'internal' consultants/CAs are bound up with resisting the resistance of others. Ford *et al.* (2008) posited that there has been 'a consistent failure of researchers to explicitly consider the contribution of change agents

to resistance' (op cit: 363). This chapter therefore contributes to knowledge by exploring the dynamic and dialectical way in which CAs and managers resist each other. As we shall see, it was at least in part, the way in which the 'internal' consultants/CAs approached change that was responsible for some of the resistance they encountered. Nevertheless, in a situation of organisational transformation, constant change, job insecurity, redundancies and massive budgetary cuts, the resistance did not simply reflect the *approach* adopted towards change but also the *content and context* of change.

A Shift From Bureaucracy to Post-Bureaucracy

> The bureaucratic form of organization is increasingly being replaced by more flexible structures that are flatter, more rectangular in shape, and with power and authority more diffused and vested in those who deal directly with customers and the external environment.
>
> (Perrewe et al., 2000: 117–118)

This section provides an account of the bureaucratic/post-bureaucratic organisational form as a means to understand the widespread management resistance observed at Copperdale City Council. The assumption underpinning the literature that has heralded, prescribed or described an 'epochalist' (McSweeney, 2006) shift towards post-bureaucratic ways of organising is that management will support such endeavours (e.g. Drucker, 1992; Handy, 1994; Hammer and Champy, 1993; Heckscher and Donnellon, 1994; Kanter, 1989b; Peters and Waterman, 1982). This is questionable because managers, especially middle managers, often suffer because of the flexible, delayered, flatter, empowered, customer-focused, enterprising, team-based, decentralised, reengineered type of organisation that is associated with the post-bureaucratic (see Grey, 1994; Willmott, 1994). Indeed, in a privatised utility going through post-bureaucratic reform, a manager stated that 'we're cut to death and moved from pillar to post every two years and yet still expected to be loyal' (Thomas and Linstead, 2002: 85), which resonates with the case of Copperdale.

Grey and Garsten (2001: 230) view post-bureaucracy as a trend which includes 'a range of organisational changes which have as their espoused aim the erosion or dismantling of bureaucracy'. This erosion of bureaucracy can be questioned because post-bureaucratic ways of organising often reproduce key features of bureaucracy in the private sector (e.g. hierarchy, central control, functionalism, rationalisation, division of labour, specialisation, impersonal rules, procedures, detailed monitoring and record keeping). This is the case in relation to teamwork (Barker, 1993); project management (Clegg and Courpasson, 2004; Hodgson, 2002, 2005); Total Quality Management (Knights and McCabe, 1997, 1999;

Tuckman, 1994) and Business Process Reengineering (Grey and Mitev, 1994; McCabe, 2004; McCabe and Knights, 2000a). In this sense, the new organisations are hybrids of the bureaucratic and post-bureaucratic (see Alvesson and Thompson, 2005; Clegg and Courpasson, 2004; Hendry, 2006; Hopfl, 2006; Josserand et al., 2006). Indeed, according to Hopfl (2006) 'it is by now almost the conventional view that there is no simple, unilinear story to be told about bureaucracy being superseded by post-bureaucracy' (op cit: 9). Hence McSweeney (2006) posits 'there is considerable evidence of widespread bureaucratic intensification. . . . during the past few decades' (op cit: 25) in the UK Civil Service and local government (see also Alvesson and Thompson, 2005: 500).

Nevertheless, we need to question other underpinning assumptions regarding post-bureaucracy namely management's support for such endeavours. This needs to be questioned not least because 'The refurbished bureaucracy is an original combination of old types in a dynamic perceived as new, leaving a management whose identity was formed in the old ways of doing and being disconcerted as to how to implement the changes in their identity that are demanded' (Josserand et al., 2006: 55). Of course, the change demanded is not only in relation to identity but also concerns the culture, structures, processes and practices of work. This is not to suggest that managers have suddenly become radicals or Luddites who entirely oppose change. Indeed, the case of Copperdale City Council supports the opposing view that:

> Most managers still feel a moral duty to serve their employers and support their bosses, by working hard and to the best of their ability. They also feel a duty to look after, as best they can, the employees who report to them, people for whom they are morally as well as financially responsible.
>
> (Hendry, 2006: 270)

A significant problem is that managers are often confronted with contradictory demands and face ambivalent situations (see Hendry, 2006; Larson and Tompkins, 2005; McCabe, 2000; Watson, 1994a). They may be tasked to focus on quality whilst experiencing demands to deliver quantity output or urged to be team focused where there is an emphasis on monitoring individual performance (Knights and McCabe, 2003). These contradictions are also evident in the public sector where there is a public service ethos but intense pressure to cut costs. As individuals, managers are locked into competition with other managers for scarce resources and career progression whilst facing pressures to deliver, which can lead to potentially irrational actions such as adopting the latest managerial buzzword or flavour of the month as a means of advancement (see Huczynski, 1993; Knights and Murray, 1994; Lockyer and McCabe, 2011; Marchington et al., 1993; Parker, 1995). All of this exists in a context

of shattered job security in the wake of the 2008 GFC that has intensified a situation where managers 'hours are not limited and whose jobs are never finished' (Hendry, 2006: 271). In view of the contradictory demands, insecurities and pressures on management, it is problematic to assume that all managers will unequivocally support change. In the case of Copperdale, the introduction of CAs produced a new layer of bureaucracy that centralised Change Management. Rather than a dynamic of management enacting change it meant that the majority of managers, like employees, were on the receiving end of changes led by CAs accompanying cuts in public sector spending.

The critical literature has represented both bureaucracy and post-bureaucracy as forms of management control (Alvesson and Thompson, 2005; Barker, 1993; Sewell, 1998) and yet, reflecting the insecurities, contradictions and ambivalent situations managers confront, both need to be reconceptualised as arenas of control and resistance (see Larson and Tompkins, 2005). This applies in relation to employees, which has been well documented but also managers, which is less well known. To recognise these blurred boundaries between bureaucracy and post-bureaucracy and control and resistance fits with McSweeney's (2006) criticism of the 'epochalist vision' of post-bureaucracy that is 'one of total transformation' for it 'denies the complex, diverse, coexisting, and interpenetrating nature of organisations' (op cit: 31). Similarly, Foucault's (1982) 'relational' approach towards power also coincides with such arguments for it allows us to account for the pervasive and enduring struggles at Copperdale that we shall now return to.

The Case Study

The Transformation Programme

The annual cost of the Copperdale Organisational Transformation (COT) programme team was £4.5 million. The entire team is responsible to the director of transformation but the 100 CAs are managed by two heads of transformation. The two heads are each responsible for one element of the transformation programme. The first is the £50 million refurbishment programme that involved relocating 1,500 staff, which we began to discuss in Chapter 5 and which we will return to in subsequent chapters. The second involved a broader redesign of council services and to achieve this Target Operating Models (TOMs) had been developed for and with, each of Copperdale's four major service divisions. The TOMs outline how services are currently organised ('as is') and what they will look like after the redesign ('to be'). The following sub-sections explore the various forms of managerial resistance that the CAs encountered along with their resistance to this resistance. The first section considers some of the resistance that was exhibited by senior managers.

Senior-Level Opposition: Resistance Through Non-Compliance

> You can't take a new Target Operating Model (TOM) to our chief execs, not really interested. You have to do things in a more complex way.
>
> (Paige, director of transformation)

Although it may be thought that 'high-level managers or corporate executives' will display 'a corporate identity' and 'a deep sense of loyalty to corporate values' (LaNuez and Jermier, 1994: 236), this may not preclude resistance. Paige's comments indicate that senior managers were not always supportive of the changes proposed by the CAs. This does not mean that senior managers did not identify with the organisation only that they may not identify with the COT programme, aspects of it, the discourse or perhaps the context of change. As has been found in the case of an insurance company (McCabe, 2002), this might reflect that they confront what is, for them, an 'alien' (Sturdy, 2011: 522) language. Hence Paige believed that using the term TOM would foster resistance and so she sought to resist this resistance through avoiding a direct approach to senior management using this language. Philippa (head of transformation), also referred to senior level management resistance, which reflected that established lines of authority, ways of working and vested interests were being challenged through the planned transformation:

> It's not all fun and, you know, it's hard work because you are trying to *persuade* people. You are trying to persuade senior managers to give up *their* money and completely reengineer things that have been like this for 200 years.
>
> (emphasis added)

Senior managers control the budgets for their various departments/services and resisted attempts to dilute their authority and cut the finances allocated to their area. Philippa attempted to resist this resistance through persuasion, which indicates that she was not willing to accept senior management opposition to the planned changes. It also indicates that she was unable to simply impose change on others and so worked to persuade them to exercise power in line with the COT programme. There are fundamental issues at stake, which include the hierarchical order, jobs, a way of life, established identities and the provision of services that underpin this senior management resistance.

The seniority, respect for and longevity of the CEO presented a particular problem because as Paige remarked, 'nobody disagrees with the Chief Executive'. This unwillingness to disagree with the CEO contributed 'to the very reactions they [CAs] label as resistance' (Ford et al., 2008: 363).

The CEO is heavily involved in public-facing activities that require him to engage with numerous stakeholders and Miles, a CA and Programme manager, felt that these activities distance him from the day-to-day management of Copperdale. This was seen as contributing to the resistance by senior-level managers:

> he's got Strategic Directors that are almost left to have bull fights, and there's a lot of in-fighting that goes on across those about Transformation, because, you know, you'll have somebody saying 'Well I'm not having it'. They'll say 'Well if you're not doing it then I'm not doing it'. And you lack the Chief Executive having leadership to bang those heads.

The CEO devolves responsibility to strategic directors and consequently they decided whether to opt in or out of the COT programme. Non-compliance was also attributed to the CEO who resisted aspects of the change agenda that he had instigated. Thus despite *her* willingness to resist or directly confront the CEO, Paige asserted that the CEO was not always supportive of change:

> Where we've got the highest levels of crime, poor health, unemployment, low skills, all those issues, we looked at three areas of the City where they were the worst and I led a piece of work for 18 months, which was about looking at a whole family and how you can deliver services in a different way. . . . and the Chief Executive has not really bought into that.
>
> (Paige)

Irrespective of the rights or wrongs of the situation, it is apparent that Paige, as a CA, is far from a heartless agent of change because she is clearly concerned with the welfare of local people. A concern for others was evident in the comments of the majority of the CAs that were interviewed and this challenges negative representations of consultants as unfeeling, ruthless or purely self-interested.

This section has considered senior-level management non-compliance, which the CAs sought to resist through persuasion, avoiding certain language or direct confrontation. The notion of persuasion fits with a 'relational' (Foucault, 1982) understanding of power because the CAs were unable to impose change and had to seek the consent of senior managers to instigate their plans. It is also the case that the senior managers do not *have* power and so their opposition to change was continually challenged by the CAs. If we think about how power is traditionally understood in terms of planned change, the CEO or a change leader drives change and yet here the exercise of power was far more diffuse with CAs, the CEO

and senior managers all exercising power often in antagonistic ways reflecting their diverse identities and interests.

A Go Slow: Resistance Through Bureaucratic Manipulation

According to Hodson (1995) '*worker* resistance under bureaucratically mediated control' involves 'resistance *to* bureaucratic rules' (op cit: 94; emphasis added). By contrast, this section considers how managers resisted through *using* bureaucratic rules and their knowledge of them against the CAs to slow down or challenge change. The resistance posed by the separate divisions within Copperdale (i.e. adult, children, neighbourhood and central services) was something that Paige, the director of transformation, was employed by the CEO to address. She therefore attempted to resist the bureaucratic divisional structure as a means to instigate change:

PAIGE: when I first came here everyone had their own finance officer, everyone had their own HR team.
DARREN: When you say everyone, you mean each of the three Divisions.
PAIGE: Yes, and to some extent so did the corporate core. So we were all running a little mini-council, which was really inefficient, ineffective. We all had our own points of contact and if you were a City resident you had to work through our bureaucracy. . . . and it created boundaries between ourselves. . . . the rivalry between the Divisions and one of the things I was asked to do was to come up with models that break it all down.

The divisional/bureaucratic structure was both a focus for change but also the medium through which the divisions resisted. Paige resisted what she saw as the 'boundaries between ourselves', which referred to the ability of each division to exist as a separate 'mini-council'. It is intriguing, however, that her resistance to this bureaucratic structure amounted to the bureaucratic centralisation of change, HR and financial services. The resistance of both managers and the CAs therefore gravitated around control over the bureaucracy. Both sought to control and resist bureaucracy through bureaucracy.

Another manifestation of bureaucratic resistance was evident in relation to the figures through which the transformation team sought to make the case for change. Beverley, a programme manager on the COT team, elaborated upon this:

BEVERLEY: The availability of good data is absolutely crucial because we're using that as a basis for decision making and if there is no

> credibility to that data it just makes the task so hard. So you go in with a set of proposals about what things are going to cost and what it might cost in the future but, if those figures are flawed, then you end up talking about issues relating to the figures not about fundamental issues about how we change the service. So it acts as a real barrier actually. . . .
>
> DARREN: So does that almost become a means of resistance?
>
> BEVERLEY: Yes it does because the issue then becomes the credibility of the data as opposed to the actual proposals for change.

Bureaucratic control and resistance, in this instance, are intertwined as both management and CAs sought to use the bureaucracy to gain or maintain control and to resist each other. The resistance was 'facilitative' (Thomas et al., 2011: 35) or 'productive' (Courpasson et al., 2012) for the managers as it allowed them to slow down the process of change but not to stop it. It was also facilitative/productive for Beverley as a CA because she learnt that to achieve change it is necessary to build 'alliances' (Hartley et al., 1997: 67) or to establish good working relationships with others rather than to simply rely on figures to instigate change. It could be argued therefore that Beverley has learned that power is 'relational' (Foucault, 1982) because she discovered that power can only be exercised through the support of others. According to Hendry (2006), 'managing *in* a bureaucracy almost inevitably requires managing *round* a bureaucracy' (op cit: 275; original italics). Beverley did not so much try to get 'round' the bureaucracy through using numbers but found that she had to devise ways to get through it. Beverley expressed culpability for the management resistance she confronted because she had sought to effect change through numbers rather than through relationships. Her insights suggest that this bureaucratic resistance is 'a function of the quality of the relationship between agents and recipients in which change agents are and have been active participants and contributors' (Ford et al., 2008: 363).

The CAs figures may have been wrong and so the management resistance may have been justified. Alternatively, the management resistance may have just been an attempt to slow down the process of change. In view of this, 'developing strong working relationships' (Ford et al., 2008: 370) would not necessarily resolve the issue. The numbers represent management empires, identities, jobs, incomes and careers; the threat to public services and a way of life. If relationships can be improved this threat is not going to go away and so resistance is likely to endure. The management resistance in this instance relates to central government, senior management and CA domination but also to exploitation because jobs/careers are at risk and subjection because identities are threatened.

The senior management team (SMT) includes directors of divisions, each of which has multiple heads of service (HoS) and there are approximately

50–60 HoS across the entire council. Reflecting, in part, this divisional structure, the HoS do not have a single forum through which to meet and this creates communication problems across the council:

> The bureaucracy here is just incredible. . . . it churns issues and opportunities and challenges all around this management factory unnecessarily. If it didn't have so many people it would move a lot faster because there are so many people that think they have some skill in the game. They all want a say in it. . . . Got involved in Customer Service said 'Yes, this is what we need to do', there wasn't necessarily a disagreement to that vision but then when you started talking about it 'Ahh well, you know, got to do it this way, got to do that'.
>
> (Miles, CA and programme manager)

Miles attempted to control and resist the bureaucracy or what he referred to as 'this management factory'. He designed a single complaints leaflet to replace the multiple forms that existed:

> The managers within the services kicked off big style saying 'Well I haven't seen that'. Well said 'No, we've brought it through the governance of the Customer Services Group and took it to the Customer Services Implementation team'. And they were saying 'Oh no, can't do this, can't do that'. Lots of reasons why you can't, they were saying 'Well has that been to the Complaints board? Well it will have to go to the complaints board and then it will have to come back to the implementation team, then it will have to go to the Programme and then to the Improvement Board'. And you just think 'This is the complaints leaflet!'

This exemplifies Merton's (1940) critique of bureaucracy which is that 'bureaucratic officials affectively identify themselves with their way of life. . . . which leads them to resist change in established procedures' (op cit: 363). This illustrates that resistance to domination is also connected to struggles against subjection or, as Josserand *et al.* (2006) put it, 'the stickiness' of a 'previous identity' when individuals become 'entangled in the nets of their extant social ties' (op cit: 61). Miles asserted that people 'are more concerned about the process than they are the outcome', which is to suggest that they have become embedded in, preoccupied and identify with, the inner workings of the bureaucratic machine. It is debatable whether Miles' assessment is correct because there are serious issues at stake related to job losses, workload and service provision. Managers resisted Miles's attempt to introduce certain changes and this can be compared to a 'go slow'. Miles nonetheless attempted to control and resist the bureaucracy through by-passing established bureaucratic channels.

In effect, he attempted to manage '*round*' the bureaucracy (Hendry, 2006: 275; original italics) and confronted opposition in doing so.

These insights contribute an unusual twist to the argument that bureaucracy can be 'enabling' (Adler and Borys, 1996) or that there are 'positive features of bureaucracy' (Alvesson and Thompson, 2005: 502) because bureaucracy can be seen as a means to resist. It is productive of and enables resistance. It is certainly the case that 'bureaucracy can act as a counterweight to arbitrariness and managerial power' (ibid). But as we have seen, it is not always management exercising power. Management tended to be equated with bureaucracy by Alvesson and Thompson (2005) but they can also be on the receiving end of attempts to change the bureaucracy, which work through bureaucratic means and so bureaucracy can be used against them.

In this section, we have explored how managers may use bureaucratic structures, procedures and processes to maintain control and, in the process, evade or slow down change. Bureaucracy is simultaneously a medium of control and resistance for both the CAs and management. This is evident in the struggle over figures and the use of rules, procedures and committees to thwart each other's position. We considered how the CAs devised ways to resist management resistance through subverting the bureaucracy; centralising functions and building relations. Clearly, this is not a shift to a post-bureaucratic way of organising if, by this, it is meant that bureaucracy is left behind because bureaucracy continues to be at the heart of control and resistance.

Sabotage by Withdrawing Consent

The withdrawal of consent through a 'work-to-rule' is a long established means by which 'employees' resist management (see Brower and Abolafia, 1995: 158) but, an account of how managers withdraw consent, is missing from the literature and yet this characterised much of the resistance at Copperdale. According to Edwards (1990), consent 'cannot be reduced to a single measure. The analytical task is to explore its nature and constituent parts' (op cit: 141) but still the debate in relation to consent has largely focused on employees (e.g. Burawoy, 1979; Collinson, 1994; McCabe, 2011, 2014). An example of managers withdrawing consent arose during the research and it reflected managerial animosity following central government spending cuts. It resulted in a refusal to engage with aspects of the change programme and this also impacted on the research. This is more defiant resistance than attempting to delay change. It fits with LaNuez and Jermier's (1994) definition of sabotage as 'deliberate action or inaction that is intended to damage, destroy or disrupt some aspect of the workplace environment' (op cit: 221).

The empirical research was authorised by the director of transformation and the political leader of Copperdale and yet the heads of service

(HoS) and middle managers used the research as a means to vent their opposition to central government domination through spending cuts. The following extracts are from emails between Thomas, a member of the transformation team and myself. He had been tasked by the director of transformation to set up interviews with staff from different service areas and initially he stated: 'This should be easy to sort. When would you like to start your interviews?' A subsequent email indicated undiminished optimism: 'I can approach Heads of Service for volunteers, do you want people grouped by job title, grade or a bit of both?' This optimism began to drain away in a later email:

> I am not having much luck booking in appointments for you. Heads of Services are blocking this stating resource issues and not being able to release staff. I will need to approach this from another angle and may have to delay some of the appointments.

During a subsequent telephone conversation, Thomas described this resistance as 'political'. He remarked that departments are 'using' the 'cuts' for which they 'blame the Transformation team' as a means to resist releasing staff. He continued that they are 'trying to get back at the settlement' and consequently, the majority of the services have 'refused to be involved' in the research. In a later telephone conversation, Thomas explained that one of the HoS had 'made a political point and complained about the Government', which he said reflected that 'there's been massive changes with the cuts'. This resistance to domination by central government and the CAs did not only relate to the research hence Thomas was explicit that '*they're knocking lots back not just this*'. Nevertheless, Thomas persevered in his attempt to resist this resistance and although it proved possible to set-up interviews, each step was difficult, for as he said in one email 'I have not been able to secure anyone for Monday' and in another:

> It has been much harder than I initially thought to get the volunteers, I have still not heard from the HR department and I am going to chase that up today.

Thomas attempted to use HR managers as a means to resist the resistance of the HoS. He sought to circumvent the HoS and yet the HR managers also resisted by not responding to him and this sabotaged his endeavours. Thomas explained during another telephone conversation that HR is 'one of the areas we have had some resistance from' and in an email:

> I am afraid I have not had much take up for Monday's session, and I would not be too hopeful about further volunteers at this stage. . . . I am chasing up the HR team as they have still not managed to supply anyone. However, I am trying to get hold of some of their managers.

Thomas articulated his inability 'to get hold of' managers and this is indicative of a withdrawal of consent. He continued to face resistance saying 'I am so sorry the take up was so low, I have had complaints about resources'. During a final telephone conversation, he explained that we thought 'we'd have less resistance from management' to releasing staff.

Through focusing on managers rather than employees, this section has illustrated a variation of what LaNuez and Jermier (1994) described as 'sabotage by circumvention' involving a 'failure to act' (op cit: 240), whereby managers effectively sabotaged the CAs designs. Rather than smashing a machine or a product, it is a 'soft' type of sabotage; a 'symbolic statement of protest': an act of 'revenge' that provides a 'subtle reminder of injustices' (op cit: 245). As resistance, it reflects a struggle against the domination of central government and those tasked to deliver the cuts but, as we have seen, the CAs sought to resist this resistance through their 'resistance through persistence' (Collinson, 1994).

Middle and Frontline Managers: Resistance Through Resignation, Refusing Martyrdom and Persistence

In a move that is often linked to post-bureaucratic ways of organising, the transformation team sought to delayer management, which obviously threatens management jobs and this also explains some of the resistance that the CAs confronted. As Philippa (head of transformation) explained, a number of managers had 'voluntarily jumped ship' or, in other words, had resigned, which is a well know expression of individual resistance among 'employees' (see Coch and French, 1948: 517; Edwards, 1986: 257; Hodson, 1995: 93). Beverley, a programme manager and CA, elaborated on the ongoing resistance in relation to the managers that remained:

> We're trying to change long-standing ways of working and not everyone wants to change. So trying to sort of redesign structures, roles and cultures that have built up over a long, long period of time, is really quite difficult and it requires really strong leadership. I mean leadership in the individual service areas but quite often that can be difficult for those managers who were in those roles and perhaps have been in those roles for a long time. So there's always the challenge about resistance to change. . . . we're suggesting we don't need as many managers as we've got now. Now, when you're proposing that with the management themselves, it takes quite a strong manager to put their own personal position to one side and think about what's best for the restructuring of the service.

Beverley outlined a paradoxical situation, where managers are asked to display 'strong leadership' in order to enact plans that will eliminate their jobs. In short, the CAs were looking for managerial martyrs and so here

struggles against domination are clearly connected to issues around subjection and exploitation. Hence jobs were threatened and the managers who remain will have to work harder for the same or less money given recent below-inflation pay rises in the public sector. Beverley indicated that these managers were often unwilling to display a 'corporate identity' or 'a public good orientation' (LaNuez and Jermier, 1994: 236) whereby they would be 'strong' and sacrifice themselves. They resisted martyrdom, which highlights how struggles against domination, exploitation and subjection are interlinked.

Referring to the relocation of staff to the new building, Paige, the director of transformation, remarked that 'It was really hard to get managers to accept that we are going to an open plan environment'. Collinson (1994) has identified how workers may engage in 'resistance through persistence' whereby they push for greater involvement in the organisation. This also applied in this case where managers continually contested open plan working. Hence managers outlined the importance of older ways of organising and persistently made the case for separate offices due to the need for confidentiality. Prasad and Prasad (2000) have asserted that employees may resist through 'asking questions' and by 'alerting managers to flaws in system design' (op cit: 393) and similar dynamics were observable here where managers challenged the CAs designs. Gary, who was the construction director for the refurbishment, illustrated this when he said:

> I've had massive requests for cellular offices particularly from managers. Managers are less likely to accept transformative working than your average productive unit because it's hit their ego. They no longer have a room of their own—little empire with their 27 people sat outside beholding to them.

Gary attributed these requests for separate offices to an irrational concern with 'ego' and status. In this sense, resistance to domination is bound up with struggles against subjection or the new managerial identity that the CAs are seeking to impose. Irrespective of the rights or wrongs of this situation, one identity [the hierarchical, bureaucratic manager] is seeking to resist a new form of subjection in the guise of the flexible, delayered, open plan, post-bureaucratic manager. Gary and the other CAs rejected and therefore resisted managerial concerns regarding their need for privacy and confidentiality; they did so through both denying requests for separate offices and the legitimacy of such requests.

Conclusion

A key assumption underpinning the Change Management literature is that managers will support change endeavours, as this chapter has illustrated,

this is not always the case. Consultants are often portrayed as powerful manipulators of others and yet, as this chapter has revealed, it is necessary to distinguish between 'external' consultants and CAs or 'internal' consultants. As we have seen, CAs are often vulnerable and faced resistance from numerous levels of management. This resistance was diverse and attempted to block, delay and even sabotage the CAs' designs who, in turn, sought to devise ways to resist this resistance. The chapter has argued that if we limit our analysis of resistance to management-staff relations then other forms of workplace resistance may be obscured or omitted. Future research therefore needs to be sensitive to how different actors resist along with interrelated struggles over domination, exploitation and subjugation. Although they are interconnected, it is evident that the dynamics of different forms of resistance can be captured under these different headings. Finally, the chapter has highlighted that if bureaucracy/post-bureaucracy are understood to be simultaneously modes of control and mediums of resistance then management resistance may be far more pervasive and continuous than research to-date has suggested.

7 Resistance
From Negative to Positive/Productive?

Introduction

This chapter explores what happened when Copperdale City Council relocated 1,500 back office staff to the new, temporary building and how it became a site for struggle. It considers the role that the CAs played in creating an open plan, flexible, 'hot desking' work environment and how they understood and sought to resist the resistance they confronted. In recent years, resistance has been presented as a 'tool' of management (Ford and Ford, 2009: 100) and as 'productive' (Courpasson et al., 2012) or 'facilitative' (Thomas et al., 2011) of organisational change. To date, this has only been empirically explored in relation to inter-management struggles and so, by contrast, this chapter focuses on how both employees and managers sought to resist the changes that the CAs were attempting to introduce.

The chapter adds to our understanding of resistance by exploring how CAs may understand and approach resistance in contradictory ways whereby a repressive/negative and a productive/positive approach towards resistance coexist. It is argued that resistance can never be a 'tool' of management because power is not possessed by any single individual or group. Finally, it is posited that a facilitative/productive understanding of resistance tends to provide an overly rational view of both management and those who resist. This is due to the fact that power struggles, extant inequalities and economic/existential vulnerabilities generate a far more uncertain situation than has been suggested so far. The focus will be on 'routine resistance' (Scott, 1985), misbehaviour (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999; Knights and McCabe, 2000a) or the 'multitude of less visible and often unplanned oppositional practices in the everyday world of organizations' (Prasad and Prasad, 1998: 227).

The central question that the chapter explores is what are the implications and limitations of a 'facilitative' or 'productive' concept of resistance? In doing so, it provides additional insights into the complexity of workplace struggles. The chapter is organised as follows. In the next section, the literature on Change Management and resistance that has

engaged with the notion that resistance can be productive or positive is reviewed. We then return to the case of Copperdale before drawing out the major insights of the chapter in a conclusion.

A Positive or Productive View of Resistance to Change

The early literature on Change Management represented resistance as negative and as something that needed to be repressed or 'overcome' (Coch and French, 1948: 512). Coch and French (1948) argued that 'to modify greatly or to remove completely group resistance' (op cit: 531), communication and 'group participation in planning the changes' (op cit: 531; see also Caruth et al., 1985: 27) are necessary. This emphasis on communication resonates with a 'unitary' (Fox, 1974) perspective. Although Coch and French (1948) considered resistance by 'sub-groups' they neglected more fundamental workplace conflicts, divisions and embedded inequalities that are an everyday feature of organisational life (see, for example, Collinson and Ackroyd, 2005; Ezzamel et al., 2001; Hodson, 1995; Jermier et al., 1994). The belief that resistance can be 'overcome' or 'completely' removed reflects the rational-technical perspective on Change Management and also the view that management possesses power. Hence through communication or participation it is thought that management can eliminate opposition to its plans.

A negative view of resistance with its emphasis on 'overcoming' resistance continues to dominate mainstream management studies (see Battilana and Casciaro, 2013; Recardo, 1995) and the Change Management literature (Schneider and Goldwasser, 1998). Indeed, Bovey and Hede (2001) linked resistance to 'irrational ideas and cognitive distortions' (op cit: 373). This fails to recognise that problems within the workplace or change initiatives might generate resistance and instead it attributes resistance to 'unhealthy' individuals. A belief that resistance is 'negative' or 'harmful' (Schneider and Goldswasser, 1998: 42) has been argued to be 'biased' (Powell and Posner, 1978: 32) towards the perspective of those who implement change. In view of this, Powell and Posner (1978) sought to reconceptualise 'resistance to change' and made the point that 'When managers believe that workers resist change, they are not open to hearing their own employees' comments concerning change' (op cit: 33).

Powell and Posner (1978) highlighted that it is not enough for managers to communicate or encourage participation because if the intention is simply to overcome resistance then this may fuel resistance. This is due to the fact that what such managers communicate is that 'they are not to be completely trusted by their employees' whose 'ideas are not of value' (ibid). This implies that managers or CAs must be willing to do much more than listen or make marginal changes to plans/strategies; they must be prepared to abandon or substantially change them. In other words, CAs need to 'determine what might have been wrong with the

work itself, supervision or company expectations' (Nord and Jermier, 1994: 399).

A similar approach towards resistance was adopted by Dent and Goldberg (1999) who averred that 'it is time that we dispense with the phrase resistance to change' (op cit: 26) because people 'do *not* resist change, per se' (ibid). Instead, they argued that people resist particular conditions such as reduced pay or status. Like Powell and Posner (1978), they posited that 'subordinates' have been regarded as the 'source of the problem' (Dent and Goldberg, 1999: 37) and argue that there needs to be 'a change within the system' or how 'the change effort is being implemented' (op cit: 39). Krantz (1999) was critical of these assertions and averred that Dent and Goldberg (1999) merely switch the actors around by suggesting 'that the workforce is not the problem—managers are' (op cit: 43). He argued that people 'do resist change because they use familiar, existing arrangements to help protect themselves' (op cit: 43–44). Clearly, there are times when a conflict of interests arises and a unitary or even a pluralistic solution or 'a balancing process' (Dent and Goldberg, 1999: 39) either fails or is not pursued. It is mistaken then, given that organisations are arenas of inequality, to assume that resistance can always be avoided or that managers will necessarily see it in a positive light.

Powell and Posner (1978) and Dent and Goldberg (1999) are silent with regard to inequalities within organisations and they focus on the pluralistic possibilities for compromise and consensus. Yet CAs may regard some forms of resistance as valid and be willing to compromise in relation to them whilst regarding others as invalid and beyond compromise. This will vary according to the organisational culture, the management style, the nature of the proposed change, external economic conditions and the strength of opposition. It will gravitate around what managers regard as their prerogative at a given time. Caruth *et al.* (1985) argued that 'When employees suspect or see that a change is likely to disrupt or destroy their social group, they will tend to resist the change' (op cit: 25) and this is redolent of the case of Copperdale. They stressed the need for managers to demonstrate how 'change will produce a more desirable working situation' (op cit: 26; see also Ford and Ford, 2009: 100). It has to be acknowledged, however, that 'the status quo' may be 'better' for employees than 'the proposed change' (Nord and Jermier, 1994: 398). This is central to the problems that the CAs encountered at Copperdale because many employees and managers did not associate change with a more 'desirable working situation'.

In terms of a positive approach towards resistance, Mariotti (1996) asserted that 'being able to see another's point of view and embrace *some part* of that position without *compromising* the *entire* change effort will improve the chances of success' (op cit: 30; emphasis added). Similarly, Ford and Ford (2009) refer to a positive view of resistance as 'a willingness to reconsider *some* aspects of the changes you're initiating'

(op cit: 100; italics added). Finally, Ford and Ford (2010) prescribe listening 'to resistance as a form of feedback that can be used to improve the change and the success of its implementation' (op cit: 27). In each of these scenarios, it is suggested that resistance can be accommodated as a means to facilitate change but only when the vision or 'change effort' itself remains inviolate. This highlights problems with a managerial understanding of positive or productive resistance because it only seems to apply in circumstances that do not fundamentally alter or challenge management's designs.

Forty years ago, Kotter and Schlesinger (1979) asserted that resistance can be ' "good" for the organization' when the information of those on the receiving end of change 'is more accurate' than that of 'the initiators' (op cit: 108). It was argued that 'this likelihood is not obvious to some managers who assume that resistance is always bad and therefore always fight it' (ibid). Ford *et al*. (2008) have reprised this argument, asserting that resistance can be a 'potential contributor to or resource for effective change' (op cit: 363). Resistance is seen as 'a valuable resource in the accomplishment of change' (Ford and Ford, 2010: 24) and this echoes Pardo del Val and Fuentes's (2003) assertion that resistance 'should be seriously considered to help the organization to achieve the advantages' (op cit: 148) of transformation.

All of these arguments imply that organisations are unitary or pluralistic arenas of consensus, dialogue and conversation. To illustrate this, Ford *et al*. (2008) state that when CAs act inappropriately through, for instance, 'breaking agreements' (Ford et al., 2008: 363) they must act 'to *restore* the subsequent loss of trust' (ibid; italics added). This assumes that trust is part of the natural order rather than a fragile and impermanent state that may or may not exist before, during or after change. In a subsequent article it was asserted that 'When people know why things are changing . . . they are more willing to join the process' (Ford and Ford, 2010: 29) and yet employees may not agree with the proposed changes irrespective of how they are communicated.

The strategies that Ford *et al*. (2008) offer to address resistance are familiar and 'include communicating extensively, inviting people to participate, providing people with needed resources and developing strong working relationships' (op cit: 370). It needs to be recognised, however, that these are merely ways to ensure that management designs are enacted. The authors do not countenance that there may be issues which managers are unwilling to concede and that, if resisted, will create a situation where resistance is regarded as negative.

Drawing on an 'organizational becoming' perspective and an analysis of a culture change initiative, Thomas *et al*. (2011) also argue that resistance can be positive or, as they put it, 'facilitative'. This is 'because engagement with new meanings proposed by senior managers involves challenge and modification by other employees' (op cit: 22) and so rather

than a 'hindrance' it is argued that resistance becomes 'integral to successful change' (op cit: 23). The authors focused on the relationship between senior *and* middle managers and so this chapter provides fresh insights by exploring the relevance of their arguments in relation to *front-line employee-management* struggles *with* CAs.

Thomas *et al*. (2011) found that senior managers were 'willing to make an accommodation' (op cit: 35) to the resistance they encountered in relation to a customer focused culture. This accommodation was made only *after* senior managers had instigated a culture change and only in relation to modifying the content of the culture change. It seems unlikely that resistance to block the culture change would have been tolerated or seen as facilitative. The culture change initiative was altered but ultimately senior management imposed its will. The culture change did not threaten jobs, work intensification nor did it occur in a context of redundancies which may have produced a different outcome. The authors demonstrate that middle management 'resistance can play a facilitative role in organization change' (op cit: 35) but we need to explore how this applies in other settings and to other groups of workers not least because as the authors found senior managers are not always willing to make 'accommodations' (ibid).

Courpasson *et al*. (2012) have also focused on how middle managers can pursue what they term 'productive resistance' (op cit: 803) where resistance is 'an authentic expression seeking positive solutions for the organization' (ibid). It differs from the more managerial literature because they argue that the critical question is 'How can resistance produce change that significantly challenges top management decisions?' (ibid). Courpasson *et al*. (2012) focus on 'stories of success' (op cit: 806) or where resistance has successfully achieved its aims and so cases where resistance has largely failed to change the overall change programme, such as at Copperdale, can add to our understanding of productive resistance.

Courpasson *et al*. (2012) attribute what they see as the neglect of 'productive resistance' to sociology of work theorists who assume 'an irreducible opposition between workers and managers' (op cit: 802). It could, however, be argued that the latter scholars also understand resistance to be productive when it improves the living standards of employees, reduces control over them, ameliorates work intensification, addresses issues of inequality and/or discrimination (e.g. Collinson, 1994) or challenges the extant order (see Nord and Jermier, 1994). In this sense, there may be more common ground and shared understanding between these theoretical positions than Courpasson *et al*. (2012) suggest. Organisations are sites of immense inequality and so the dynamics around whether employees can mount resistance that can 'benefit the whole organization' (op cit: 802) need to be investigated along with the view that top managers will 'accede' (Courpasson et al., 2012: 802) to resistance. Courpasson *et al*. (2012) observe that the resistance they studied 'was not a contest based

on systematic adversarial positioning from threatened occupational communities' (op cit: 813). In view of this, we need to understand whether productive resistance is relevant in situations where relations *are* adversarial and occupational communities *are* threatened, as at Copperdale.

Foucault's (1980) argument that power is 'productive' (see Knights and Vurdubakis, 1994) has received considerable attention in terms of the way in which individuals are 'constructed or produced' (Townley, 1993: 522) as particular types of subject. Yet what is often missed or underplayed, is the theoretical implication of Foucault's work that power is *simultaneously* repressive (see McCabe, 2000, 2008). Indeed Foucault's (1977) theorising seems, at times, to preclude this way of theorising hence he asserts that 'we must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms' (op cit: 194). This has led some scholars such as Hoskin and Macve (1986) to argue that Foucault 'theorised power as something positive: not as repression or suppression' (ibid: 106).

Although subjectivity and everyday life are produced through power relations in terms of what *we must do or be* it necessarily follows that this has implications for what *we must not do or be*. To understand power and resistance we must therefore be sensitive to the way in which productive and repressive power relations coexist. To do otherwise in terms of only focusing on the way in which power, in the form of resistance, is productive may skew our understanding of the dynamics of a particular situation. As we search for the productive we may underplay the way in which power says 'no' as well as 'yes'.

As discussed in Chapter 3, Foucault (1977) also advanced our understanding of power by arguing that it is 'relational'. Scholars who focus on facilitative/productive resistance have illustrated this point in relation to middle managers who resist senior managers and/or each other (Thomas et al., 2011; Courpasson et al., 2012) but it has a wider resonance. It implies that resistance can never be a 'tool' of management because resistance will always find a way to evade capture. It also means, however, that employees who seek to resist are also likely to confront resistance whether from CAs or different layers of management.

The situation is therefore slippery because it points towards a dynamic where multiple agents exercise power simultaneously in ways that resist each other. We saw this in Chapter 6 when different layers of management resisted CA designs and CAs resisted management. The implication of this is that the outcomes of change are unlikely to marry up with the desires of top management or CAs whether they view resistance as productive or not. But neither are they likely to match the aspirations of those who seek to exercise power in productive ways so as to resist managerial demands. The complexity of this situation where 'points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network' (Foucault, 1979: 95) suggests a highly uncertain situation.

The Case Study

We shall now explore some of the contradictory ways in which the CAs understood and approached employee resistance in the case of Copperdale. We will examine the resistance that the CAs were willing to see as positive or productive and that which they saw as negative and sought to repress. In doing so we consider the limitations and possibilities of positive or productive resistance as a concept. The particular focus of the chapter arose partly through the empirical research because it seemed peculiar that the CAs talked about resistance in ways that appeared contradictory. This became a theme through which to analyse and manually code the tape-recorded interviews and this reflects the argument of Thomas *et al*. (2011: 36), that 'there is scope for more nuanced conceptualizations of resistance that incorporate a consideration of ambivalence'.

Through the analysis of first-hand accounts, all references to resistance were extracted for the purposes of comparison and they were contrasted in terms of the different meanings and ways of understanding resistance that they conveyed. From this analysis, patterns and sub-themes emerged in terms of how the CAs referred to resistance and these were synthesised through developing a coding scheme around the categories of 'negative/insubstantial', 'positive/productive' and 'negative/substantial' representations of resistance. It is necessary to recognise that 'any gaze is always filtered' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003: 31) and so these constructs cannot be said to have emerged entirely through the empirical data (i.e. the emic or the meanings of those in the field) because theoretical constructs play a role in terms of what our analysis allows us to see (i.e. the etic or the theoretical meanings that researchers use to interpret what is going on). Hence the material was constructed through contrasting the empirical findings with the recent theoretical interest in 'productive' or 'facilitative' resistance. It is necessary to make such theoretical connections because 'merely repeating the stories told by the respondents would be unlikely to add much to theory development' (Whittle and Mueller, 2010: 633). The aim of the following account then is to 'deepen people's understanding' (Watson and Watson, 2012: 685) of a positive/productive/facilitative view of resistance.

The chapter concentrates largely on the experiences and understanding of resistance as expressed by the CAs as opposed to those on the receiving end of change. This is important because the CAs contradictory understanding of resistance provided insights into the limitations of thinking about resistance as positive, productive or facilitative of change. The same CAs sometimes appear in different representations of resistance because the views they expressed were, at times, contradictory. This focus was not anticipated in advance of the research but emerged over 'the course of the research' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983: 175). In order to make

sense of the CAs representations of resistance, the next two sections will explore the wider context of the move to the new building.

A New Vision of Work

> Every morning I walked in and it was dark. The entrance ways were dark and there was this one sign, I still remember, at a jaunty angle. . . . it was a hanging sign. . . . it was pointing down but it was indicative really of the building.
>
> (Michael, project manager)

> It was a warren of offices, a maze of individual people, people's whose paths never crossed. . . . it was like little townships, people had their taps in their offices, their kettles in their offices, nobody spoke to anybody else, everybody hated their offices.
>
> (Bill, contracts manager)

These extracts are indicative of the negative way in which the Victorian back-office was represented by the CAs. A document presented by the CAs to senior managers in 2011 painted an equally negative picture hence it stated that there was 'no open plan office space'; 'managers segregated from teams in private offices'; 'cluttered offices'; 'poor information security'; 'no staff break out space'; 'poor/non-existent kitchen facilities'; 'limited choice of workstations'; 'meeting rooms 'owned' by departments' and 'poor space utilisation'. It was suggested that this space needed to be changed and 'the way people are defined' (Kornberger and Clegg, 2004: 1104) or 'produced' (Foucault, 1982) through it. The old back-office was organised along departmental lines so instead of visiting the Council you visited an individual department. The move to the temporary new building involved creating a single customer service centre (CSC) on the ground floor, which combines all the previously separate public facing areas of Copperdale into what was described as a 'one stop shop'. Ian, who is a transformation manager, explained the previous situation:

> There was no baby changing facilities, no public toilet facilities, the environment wasn't very welcoming. There was no tea and coffee facilities and also you needed to know where you were going in order to get into the right queue and sit and wait and the waiting times were sometimes several hours. So a number of people anecdotally they'd come in, they'd see a queue, they'd sit in the queue and get in the front of the queue and they'd say 'No you want the housing options queue, which is round the corner'.

The new CSC has a reception and waiting area; a space where children can play; a small lending library and Internet access for the public. Paige,

director of transformation, described the transition to the new building as immensely successful:

> Email usage has really dropped. Attendance has improved. Absenteeism is really low. We did a morale survey before we went and all the soft factors show really positive feedback.

Although it was suggested that the move was entirely successful, one has to consider such outcomes as improved attendance and reduced absenteeism, in the light of large-scale spending cuts and redundancies and the fear that this has fostered. The temporary building is being used to introduce new ways of working and so it is far from a 'neutral shell' (Baldry et al., 1998: 163). The aim is to rethink how space is utilised through creating open plan offices where managers sit alongside staff rather than in separate offices. It also includes a clear-desk policy, hot-desking, flexible and mobile working:

> They are working now in the way they will be working when they go back [to the refurbished building]. So it has given us an opportunity, a clean break, shut the door, start the new world and then move the new world back. So, for example, everybody had a desk and a chair and they probably sat on it for 30 years. Now we are saying 'We'll have a ratio of 8 desks to 10 people and we'd like to get nearer to 6 desks per 10 people' 'cause not everybody is there all the time. Some people's jobs mean they are out and about all the time and there is a cost per desk, per computer, per phone. . . . it isn't just about buildings. It's about the way people work, the way we interact with customer.
>
> (Philippa, head of transformation)

This 'new world' back office can be equated with a 'generative building' where 'things are loosely coupled so that they [employees] can act, react, and interact flexibly' (Kornberger and Clegg, 2004: 1106). Philippa commented that this 'isn't just about buildings' but, as she appears to view the world from a cost-based perspective, the social, for her, seems to be about enacting new ways of working. As material objects such as buildings, rooms, computers, phones, desks and chairs contribute to our understanding of ourselves and others, these changes are likely to threaten existing ways of being. The new intranet site, 'Journey to the New World', communicated the changes to the staff in the following way:

> The back-office is being transformed to deliver improved customer facilities as well as creating a great work environment for its staff. . . . [it] . . . aims to refurbish the building and spaces to enable them to deliver state-of-the-art services.

We can observe that the language or 'cult[ure] of the customer' (du Gay and Salaman, 1992) is deeply engrained in the vision of the new world of work. The new building includes areas where people can make tea/coffee, which have a large hanging sign above them saying 'Brew Area'. There is also an area where both the staff and the public can buy lunch or have a snack. There are focus pods or individual rooms where people can go if they need privacy or silence to write a report, for example. There are open tables for meetings and rooms of different sizes to accommodate different sized meetings. As Dale (2005) found in a different context, this reflects a 'deliberate manipulation of social and spatial organization in order to effect a certain vision of work and organizational form' (op cit: 666). This is evident in a strategy document that spelt out the new 'vision' of work as it included a 'customer' and a separate 'staff' vision. It reflects a belief that material changes can 'drive' changes to the social:

> The new back-office will deliver a design that completely transforms the physical work environment for staff. The physical office design will provide the foundations to deliver state of the art services to customers whilst new ways of working will ensure the building is used to its full potential, drive behavioural change, improve employee culture and ensure staff have the right tool for the job.

In contrast to the negative representations of the old back-office, this strategy document represents the 'new world' or building in an entirely positive way. Hence it states that it is a 'clean, fresh open plan office space—no cellular office space' and includes a 'Co-location of teams, managers sat in the open plan, improved communication, flexible workforce'; 'an effective mix of workstations'; 'less paper office'; 'modern kitchen facilities'; 'two large communal break out areas' and 'a more efficient building—greener and sustainable'. As we shall shortly see, although 'words . . . might shape a building . . . the building does not necessarily shape human behaviour' (Kornberger and Clegg, 2004: 1100) or, as Copperdale's vision put it, 'drive behavioural change'. This is due to the fact that 'the constitution of a particular space' needs to be 'understood as a combined material and social interaction' (Dale, 2005: 651). In other words, neither the material nor the social is determinate because they mutually constitute each other. Paige (director of transformation) articulated the benefits of the changes:

> the thing that the staff are saying is 'We really feel like we're important to the organization, you value us'. And on the walls we put pictures of each ward and the main focal point of the picture is the frontline worker who works in that ward. And they're so proud of the fact that their picture is up on the wall.

Each meeting room is named after a particular area of the city and there are pictures on the walls of the staff who work in those areas. There is also wording about each area and, according to Ian (transformation manager), the intention is 'to remind people that their there for these customers'. It is evident then that these are not simply wall decorations for they are intended to effect a change in culture and staff subjectivity. Gary, is a former external consultant and he is the director of the building project, he explained its rationale as follows and it underscores that spatial change is about more than just buildings:

> Historical cellular accommodation with little boxes with a manager sat there with his team of 6–7 . . . that's my little environment, my world, has to go . . . the way you transform services, we will effectively have a Customer Services Centre, which is very customer focused. . . . you will be met by a meeter and greeter, very much Asda-style, by a multi-skilled individual, who can either direct you to a computer terminal to go on-line and solve your problem very quickly or take you to a one-to-one, face-to-face contact.

Gary explained that the objective is to reduce 'customer' contact time from 3 to 4 hours to 30 to 40 minutes, which is not possible 'in an environment which is just little boxes, long corridors and piles and piles of paper everywhere'. The idea is to move beyond 'hot desking' toward 'agile' and team-based working, where no one has a desk but books a desk and works from a variety of locations. Bill, a manager of the project, indicated that significant changes have already been achieved:

> We've put them in this fantastic decant location and now everybody's rubbed their eyes and kind of woken up to the realisations of it that it actually gives them so much more benefit not just in terms of the working environment but from a social point of view, from a confidence point of view, from a production point of view. You can actually now physically feel the benefits when you go into a room, it's a lot more positive, the people are really enthused about going to work.

Resisting the New World!

Although the new building and ways of working were represented as an unmitigated success by senior members of the transformation team; the closer one came to those in contact with everyday life, be they CAs or those the changes impacted upon, a different, more antagonistic account emerged. The frustrations of managers and staff with the new ways of working were compounded by the loss of approximately 2,000 jobs, in the wake of budgetary cuts, following the UK Coalition government's 2010 Compulsory Spending Review. Ian, a manager in housing, was

critical of the new open plan approach especially the attempt to remove the sense in which one has a set place of work. His comments suggest that others also opposed this change:

> There must be a better way. But the idea of not having your place, your chair—and immediately when we moved in here I could see that people had started to subvert, they had started to personalise their work space.

Laura, a manager who works in core services, explained that there has been resistance through personalising space: 'photos and things even though we were told absolutely that's not the future'. Discontent was largely expressed through 'routine resistance' (Prasad and Prasad, 1998) and cynicism (see Fleming and Spicer, 2003), especially in relation to the new management speak, was widespread:

> I think if you are implementing cuts, that's what you have to say, and I don't think you should call it Transformation or Reorganisation or Redeveloping or Reorientation or anything that it isn't.
>
> (Nigel, adults coordinator)

Another expression of resistance was mockery (Collinson, 1992), which was evident during a conversation with Tracy (contracts officer) and mike (homelessness officer):

TRACY: A girl I used to work with, in the Tenant Participation Unit said to me 'Are you in scope or out of scope?' 'What are you going on about?' 'Well, we're in scope' I went 'Right' and she said 'So that means we're going to be subject to service redesign'. So I came back to my team and said 'What's "in scope" or "out of scope"?' And someone says to me, 'We're all right, we're out of scope'.

MIKE: You're not on the radar!

The following observational note was recorded whilst sitting in the canteen of the new building: 'In the atrium stands a 30–40ft dying tree amid the stainless steel and glass'. This tree, which is supposed to convey a modern design, was without leaf in August. John, who works in the housing department, expressed how 'sad' he felt whenever he saw it. It can be seen from every floor of the building and he felt that this dying or dead tree is 'not good' with 'all these bad vibes that are going round'. The dying tree can be seen as a metaphor which symbolises that a way of life is being eroded due, in part, to central government cuts but also the new way of working. The new building epitomises standardisation hence Laura (core services, manager) remarked 'I've got off at the wrong floor,

walked in, gone to where I thought my desk was and it all looks the same, and it's not there, and I realise I'm on the wrong floor!'

The vision of work is to introduce a hot desking environment with a 6:10 desk-to-staff ratio, without a fixed allocation of desks. To enforce this and repress the older ways of working and being, the CAs were attempting to impose a clear desk policy whereby each evening all members of staff clear away personal items. Each member of staff has been allocated a hot box in which to put photographs, calendars, paperweights and any other personal belongings. The remarks of Elona, who is an officer in the homelessness team, vividly illustrate the sense of disorientation, loss and anger that this has generated as was alluded to in Chapter 5:

> I don't like open plan personally. We were told we had to have a clear desk policy. We very much felt we were walking round like office nomads, our personal contraband in little mesh baskets, very much a feeling that you have no identity here as a person, as an employee, you're just here to do your work, be abused, not know what time you're going to finish and that's it, whereas before we had our own office, our own space.

Elona clearly felt repressed by the attempt to produce a new transient identity, which threatened her earlier sense of self and belonging. According to Rob, a finance manager, resistance to this project involves non-compliance:

> In practice, it's been completely abandoned. I think the justification for bringing it in was that we would have a wonderful utopia of flexible working, but in reality everyone comes in here every day. It's very rare that you would have people working in more than one location.

Similarly, Allistair, a data officer, stated that 'not everyone does it. People leave all kinds of stuff on their desks'. Other, perhaps more substantial expressions of resistance included staff switching trade union membership because it was felt that their union was too compliant with management's designs. Moreover, the homelessness unit was balloting for strike action due to the stress caused by staff shortages. The following material presents three different ways that the CAs understood and represented the resistance that they encountered.

Resistance as Negative/Insubstantial

In the managerial literature, resistance is often presented as negative, irrational, emotional, reflecting a lack of understanding and, in this way, it is seen as insubstantial. This follows classic 'unitary' (Fox, 1974)

assumptions and it was evident that some CAs saw resistance in this way. Hence according to Ian, a transformation manager, the new building provides 'flexible working spaces' but 'It's taking people a little while to *understand* that actually they don't need to sit at that same desk everyday and try and work from there, they can actually go and work somewhere else' (emphasis added). The current ratio of 8 desks to 10 staff is intended to enforce flexible working and reflects an expectation that some staff will work from home or in different offices depending on work demands. It was the case that some managers were refusing to allow staff to work from home and this managerial opposition was also attributed to a lack of 'understanding':

> If you've got somebody that works well in the office erm, and delivers against objectives, if you can't see them for a few days that's not going to change and, if you've got somebody you don't trust in the office, it's not going to change either. So it's just trying to get people to understand.
>
> (Karen, project manager)

In addition to a lack of understanding, as stated at the end of Chapter Six, management resistance was also attributed by some to 'ego' (Gary, commercial director) issues due to the loss of private offices and so it was seen as 'a psychological concept in which resistance is sited within the individual' (Dent and Goldberg, 1999: 34) or the 'mind' (Bovey and Hede, 2001: 373). This fails or refuses to acknowledge problems with the planned changes, the strategic vision or the extant workplace and it presents resistance as a marginal issue and/or an 'emotional' (Kotter and Schlesinger, 1979: 107) one that is irrational and lacks substance:

> The biggest reason [given for resistance] is generally security: 'I've got confidential information about adult services here'. Well put it in a cupboard. Don't leave it on the desk.
>
> (Gary, director of the building project)

As this extract reveals, far from lacking substance, the resistance was linked to information security, client confidentiality and control. Nevertheless, Gary sought to repress and resist this resistance through trivialising it as his terse remarks about 'ego' and putting confidential information away, indicate. Trivialising matters can be understood as an attempt to resist employee and management resistance and this was evident, for example, when Ian (transformation manager), attributed resistance to complaints about air conditioning:

> there are still many people who say 'It's a bit cold. The air-conditioning isn't right in the building'. . . . So you've got people who sit in cold

> corners and people who sit in warm corners and they complain about the temperature. You think, 'Well the whole point of the building is that you can go and sit at any desk'. They're still 'That's my desk, that's where I work'. We need to work on that cultural change.

Ian sought to repress and deny complaints about air-conditioning by suggesting that individuals can work wherever they want. The implication is that the resistance is trivial because it is about air conditioning but this neglects the loss of control people experience in a computer-controlled environment (see Baldry, 1999). There was also a gendered dimension to this dismissal of employee resistance; hence Gary, the building director, attributed it to women and implicitly suggested that the resistance is irrational:

> I can guarantee that the majority of women will sit at their desks, the temperature will be 65 degrees and they will be cold. The reason they're cold in winter is because air at 65 degrees is moving past them. It's coming in a vent here, tumbling and because the air is going past them at 65 degrees they're cold. They're not cold, they perceive that they are cold because the air is moving past them.

Overall, these accounts present resistance as negative, irrational, insubstantial and reflecting a lack of understanding. In this way, the CAs sought to resist resistance by denying its legitimacy and the implication that there is any problem with the changes that it is their responsibility to implement. The next section considers a different representation of resistance, one that did not simply seek to dismiss or repress employee grievances but sought to engage with and understand *some* of the issues it raised as potentially productive.

Resistance as Positive/Facilitative/Productive

> When we moved in we said 'No kettles', a number of reasons—energy efficiency, the fact that they have to be tested, the fact that you end up with 4 or 5 in each kitchen, all these different reasons. We said 'No, we're going to try a new way of working. We will introduce vending. We'll get the hot water from vending machines free of charge'. That's a thing we tried, massive loads of feedback, resistance about that and actually quite valid. Within 6 weeks we'd introduced hot water boilers because people were saying the vending water isn't hot enough, it doesn't make a cup of tea and all that kind of stuff.
>
> (Karen, project manager)

Although expressed in quite a dismissive way, Karen viewed the resistance to using vending machines to make cups of tea as 'quite valid' and the vending machines were subsequently replaced with hot water boilers. It

seems, therefore, that in relation to some issues, the CAs were willing to accommodate resistance that they saw as legitimate, 'positive' or 'helpful':

> We were originally just going to put vending machines in the building and got a lot of challenge from the unions about it being really important to the staff that they can make a cup of tea but that was a really positive kind of challenge. It was much more of a challenge rather than drawing a line, it was helpful challenge so we ended up providing hot water for everyone. So it's much more working together, identifying potential problems, solving them before they become big issues.
>
> (Michael, project manager)

The staff website contains a list of office protocols that outline expected standards of behaviour but they were often flouted. One example of the office protocols is the 'clear desk' policy. This policy appeared to threaten how employees spatially affirmed their sense of self at work:

> A lot of people have established themselves at a desk so it has effectively become their desk, so they sort of have made a stand by personalising that area. And I think we'll face that battle again when we come to reinforce the clear desk policy er flexible work spaces. We've set up a Building User Group so that each area has an opportunity to er feedback any comments but it [resistance] manifests itself in rumbles and grumbles about air con and everything else, sort of the usual stuff, but they've got an opportunity to release their concerns or issues.
>
> (Ian, transformation manager)

In this extract, Ian acknowledged that the staff are resisting the spatially transient subjectivity that Copperdale is seeking to impose by making 'a stand' through 'personalising' their workspace. A 'Building User Group' provides another example of viewing resistance in a potentially positive or productive way as it provides a forum for employees to voice their discontent. Yet if employee concerns are simply dismissed as 'rumbles and grumbles' then it shifts once more to a repressive or negative approach. It appeared that the CAs were unwilling to see resistance that challenged their vision of work as positive hence Ian remarked that they intend to reinforce the clear desk policy.

Despite replacing vending machines with boilers, there was ongoing resistance over the use of kettles. The way in which this issue has been handled also illustrates a facilitative or productive approach towards resistance on the part of the CAs:

> no matter how many times we say 'No kettles', every time I walk round there's 3 or 4 kettles in the kitchen and that's typical resistance.

> Well, what're we gonna do about it? Well what we could do is we could walk around every day and get the cleaners to take away every single kettle that pops up but I think there comes a point where you go 'What are the things that are going to really help us change this organization and is a kettle really one of the wars that we'd want to win?'
>
> (Karen, project manager)

Karen asserted that to facilitate change she has opted to accommodate this resistance whereby staff are allowed to retain their kettles but this is only a temporary concession for she indicated that the use of kettles will be revisited following the move to the newly refurbished back office building. The resistance to the 'hot box', clear-desk policy and the continued use of kettles, appeared to reflect the threat that the new transitory way of working posed to established identities, communities, cultures and ways of working. The positive benefits of a strong community did not appear to be part of the CAs' vision of transient, open-plan, hot-desking flexibility and this points towards a more substantial clash of visions, to which we now turn.

Resistance as Negative/Substantial

The implication of resistance being a 'tool' of management (Ford and Ford, 2010) is that it can be accommodated and managed. Yet critical commentators suggest that resistance endures, takes multiple forms and cannot be overcome or eradicated through negotiation or compromise (see Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999; Collinson and Ackroyd, 2005; Ezzamel et al., 2001; Hodson, 1995; Jermier et al., 1994). Instead, resistance is understood to reflect substantive issues around control, inequality, autonomy, hierarchical decision making, identity and work organisation. It was interesting therefore that some CAs alluded to such issues even as they attempted to both trivialise the resistance *and*, at times, use it in a productive way to secure their goals:

> I had staff members emailing me about the impact of not having a kettle in the office and, you know, you're talking about working flexibly, you need a clear desk. You can't have people with a cupboard and desk, storing their own tea bags and cups in and then there's the energy efficiency. It's about making people understand that bigger picture but because of the culture, staff will go to the trade unions, so it becomes very difficult.
>
> (Rose, project manager)

Rose presented resistance both in 'unitary' (Fox, 1974) terms as trivial, reflecting a lack of understanding *and* 'pluralistic' (ibid) as it involved the trade unions. Her comments also alluded to a more fundamental

source of division over the organisation of work. Hence she indicated that storing 'tea bags and cups' in a 'cupboard and desk' poses a threat to the vision of working flexibly, which must therefore be resisted and repressed. The continued use of kettles then is indicative of a more fundamental clash of visions:

> You are seeing resistance in different ways. Like, resistance in 'Well I'll just flout a protocol', resistance in 'Well no one will see me if I just put that dirty mug in the sink even though there's a dishwasher there'. But also more subtle resistance: 'We really want to do this [open plan working]. We think it's a right thing to do but we can't do it. But we will work hard at it, we will try, but oh no, it's not right for us'. There's so many different types. It feels trivial but if you focus on the things that we spend a large amount of time on what's become known as Kettlegate.
>
> (Karen, project manager)

Karen explained that resistance is pervasive and takes multiple forms, which presents it as more substantial than has been suggested so far. It also reveals that the attempt to repress *and* manage it in a positive way has failed to date, which is indicative of a 'relational' (Foucault, 1980) understanding of power. 'Kettlegate' was a catch-all term that the CAs used to describe the resistance they encountered and it can be understood as an attempt to play down, mock, repress and resist this resistance. In the following extract, Michael, a project manager, explained how adult services are resisting open plan working on the basis that they are dealing with highly sensitive and confidential issues:

> We've got a division for adults and they do a lot of confidential work: 'So one of the big challenges to us [Adult Services] is open plan working. It really doesn't work for our service because we've got lots of confidential conversations going on'. And that's a huge bit of resistance for us to overcome because if we can't do the open plan bit, we can't really release the space efficiencies, we can't deliver the project, because if everyone wants to go back to closed working, we might as well have not spent a penny, not started.
>
> (Michael, project manager)

Michael is part of a team that has been tasked to deliver a transformation project that includes achieving 'space efficiencies' and so resistance to the vision of flexible, open plan working is not seen as positive or productive and must be repressed or, as he said, 'overcome'. This suggests a more fundamental conflict and a less rational situation because it indicates that some resistance will not be accommodated or regarded as productive

irrespective of its legitimacy. That is to say, even though adult services deal with members of the public with drug or financial problems that necessitate confidentiality this issue was dismissed. There were ongoing struggles over the organisation of work, which hindered management's ability to manage resistance whether through productive or repressive means:

MICHAEL: the next step is the 'OK you've got 100 people in your service but you've only got 80 desks.' Only 2 or 3 service areas are doing that at the moment so when we go with that big push for everybody to do it we'll get a similar set, a new set of resistances and we'll have to overcome those.

DARREN: It sounds like you're working from the assumption that there will be resistance, that you're anticipating resistance?

MICHAEL: Yes, yes, absolutely yes, that is actually the case.

DARREN: So you are sitting down and devising strategies, tactics of how to resolve that?

MICHAEL: Yes absolutely. It sounds a bit er, perhaps a little bit cynical, when you say it out loud, but that's absolutely what we do. . . . it is about saying, well predicting resistance, understanding the barriers for change, keep coming up with strategies to mitigate.

Michael stated that each phase of change gives birth to new resistance that he in turn tries to repress or 'overcome'. Nonetheless, it could be argued that resistance is productive for Michael because it surfaces issues that he needs to address and it is productive for employees because it allows them to raise grievances. Yet in this case, the source of the resistance remained unresolved and so whilst certain forms of marginal resistance were regarded as productive, resistance that reflected more substantive issues such as control over one's work space were repressed.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the limitations of a positive or productive understanding of resistance. It has highlighted that CAs may understand and approach resistance in contradictory ways, which generates obstacles to thinking about resistance as positive or productive as it is likely to undermine attempts to manage resistance. It has illuminated that we need to simultaneously attend to productive and repressive exercises of power to comprehend the complexity of resistance. A 'relational' understanding of power was apparent for it is evident that resistance is not a 'tool' of management to wield as they wish. The chapter suggested that the concept of 'productive' or 'facilitative' resistance can be advanced through attending to the complex and contradictory dynamics of the employment

relationship, which generally points towards uncertain outcomes. The discussion of productive or facilitative resistance in the case of Copperdale reveals that recent accounts have tended to present an overly rational and pluralistic view of management that needs to be rethought. Nevertheless, this is not a council of despair because many workplace advances testify to the productive effects of resistance.

8 Cynicism in Service

Introduction

In recent decades there has been a growth in culture change initiatives which promote employee identification with the corporation (see Ray, 1986; Willmott, 1993). In this context, cynicism has been identified as an *individualistic* means through which employees can resist through 'distancing' (Collinson, 1994) themselves from such demands. This chapter posits that cynical public sector workers may occupy a more ambivalent, complex and collectivist position than such arguments suggest. It explores how staff and managers at Copperdale resisted through representing corporate discourses as creating a shadowland of pretence, a surreal game of words and box ticking where appearance is more important than substance. The chapter highlights that public sector employees are aware that their actions and cynicism reproduce their plight but act, at least in part, in a way that reflects a *collective* identification with the public, each other and/or due to economic necessity.

Although cynicism has been linked to a dis-identification with corporate discourses (Costas and Fleming, 2009; Fleming and Spicer, 2003), this chapter argues that cynical employees may nonetheless continue to identify with certain aspects of their work. Identification and dis-identification are not therefore total or mutually exclusive subject positions. Cynical employees may exhibit a collective concern for others and service that coincides with managerial demands *and* a cynically engaged (rather than disengaged or distanced) critique of how managerialism linked to the NPM and enterprise, elevate image, salesmanship and measurement.

The chapter is organised as follows. The next section explores the literature on resistance and especially cynicism. Cynicism is then explored in the case of Copperdale before summing up the main arguments of the chapter in a conclusion.

Resistance and Cynicism

The value of cynicism as a means of workplace resistance is something of a vexed issue. Do cynical workers reproduce the extant order as they

continue to *do* what is expected of them and so in this sense it is 'self-defeating' (Fleming and Spicer, 2003) or does cynicism carry a 'disruptive force' that offers 'a form of resistance with true potential' (Karfakis and Kokkinidis, 2011: 330)? Is it 'real' resistance or illusory? It has been suggested that cynicism is a form of 'decaf resistance' because it is resistance without the 'costs and risks involved' (Contu, 2008: 374) and yet there may be financial and career limiting consequences for those labelled cynical. This chapter explores how employees and managers at Copperdale cynically engaged with and recast official corporate discourses linked to the New Public Management (NPM) (Hoggett, 1999; Hood, 1991), the enterprise discourse (du Gay and Salaman, 1992) and the Copperdale Organisational Transformation (COT) programme. Hence they mockingly described them as generating a 'tick box' culture. The staff participated in and reproduced this culture even though they considered it to be a distraction from the provision of services. They appeared to be locked into both the 'tick box' culture and resistance in the guise of cynicism.

Cynicism can be understood as a double edged sword because on the one hand it provides a coping mechanism—a 'release' (Ashcraft, 2008: 382) or 'safety' (Cutler, 2000: 310) valve—allowing employees to vent their anger, maintain a sense of independence and live with what are otherwise insufferable conditions. On the other hand, employees may become enslaved by a 'vicious circle of cynicism' (Willmott, 1993: 518) resulting in 'an undermining or numbing of a capacity to directly criticise or resist the cultural logic' (op cit: 163; see also Kunda, 1992). A 'cynical distance' may emerge that reproduces discourses such as 'enterprise' through employee/managerial 'involvement in everyday practices within which enterprise is inscribed' (du Gay and Salaman, 1992: 163).

Prasad and Prasad (1998) have drawn a distinction between 'disengagement' as a form of resistance whereby employees 'distance themselves from managerial ideologies and initiatives' (op cit: 237), which is how cynicism has been presented in the literature versus what they refer to as 'subtle subversion'. The latter refers to 'incessant everyday interpretations and reinterpretations of managerial discourses by workers' (p. 236), which presents the possibility for a more engaged and challenging form of cynicism of the type discussed by Cutler (2000) or referred to by Karfakis and Kokkinidis (2011) as Kynicism.

The established arguments regarding cynicism follow Zizek's (1989) position that 'cynical distance is just one way—one of many ways—to blind ourselves to the structuring power of ideological fantasy: even if we do not take things seriously, even if we keep an ironical distance, *we are still doing them*' (original italics; op cit: 32). This argument was taken up by Fleming and Spicer (2003) who posited that 'cultural power may work through dis-identification' (op cit: 161) whereby cynical employees 'still practice the corporate rituals'. Likewise, Costas and Fleming (2009) refer to the 'psychic satisfaction' for employees that dis-identification can

generate resulting in 'an outcome that may ironically integrate them into the rhythms of work more effectively given the impression of autonomy it engenders' (op cit: 354; see also Willmott, 1993). Similarly, Contu (2008) views humour, scepticism, cynicism, etc., as 'the inherent transgression of the order that is the ultimate support of the official discourse' (op cit: 368). This argument presents employees *not* as cultural dupes but as behavioural ones 'because we fail to *understand* that the fantasy is ingrained in our modes of *conduct*' (Fleming and Spicer, 2003: 164; emphasis added) or 'that "I", on the whole, still "do" whatever "it" she or he disagrees with' (Contu, 2008: 368).

The suggestion is that cynical employees are blind to this dynamic for otherwise they would resist in more effective ways and so this risks slipping into a form of false consciousness albeit one that is 'enlightened' (Fleming and Spicer, 2003: 164). Hence Karfakis and Kokkinidis (2011: 332) assert that 'It is not that the cynical employee is unaware of the effects of his (in) action; he is very well aware, but he nevertheless acts "as if" he does not know'. This chapter provides different insights into this thorny issue by arguing that the subjectivity of cynicism is more complex than has been suggested to-date. That it is not the case that 'The mere acting of believing actually makes you believe' (op cit: 332–333) because it is a question of what you believe in when you act and why you act in the way that you do, which does not simply follow a dichotomy of cynicism (non-believer, dis-identification) versus compliant actor (believer, identification).

Fleming and Spicer (2003) focused on how individuals respond to corporate cultures arguing that those who 'dis-identify' with their employer may still 'act *as if* she believes in the prescribed values of the organization' (op cit: 166). They identify ways in which employees might disrupt this domination through an 'externalization' of their disbelief; through refusing the corporate self or even by embracing it too strongly. Nevertheless, one problem with this line of argument is that it takes-for-granted the consistency, completeness and unity of the 'corporate self' (Costas and Fleming, 2009: 374) against which employees may cynically dis-identify. Although they recognise that dis-identification may take many forms the corporate against which it rails is assumed to be monolithic, complete and water-tight. By contrast, this chapter argues that it is often contradictory and nebulous in the public sector, especially due to the encroachment of the enterprise and NPM discourses. In view of this, employees confront inconsistent discourses and so they may identify with some aspects of them whilst regarding others in a cynical way. Employees may therefore identify and dis-identify with corporate discourses and work in a way that simultaneously reflects their belief and disbelief in different aspects of them. It is not the case then that they 'dis-identify' and yet act 'as if' they identify because they may simultaneously dis-identify/disbelieve *and* identify/believe in different aspects of the corporate discourses they confront.

Cynicism has been seen as an 'individualistic' (Gabriel, 2008: 320) endeavour and it is understood to protect against 'encroachment into the private realm' (Casey, 1995: 175) thereby generating 'psychic satisfaction' (Costas and Fleming, 2009: 354). This gives rise to the second problem with the cynicism debate, which is that cynicism has largely been related to concerns such as the loss of individual 'authenticity' (Costas and Fleming, 2009) rather collective issues. And yet, as part of a critical, shared engagement with corporate discourses, cynicism can be said to reflect a nascent 'collective oppositional and antagonistic force' (Contu, 2008: 365). Cynical employees in the public sector may be concerned with the collective public good and each other and act with this collective in mind rather than in ways that reflect their cynicism towards corporate designs. This might help to explain the absence of other forms of resistance because despite being cynical towards corporate discourses, employees/managers lives remain bound up with the collective and a concern for others (the public and each other).

Of course, not all cynical employees will comply with managerial demands for altruistic reasons or, in other words, out of a collective concern for others. They may also do so due to individualistic economic concerns and career ambitions. These are not necessarily either/or positions, however, as individuals may be cynical about corporate designs both in relation to the public and each other but comply due to a fear of the economic consequences of resisting. As Cole (1969) puts it 'a decision to strike becomes a major fear-overcoming feat' (quoted in Flam, 1993: 68) because individuals 'fear both unemployment and a loss of their work identity' (ibid). In the wake of the 2008 GFC, public sector workers may simply feel that they cannot win through industrial action. These contextual issues have not featured as part of the cynicism or dis-identification debate because of the focus on individual identity and yet they can help to explain why otherwise critical employees comply.

Karfakis and Kokkinidis (2011) have drawn our attention to how cynicism was once used as a 'disruptive force' (op cit: 334) in ancient Greece and they distinguish between kynicism and cynicism (see also Cutler, 2000). Kynicism is open, externalised, social resistance that challenges 'the status quo' (Karfakis and Kokkinidis, 2011: 338). It fits with the positive understanding of cynic that Cutler (2000) offers as 'accepting personal responsibility for one's own actions and ideas, and having the temerity to stand up for what one believes in' (op cit: 310). This contrasts with what Karfakis and Kokkinidis (2011) represent as cynicism as an inner, camouflaged, conformist, de-caffeinated (Contu, 2008) and 'private affair' (Karfakis and Kokkinidis (2011: 341). These authors acknowledge that the 'dichotomy cynicism/kynicism is too rigid' (ibid) and rightly argue that it 'should be regarded as the two extremes of the same continuum. In-between them lies what might be called the "grey area" ' (Karfakis and Kokkinidis (2011: 339).

In view of the blurring between cynicism and kynicism, it may be difficult to disentangle and/or observe the two in operation, for example, although research access was initially open to me, despite repeated requests, I was unable to access group 'consultation meetings' attended by those affected by change. I was repeatedly informed that I could attend but could never obtain a date to do so. I suspect that in these forums, the CAs faced open challenges to the plans that they were putting in place or Kynicism that employees then voiced privately to me during interviews that would be seen as cynicism. It is precisely this 'grey area' whereby matters 'are much more complex, ambiguous and ambivalent' (ibid) that informs the analysis of cynicism/kynicism in this chapter.

As we shall see, it is not only kynicism that can be seen as 'political behaviour in that it is intended to change something about the way work gets done' (Jermier et al., 1994: 19; quoted in Karfakis and Kokkinidis (2011: 338) because cynicism, voiced in private during an interview, may also have this intent. Although the cynical employee is thought to behave 'like any other employee who "buys into" the corporation's values' (ibid) far more research is needed to ascertain whether this is the case. We do not know whether cynical employees actually do behave like other employees. We do not know what impact cynicism might have on managers or fellow employees. A cynical employee may make, sell or teach, like other employees, but we do not know the consequences of a cynical exchange by email, during a meeting, at the photocopier or on the production line.

It has been argued that cynicism provides the 'illusion that we are still having the thing (resistance)' (Contu, 2008: 347) and so this renders employees 'free' by creating 'an alluring "breathing space" where people feel untrammelled by the demands of the organization' (Fleming and Spicer, 2003: 167). Yet cynical employees, who fear for their jobs, careers and income may feel anything but 'free' or 'untrammelled' and continue to throw themselves into work for this reason, which may well add to their cynicism. Others may want to resist but fear that they cannot win, which is likely to contribute to their cynicism.

This chapter seeks to add to the literature on Change Management, resistance and employee cynicism by exploring and providing additional insights into why cynical employees continue to work *as if* they support corporate discourses. Rather than an individual means of reproducing the status quo or distancing oneself from it, it regards cynicism as part of 'the stubborn bedrock upon which other forms of resistance may grow' (Scott, 1985: 273) and, as such, a precursor to more organised forms of resistance.

The Case Study

The following three sub-sections illustrate different but interconnected aspects of the Copperdale regime that employees and managers expressed cynicism towards. The first section explores cynicism that was expressed

in relation the shifting form of governance within the public sector with reference to the growing emphasis on managerialism, the NPM and the enterprise discourse. The second section examines the cynicism that arose in relation to what employees described as the 'tick box' culture and finally cynicism in relation to the sense of 'game playing' that has emerged following these developments.

Cynicism Towards Managerialism, the NPM and Enterprise

In line with the emergence of neo-liberalism (Styhre, 2014) and the enterprise (du Gay and Salaman, 1992) and NPM (Thomas and Davies, 2005) discourses, Copperdale has been going through a process of change for over 40 years. Peter, who works in the housing department, regarded such developments in a cynical way:

> towards the end of the 80s it did a 360—I think probably housing was an extreme example of what happened elsewhere in the Council—it did a 360 degree—it did an about-turn and went completely the other way and, you know, ruthlessly efficient, heavy management, ridiculous targets, everybody being stressed out, totally customer focussed and ticking boxes left, right and centre.

Peter clearly did not identify with what he depicted as the 'heavy management' and, despite the rhetoric of enterprise, he did not identify with the bureaucratic emphasis on 'ticking boxes' that we will explore in more detail below:

> everything seems not so much to be about the service and the quality of the service but more about the cost that's involved in delivering that, and whilst I know that's good and there's reasons behind that, setting ourselves targets and things that we want to improve on service this way, so I've recognised the need for all that. Somewhere along the way I feel like we're missing out a little bit on reaching the people that we need to reach.
>
> (Tracy, contracts officer)

Tracy referred to the target culture and expressed cynicism about the shift from 'service' towards 'costs' because 'the people that we need to reach' are being neglected. Her remarks are indicative of a dis-identification with a cost-focus but an identification with 'the people' [public] and 'the quality of service'.

Tracy's remarks are ambivalent because she acknowledged the importance of 'targets/costs' but suggested that it has gone too far. She described how the introduction of a customer service policy in the early 1990s was a positive development because it required staff to answer phones, wear

name badges, business attire and prioritise customer service. As a former collector of council tenant rent arrears, Tracy was once held hostage in a house for three hours. At that time, the staff were not required to record where they were going or to report-in after visits and they had to visit potentially dangerous locations on their own. Tightening up procedures in this area was therefore considered a progressive step. It was said, however, that 'What we've got today has gone beyond that' and this was referred to as the 'new corporate way of working'. This ambivalence may help to explain why Tracy does not resist other than through cynicism. Hence she dis-identified with the 'corporate way' but continued to identify with providing service to 'the people we need to reach' and indeed with some of the early changes that were seen as improvements. The changes that Copperdale is going through following the 2008 GFC were argued to have exacerbated the emphasis on costs:

> Obviously it's a different world now, it's a different financial world, and the Council reflects that. It's a lot more cautious in terms of what it does, and everything has to make sense in some financial way, and also that impacts in the day to day work that I do because there isn't the resources any more—there are jobs that have gone, people that we would refer people to that aren't there anymore. . . . they've been cut because of budgetary cuts. So it's much more a period of transition and we've moved towards being more like a sort of—that awful phrase—any Easyjet Council but I think we're moving in that direction.
>
> (John, homelessness unit)

John's comments imply that service is being eroded due to a lack of 'resources' and 'jobs that have gone'. It was evident that he dis-identified with what he referred to as the move towards a basic/cheap provider of services or an 'Easyjet Council'. The tenor of his insights imply that he identifies with providing a service and so like Tracy this helps to explain why despite his cynicism John does not resist in other ways. There is, however, another explanation which is evident in his comments regarding it being 'a different financial world' that 'the council reflects'. Rather than a lack of understanding of how his actions reproduce the status quo, there appeared to be a resigned acceptance that 'it's a different world now'—one where 'costs' predominate, which appears to rule out challenge. The fact of 'budgetary cuts', reduced 'resources' and 'jobs that have gone' carries with it an economic threat which militates against resistance that could threaten his job. Cynicism and dis-identification in relation to managerialism was nonetheless a common feature of the interviews:

MIKE: The continual focus on costs, stats, facts and figures. Things on paper, I think is removing everyone's focus from what the actual

services are there to provide a lot of the time, so social services, housing, those kinds of *service providers* are entirely let down by stats, by ticking boxes, and there's a lack of focus on what they're actually there to do (Homelessness Officer).

DARREN: Is that something that you've seen, in the time that you've been here, change?

MIKE: That's ongoing. It's getting worse and worse in my opinion. Bottom line is, does it look good on paper to report to central government. We all focus on that in my Department anyway. That's my only area of experience and that's what I'm going on. There's handling, massaging of statistics in order to give an impression of a situation that's completely fictitious. The actual reality of *what's happening to people* isn't reflected in what we're putting out there, in terms of our fact and our figures and our stats and things like that (emphasis added).

Here, Mike alluded to a situation where the managerial emphasis on statistics, figures and ticking boxes as a means of governance has become a distraction from delivering services ('removing everyone's focus'). His cynicism and dis-identification with this is tangible but it is also evident that he not only identifies with the service he delivers but also with other service *providers* who he felt 'are entirely let down by stats'. He also identified with service *users* for the 'reality of what's happening to people isn't reflected in what we're putting out there'. Mike considered that the emphasis on 'statistics, figures and ticking boxes' wasted effort and led to the manipulation of figures, which obscured the reality of service delivery. The implication is that the deterioration of services and the negative effect that this is having on people's lives is being hidden. These insights shed further light on why cynical employees who evidently dis-identify with corporate discourses continue to act in ways that do not overtly resist them. Hence, despite his cynicism, Mike clearly identified with the service he delivers, other service providers and service users, which is indicative of a commitment to service. It is evident then that 'the organization' is not a unified entity that one either identifies with or regards cynically and so dis-identifies with. Nigel, who is an adults coordinator, described Copperdale as being in turmoil because of the imposition of a business model:

NIGEL: It is somewhat in conflict with itself, and with the people that it kind of shares its business with I think. And I think that's changed and grown over the years, and I think there's clearly been an attempt to introduce what it perceives to be elements of business practice in terms of the private sector into the Local Authority, both in the sense of our relationship with the people we commission services from, for example, but also in the way staff are managed and expected to perform within the organisation.

DARREN: When did you note that?

NIGEL: I think it's been a gradual change. I think in terms of relationship between the organisation and individual employees, I think my perception of that changing has been relatively recently, it's probably been certainly over the last 5 or 6 years I would say. I think in terms of this notion of 'business knows best' and 'we're best incorporating business practice within the public sector', I think I've been aware of this for quite a long time, but I think until fairly recently it's largely been kind of lip service, to be honest.

The 2008 GFC appears to have accelerated the shift towards a business model at Copperdale thereby pulling employees in the direction of cost cutting rather than service. Nigel voiced cynicism about the idea that 'business knows best' suggesting that he holds an opposing public sector service orientation.

If employees strongly identify with a public service ethos and each other then it is not the case that they continue to 'act *as if*' they believe 'in the prescribed values of the organization' (Fleming and Spicer, 2003: 166) because *they do believe* in some of its values such as service but remain cynical about the imposition of private sector business practices. Underlying this is the economic reality that if they do not comply, their jobs are at risk and this is the chastising reality for most workers. The insights of Rob (finance manager) are illuminating for they introduce another factor, which is apt to militate against resistance in that he suggested that public opinion would not support it:

> I think in the climate we have there's probably no value in just saying right, well this far and no further, because you're just going to get hammered for that in the court of public opinion and anyone who isn't represented by a union is going to get a big whacking, so it's a shared sacrifice, so we're just going to have to accept that. I wouldn't say I was disgruntled with the union for failing to stand up to the evil dictates of our employers.

Robs comments reveal his belief that the general public would not support local government workers taking industrial action and this seems likely to impact on his willingness to resist. His remarks indicate an awareness of the wider economic situation and so at present cynicism seems to be the only option for such workers. He was not disgruntled therefore with the trade unions failure to organise resistance given the prevailing economic climate and public opinion, which again suggests a resigned but fully conscious and engaged acceptance of the situation.

Cynicism Towards the 'Tick Box' Culture

As has already been indicated, the shift towards a 'tick box' culture was a particular source of cynicism because it has created a shadowland where

things are not as they seem or as they are measured and represented. Hence Copperdale measures the number of interfaces individuals have with the public but not the quality of such interactions. The individual who is seemingly the best performer due to a high volume of public interactions may have delivered a poor service. This may mean that members of the public have to return to the council, for example, if they have been ill-advised. The opposite may apply in the case of seemingly poor performers:

> I think the style of management promoted by the Corporation is very formulistic and formulaic and ritualistic and box ticking. I think the best managers kind of say, yes, but we know it's only pretend, and everybody knows it's actually only pretend in terms of delivering a service, but some people hide behind it because actually they can't do it in any other way, whereas good managers are out front actually helping you deliver the service, whatever the box ticking requires, and will worry about the box ticking, because we're all in on that conspiracy. We know we've got to do box ticking but we know that's just over there, this is actually what we do.
>
> (Peter, housing officer)

This reference to everyday life being 'only pretend' suggests a perplexing and surreal situation where there is a world of seemingly cold, hard figures that do not marry up with reality. There are two worlds. One manufactured through figures that does not correspond with reality, which employees dis-identified with and regarded with cynicism. The other is the world of service and public need, which employees identified with. Those preoccupied with their individual performance may throw themselves into the box ticking culture by trying to tick as many boxes as possible. Others engaged with and reproduced this culture in a different way in the sense that they were concerned with delivering services and knew that the box ticking is 'actually only pretend' and so they sought to balance both the need to deliver services with box ticking. In this sense, Fleming and Spicer (2003) are incorrect to assume that cynical employees do not 'understand' (op cit: 164) that their actions reproduce their plight. They understand only too well.

According to Mike, a homelessness officer, the 'The overall picture is that it's a bit of a façade of everything being fantastic but the cracks have been there a long, long time and they're getting wider'. He explained the matter in relation to a recent service redesign:

> In that restructure there was no say there. That was based on numbers, based on the facts and the stats, which don't reflect the actual reality of the job. They're based on number of people through the door, how many cases of this type, how many of this type, how many of this type, then how long do they take, and work out the number

> of Assessment Officers we need to do that if that's an average week, and what they agreed on was what they had already [i.e. the existing number of staff], which I don't think was enough. But that restructure was done basically on facts and figures, but again it's an effort in reducing costs.

Mike was clearly cynical about how staffing levels were worked out during this restructuring, which he felt corresponded to a fallacious numerical representation of the world instead of lived experience. Rather than a 'cynical distance' (du Gay and Salaman, 1992: 630) or 'dis-identification' (Fleming and Spicer, 2003: 163), Mike's cynicism appeared to reflect a *cynical engagement* with such figures and identification with his work. Elona, who also works in the homelessness department, referred to the gap between the reality of homelessness and how it is recorded and reported. She referred to the staff consultation and her comments repeatedly refer to the collective 'our' and 'we', as in the homelessness service and those who work with the homeless, with which and with whom she clearly identifies:

> With *our* service *we* have no control over how the service is run. Any suggestions *we* have to improve the service can't be made by *our* immediate managers or a team leader. They sort of go above their heads, right to the top. I think I've seen the actual Head of Homelessness twice in the three and a half years that I've worked for the service. Any consultation that's been ongoing has felt like it's just to tick a box afterwards, after decisions have been made, and for example you'll find people saying 'Oh when I did the job 20 years ago', when it was a very different job, and they're making decisions based on their experience rather than actually addressing the service as it is today. . . . There's no common sense or pragmatism that's actually exercised, *we* see all this happening, *we* say it's going to happen. It's just a ticking time bomb. It's getting worse. And *we* talk about customers whereas before *we* talked about service users. *We* talk about relieving homelessness where before *we* talked about preventing homelessness. And *we* feel it's all just about stats and making sure the national indicators that the Government states *look like* they're being met, because there's an invisible number—we only count statutory homeless people when *we* report to Government. That's people who tick all the boxes in the legislation, while the majority of people who come through *our* door who *we* acknowledge as being homeless aren't statutory homeless, so *we're* working on invisible figures, and the only people who see the fall out are *us*, the people who have to constantly tell people yes, you are street homeless and yes, you probably are going to be street homeless for quite a while.
>
> (Elona, homelessness officer; emphasis added)

As Elona's remarks indicate, it is not only employees but the public that is subject to the tick box culture because it is through such means that they are defined as homeless or not. Elona deals with the reality of 'people who come through *our* door' who are seemingly 'invisible' because they do not tick all of the boxes. Her cynicism is bound up with an identification with the needs of those who are homeless and her colleagues who seek to help them. It runs concurrently with a dis-identification with the 'tick box' culture but she is engaged with these issues rather than distanced from them. In keeping with 'the kynic that takes an interest in changing organizational reality' (Karfakis and Kokkinidis, 2011: 341), Elona was open in her criticism, for 'we say it's going to happen' but the decisions have already been made.

This cynicism does not appear to provide 'a sense of freedom' (Fleming and Spicer, 2003: 168) because it reflects a deep concern and engagement with the issues that matter for these employees that were described as 'a ticking time bomb'. It illuminates that dis-identification with corporate discourses can run alongside identification with colleagues, the public and one's job. It sheds a different light on the experience of cynical employees for not all cynics keep 'the norms and values of the organization at a distance' whilst 'continuing to act *as if* they believe in the culture of the organization' (op cit: 169). Hence some identify with certain norms/values and act in a way that supports them. The cynicism related to the creation of a tick box culture that does not reflect people's actual lives. Hence Tracy discussed a staff redeployment scheme that no longer advertises internal job vacancies but only refers to the experiences of people who have been through the scheme:

> The staff redeployment people used to send round job opportunities, now they're sending out quotes from people who are saying 'Thank you. I really enjoyed this training course I went on last week'. What?! This is absolute—it's like your treating your workforce *like they don't know what's going on*. I feel, and I think a lot of people feel, that there's a kind of an undercurrent that's not discussed.
>
> (contracts officer; emphasis added)

Tracy's cynicism was bound up with the pretence or sense 'of hiding behind this "everything's rosy" kind of picture, it clearly isn't'. It was the feeling that staff are treated 'like they don't know what's going on' when clearly they do that seemed most irksome to her:

> It's the patronism now that is more infuriating. Before, you just accepted there were decisions taken by senior managers about certain things and you got on with things, but now it's this kind of pretence that exists.

Cynicism Towards the Game Playing

The staff were cynical about the 'tick box' culture and the pretence that it generated. There was a concern with how language is used to manipulate and manufacture reality in a way that seeks to disguise or reconfigure everyday life. Although cynicism cannot be separated from identity, it appeared to be less about protecting their sense of self and more about the impact of the changes on services, colleagues and the general public. In order to cope with the cuts in public spending, services are continually being restructured and after each redesign, the staff are required to reapply for their jobs, which involves being re-interviewed:

DARREN: Through all these interviews, do you get a sense in which—well I'm sure you do—that you are being asked to become a particular type of person, or to display a particular type of person?

IAN: I've heard the phrase—'play the game' (programme manager, housing).

LAURA: I was on an interview panel the other day and it was kind of public sector bingo, what was going on—you mentioned key phrases and you knew people were kind of gemmed up on certain things. . . . There were certain key phrases that everyone was coming out with and you kind of knew that they knew what was expected (manager, corporate core services).

IAN: Yes. Phrases means points!

DARREN: It's very true. Some people do interview really well because they have the ability to remember

IAN: Apparently psychopaths do! I'm being serious actually. Self belief and knowing what you need to say, even if you know you're never going to do it. I've interviewed recently some officers that I know are extremely capable but just go to pieces under those conditions and they don't get the jobs. And it's not good.

Ian and Laura's comments add another dimension to the 'pretence' embedded in the corporate culture. Hence the staff are required to learn certain words and phrases and use them in a way that Laura described as 'public sector bingo'. It has been argued that 'Unlike Kynicism, cynicism is a silent way of laughing with a clearly conformist character. The cynic is fully aware of the gap between rhetoric and reality, yet he is uninterested in changing reality' (Karfakis and Kokkinidis (2011: 335). It is difficult to conclude whether Laura and Ian are cynics or kynics as their mocking comments are clearly not silent and were voiced openly in an interview in front of a colleague. They do not, however, amount to a challenge to management and so could be seen as conformist. Laura is clearly unhappy with the superficiality and artificiality of having to repeat stock phrases that demonstrate an understanding of the corporate

discourse but conforms nonetheless. Yet despite this conformity, it seems incorrect to say that she is 'uninterested in changing reality' (ibid).

Ian indicated that the corporate discourse involves 'playing the game' and creates an artificial situation. This is potentially damaging for services because it rewards/elevates those who are best able to engage in 'Salesmanship, showmanship, and acting' (Gabriel, 2008: 317) but who are not necessarily the best at providing services as Ian's comments suggested. Once again, we can observe dis-identification with this corporate gamesmanship but Ian's cynicism reflected a collective identification with his colleagues who do not play the game well and the services that might suffer because those who are the most 'capable' may lose their job. This dynamic around cynicism does not reflect an *individualistic* employee who does 'not internally believe' but 'externally' believes (Fleming and Spicer, 2003: 169) because they '*internally*' *believe* in each other and in public service but do not believe in the corporate discourse. The requirement to use particular phrases was considered by some to be part of the 'tick-box' culture. Hence, Alastair, a data officer, has been re-interviewed for his job on three occasions due to ongoing service redesigns:

ALASTAIR: part of the latest restructure was going through this process where you had to fill in a Demonstrating the Values leaflet, it was like a form basically and there was various categories and you had to give examples of how you meet these criteria.

DARREN: Is that something that was easy for you to complete?

ALASTAIR: I found it difficult, because I thought it was just total nonsense. It was, I can't remember exactly how it phrased it but one of the criteria was something like 'Demonstrate your belief in Copperdale'. So you had to give an example how you—I can't remember exactly how it was phrased but it seemed to me like not something that should be part of a selection process for doing a specific job because you could just write in any nonsense there. It's not like 'Are you familiar with this certain type of software, have you done this sort of role before, have you managed that, whatever', you just had to make some nonsense up and stick it down.

DARREN: What do you think they're doing that for?

ALASTAIR: I think they're trying to tick some form of box where they're saying all the people that work here have to show that they believe in Copperdale, so they thought it would be a good idea to have that as part of their selection criteria but I just don't think it works.

The danger for employees who are drawn into the 'tick box' culture is that it breeds cynicism, artificiality and a 'preoccupation with image' (Gabriel, 2008: 317). Hence Alastair considered that the emphasis on values or explaining why you believe in Copperdale is 'nonsense' because it is irrelevant to the job and lacks substance. Alastair's cynicism revolved

around the superficial requirement to display belief as opposed to technical knowledge or the ability to do the job. This can be seen as a critique of the move towards a 'generic' worker or manager that is redolent of the NPM (see Lapsley, 2008). His cynicism therefore dis-identifies with and resists the ephemeral and the insubstantial in the corporate discourse but nevertheless indicates that he identifies with the work and the need to deliver quality services.

Catherine, a housing officer, explained that as part of the ongoing service redesign 'we've all had to fill in documents' for the interviews. This includes a so-called 'passport' which states what each individual does and the skills involved in their role and also a 'base line document' or 200 word statement that requires individuals to state what they do along with their qualifications. There is also a *Demonstrating Values* booklet that tasks employees to state in 250 words, specific points in relation to Copperdale's values:

DARREN: What values are we talking about?

CATHERINE: that would be Customer Service—it depends on your role, but for most people I think it was Customer Service. Belief in Copperdale for everybody. Erm, what did I do? Basically provide—what's the word they used—sort of outcomes, so there's delivery, saying that you're going to do something and doing it.

DARREN: What's the point of doing those rather than just having an interview to see if you can do the job?

CATHERINE: I don't know really. Probably out of all of this I'm struggling with that. I don't know. You spend a lot of time doing these things so you don't actually end up doing real work. You spend a lot of time doing that. When I got to the interview, it was a very loose kind of attachment to it. I don't know. I don't see what they're gaining from that, myself, other than it shows you're playing ball by basically saying all the right things, but we all said all the right things because we know—and I have to say filling those documents in was the biggest teamwork thing we've done for ages because we all helped each other, we all supported each other, which is probably not what they saw coming out of it but I thought it was quite a positive thing.

Interestingly, although interviews can be individualising, they appear to have had the opposite effect here in that the employees worked together to complete the corporate documents. Once again, this illustrates that employees can identify with each other even if they dis-identify with the corporate discourse. As Catherine explained, it was necessary to say 'all the right things' so as to demonstrate that 'you're playing ball' but, as everyone knows all the right things to say and cooperated to complete the documents, it became a meaningless exercise especially as a means to differentiate people. Teamwork was used to subvert the individualised

subject that is required to display a penchant for teamwork, customer service and a belief in Copperdale. Clearly, the employees were open with each other in sharing the corporate discourse they were required to display (kynicism) but it is not clear whether this subversive 'teamwork' was visible to management. Participating in teamwork to subversively engage with the corporate discourse added to the sense of unreality because as Catherine said people are doing this instead of 'doing real work' (see McCabe et al., 2019). Catherine and her colleagues appeared to share what Cutler (2000) considers to be the 'positive' features of cynicism for the 'cynical manager' who rejects the 'liberal insertion' of management speak into our lives and recognises that the likely response is 'phrased in words which are as meaningless and insincere as the original terms employed' (op cit: 309). The demand to play language games contributed to the sense of cynicism, artificiality and surrealism. It was mocked in different ways:

LAURA: It seems a bit strange as well from my point of view. The layers, certain grades they've stripped out to make cost savings, so they seem to have gone for every other grade and stripped out a layer. So from my point of view, they've created more Grade 10s, which is about £40,000, lost all the 9s, which is the next one down, are creating more 8s and lost all the 7s.

IAN: And if you're a 9, you don't get a 10 you drop to an 8. If you're a 7 you drop to a 6. So the view is that it's like a game of Snakes and Ladders with all the ladders taken away and there are only snakes now!

LAURA: I think it's meant to be de-tiering

IAN: Which is just another Orwellian term of many that this organisation uses to cover the reality.

Ian (programme manager, housing) and Laura (manager, corporate core services) clearly did not identify with the seemingly random way in which layers of staff are being stripped out of the organisation not least because it was seen as a way to downgrade the remaining staff. Laura referred to it as 'de-tiering' and Ian suggested that this is simply a way to disguise the 'reality' of downgrading staff. He described the management speak as Orwellian (see Willmott, 1993; McCabe, 2007b) and this reflected his dis-identification with the corporate discourse. Indeed, Dominic (support officer) indicated that management needs to reflect upon its use of language and actions:

> they just need to listen more. They're always talking about thinking outside the box, but I think they should do it a bit more and use a bit more common sense.
>
> (support officer)

Referring to the CAs, Nigel (adults coordinator) was cynical about outsiders or 'consultants' intervening in the organisation and he mocked the language and metaphors that they used which was discussed in Chapter 5:

> we have a business analyst around IT projects, or a business analyst around transforming what they call the 'customer journey' you know . . . and I think there has been . . . a tendency to have people managing areas within which they have no direct operational experience.

Both Dominic's and Nigel's concerns reflect a belief that Copperdale could be better managed which indicates a partial identification with it because they are *engaged* with what is going on and want it to improve. Nigel's concerns can also be understood as a critique of the general or generic manager/worker whom Copperdale and the NPM advocates and who is divorced from operational experience.

Mike, a homelessness officer, ridiculed how the corporate language constantly changes 'we call them customers now, they used to be clients, then it was service users, now it's customers and it changes all the time so I forget what the correct terminology is'. Other staff also mocked the metaphor of the customer journey hence Tracy, a contracts officer, reflected upon moving to the new back office building when she was told—'you're going to the New World, go and take a tour of the new offices'. She continued 'that's where I got frustrated with this "Journey to a New World" business. It just seemed ridiculous'. This language was intended to encourage employees to identify with the corporate transformation and yet, for Tracy, it had the opposite effect. Likewise, Mike remarked:

> It's the terminology used here and the daft jargon that gets bandied about, it's comical at times. Like 'The Customer Journey', this, this and this. And it's pull your hair out stuff.

Although both Tracy and Mike identified with providing public services as their earlier insights suggested, they clearly dis-identified with the corporate metaphors and discourse. During the interviews, cynicism was voiced and shared by individuals from different departments who had often never met before and so it would be mistaken to simply view this as individualistic or silent opposition. The comments of the staff connect with Willmott's (1993) critique of the corporate culture movement, which he linked to George Orwell's *1984*. Ian made an unsolicited connection with Orwell in his comments and so he was explicitly asked about it:

DARREN: Is that something that's joked about or talked about, the Big Brother Orwellian situation?

IAN: Yes . . . they were looking at service redesign for private sector housing at the time, and they had terms for individuals who would be resistant or not. Those that are 'Likely to be compliant with change' and 'those who will resist' and they label the resistors as 'Blue Mice' that was the term they used. So we formed this secret Blue Mouse club as kind of subversives within the organisation. But really, the genuine impact is that people are really devastated by what is going on at the moment. I've seen people in tears.

Ian clearly understood his mocking cynicism to be resistance towards the new corporate approach and it distanced him from the corporate speak but his concluding comments are also indicative of a compassionate identification and engagement with public service and colleagues who he has seen 'in tears'. Kynicism is said to 'differ from modern cynicism because it is not miserable but cheerful and happy' (Karfakis and Kokkinidis (2011: 334) and Ian's 'secret Blue Mouse club' certainly suggests an element of gleeful kynic subversiveness that was shared with others. As this did not include an open challenge to management it does not seem to accord with Kynicism but nonetheless we can see that the division between cynicism and Kynicism is blurred.

The comments of Dominic, a support officer, express identification with, for example, the need to learn new skills but he remained cynical about the substance of the changes and his criticisms reflect a dis-identification with what he described as corporate 'propaganda':

> Basically with anything new that they want to push forward, they will always tell you how great everything is. It will do this, it will transfer skills, you'll be able to do this, you'll be able to do that. It's all rosy. It's all nice and rosy. It's just to get people on board, it's all propaganda, to get people into the idea.

These remarks exemplify cynicism 'as an everyday reaction to the gap which some people perceive to exist between what they are told and what they instinctively feel' (Cutler, 2000: 307). Cynicism appeared to be linked to a dis-identification with corporate 'propaganda', the 'tick box' culture, the measuring, the facade, the pretence, the fantasy, the nonsense of everyday life. Rather than embrace this shadowland, employees resisted through remaining cynical and yet they identified with what they saw as their 'real work' (see McCabe et al., 2019) of delivering services and with each other. Rather than cynicism reflecting a lack of understanding of what was happening to them or a means of escapism, there was instead an acute awareness as Tracy's insights revealed and also an intense engagement with the services they provide and with each other. Cutler (2000) refers to the cynic's role which 'is to provide an irreverent stab at this veneer in an attempt to expose' what 'may lie hidden beneath'

(op cit: 303). This resonates with the staff experiences indicated in this chapter:

> One of the things did raise my scepticism was receiving a communication from somebody within the Transformation team whose job role was described as a 'Solutions Architect' and to me that just doesn't sound like a real job. . . . Well it sounded to me a bit like something out of Hogwarts (from Harry Potter) or something like that. You know, Department of Wizardry and Magic. I'm sure he was a very good, effective person at what he did but I have no idea what he did.

Conclusion

To conclude this chapter, although cynicism falls far short of a revolutionary subjectivity or action it seems too strong to say that it serves to 'inherently guarantee' our way of life rather than being a means to 'disturb or disrupt' it (Contu, 2008: 370). If there were to be a challenge to the extant order it may begin as a sustained cynicism that would have to be translated into collective action. It is also problematic to conclude that disbelieving, cynical employees nonetheless act *as if* they believe because this de-contextualises and individualises such acts. In the public sector, collectivism plays a role in this dynamic as employees *identify* with each other and the public they serve even as they remain cynical about and *dis-identify* with other aspects of the corporate discourse.

9 Making Organisational Politics Political

Introduction

This chapter analyses three discourses on organisational politics (OP) and relates them to organisational change—micro-, meso- and macro-politics. It argues that each has limitations because the politics they consider are embedded within the status quo. It then introduces a fourth, more critical OP discourse, which recognises how individuals are produced as particular types of subject through disparate corporate discourses. It is argued that this latter discourse can be extended and rendered more political by including within its analysis an appreciation of the role that party politics and the media plays in relation to OP. In this way, further insights can be provided into how seemingly political discourses can serve to fabricate us as apolitical subjects that take the status quo for granted. The chapter draws on a chess metaphor to argue that the literature on OP has tended to focus on politics in relation to how the game or our established way of life is played out rather than questioning the game itself.

The notion that organisations are political arenas has been firmly established through the seminal processual work of Mintzberg (1983), Pettigrew (1973) and Pfeffer (1992). These authors explored the meso- or organisational politics that impact upon change and inform management decision making. The relationship between micro-, meso- and macro-politics has largely been neglected and yet the importance of supraorganisational or macro-politics is of critical importance when seeking to understand change especially within a local government authority (LGA). In an LGA context, politics takes on a different meaning, which is distinct from politics in the private sector because of the blurring between management and locally elected politicians. Moreover, the impact of national politics is more overt in the public sector and infuses the process of change.

This chapter seeks to add to our understanding of OP and endeavours to further politicise it. It considers micro- (Fedor et al., 1998; Hochwarter et al., 2003; Kacmar and Carlson, 1997), meso- (Mintzberg, 1983; Pettigrew, 1977; Pfeffer, 1992) and macro-approaches (Cole, 1985) towards OP and argues that each presents an apolitical understanding of politics

in the sense that they do not question the status quo. Instead, in different ways, the OP literature reflects a concern to manage the politics of change without providing insights into the way in which seemingly political discourses constitute us as apolitical subjects.

The approach adopted towards OP in this chapter is distinctive because—although scholars have attended to the interrelationships between identity politics (micro-politics) and organisational power relations (e.g. Knights and McCabe, 1998; Knights and Murray, 1994; Thomas and Davies, 2005)—the relationship between micro-, meso- and macro-politics has been neglected. The chapter responds to Fleming's (2005) call for research that explores how 'microprocesses are connected with broader societal forces' (op cit: 61) but goes further by exploring the ways in which politics whether micro-, meso- or macro-politics contribute to the production of ourselves as apolitical subjects that take the status quo for granted.

The chapter is organised as follows. The next section reviews the literature on OP and introduces four political discourses. We then return to the case of Copperdale to see how these discourses apply in an empirical setting before drawing out the main arguments in the conclusion.

The Discourses and Meaning of Organisational Politics

There are many different ways we can understand OP, which is notoriously 'difficult to define' (Kacmar and Carlson, 1997: 639). According to Pfeffer (1992) politics is 'the exercise or use of power, with power being defined as potential force' (op cit: 14). This understanding limits and equates politics to Lukes (1974) second dimension of power, which refers to the use of coercion and manipulation. Lukes (1974) third dimension of power, the 'radical' or 'social', fits better with the approach adopted towards politics in this chapter hence his third dimension points towards exercises of power that are less obvious or visible.

Lukes (1974) presented power in a propertied way as something that 'A' possesses to 'repress' the real interests of 'B' and, as explained in Chapter 3, this is not how power is understood in this book, which follows a more 'relational' and 'productive' understanding of power (Foucault, 1977). A 'relational' approach towards power can help us to understand OP in the sense of multiple individuals and groups simultaneously jostling for power so as to advance or maintain their interests, though these 'interests' may not be consciously thought through or known to them. Politics can be understood as an attempt to exercise power, which is bound up with securing one's sense of self, career and economic livelihood. This understanding recognises that OP operates simultaneously in multiple ways, be they micro (individual, identity), meso (group, organisational) or macro (supraorganisational), which together forge and reflect what we take for granted as everyday life.

It is problematic to argue therefore that 'politics inhere *not* in grand, macro-level processes or structures but in the micro, highly local level of everyday interaction' (Dick, 2013: 651; emphasis added) because politics is not limited to the micro but is evident simultaneously in multiple struggles that are not fully grasped if we consider only 'local level interactions' (ibid). Nevertheless, we do need to avoid 'abstractions from the activities which they are intended to explain' and 'to develop the notion of politics as what we experience it directly to be, as a mode of doing' (Burns, 1961: 259) without excluding, of course, that it is also bound up with a mode of *being* (see Knights and McCabe, 1998; Knights and Murray, 1994). The way in which multiple expressions of OP interact with and imbue each other has been neglected in the literature to date. This chapter seeks to address this through considering how politics intermingle with and infuse everyday life. It also attends to how interrelated political processes produce us as apolitical subjects: apolitical because what we see as politics and how we seek to exercise political power conceals a greater politics at work, which is our acceptance of and contribution to, the wider game or our established way of life.

There is a body of work that pursues a managerial approach towards politics, which is concerned to 'prevent' its 'dysfunctional consequences' (Ferris and King, 1991: 70) or endeavours to understand 'how, where, and why politics can be bad or good and how to control it: that is when politics is functional or useful and when it is destructive' (Hall et al., 2004: 252–253). As has already been indicated, however, it is problematic to assume that politics can be controlled. Buchanan (2008) describes this literature as adopting as 'a positivist perspective' in that it seeks 'to develop a generalizable model of the triggers, nature and outcomes of political behaviour' (op cit: 50). This type of approach is evident in Kacmar and Carlson's (1997) concern to identify 'a reliable and valid measure of perceptions of organizational politics' (op cit: 655). The focus of this literature tends to be on OP in relation to individuals, groups or organisations (Hochwarter et al., 2003).

This chapter, by contrast, does not adopt a managerial line of argument and instead it seeks to understand broader political processes at work that stretch beyond organisational boundaries so as to include the role of the media and central government. It shares some affinities with Buchanan's (2008) constructivist-interpretive epistemology, in that the concern is with 'understanding' rather than 'measurement and covariation' (op cit: 50). In contrast to Buchanan (2008), however, the focus is not limited to a micro-political concern with 'individual behaviour, relationships and perceptions' (ibid) as this omits important political relations both within *and* beyond organisations.

The following sub-sections present four discourses on OP. Before proceeding to examine these different discourses, it is necessary to explain the meaning of discourse. I follow the Foucauldian position, 'which assumes

that discourse, subjectivity and practice are densely interwoven' (Alvesson and Karreman, 2000: 1126). As a consequence, it is understood that language is embedded in practice and that through discourse 'our sense of ourselves as distinct subjectivities is constituted' (Clegg, 1989: 151) albeit not in a deterministic way because power is never totalising in its effects (see Foucault, 1977). The power effects of a given discourse are understood to be achieved through bureaucratic regulation or 'discursive practices' and so there is a materiality to discourse.

To explain this, one can think about the 'enterprise' discourse (du Gay and Salaman, 1992), which promotes individuals who think of themselves as autonomous, accountable and responsible beings. This discourse is enacted through materials and practices such as job descriptions, adverts, corporate videos, promotion criteria, application forms, rewards, disciplinary processes, culture change programmes, interviews, appraisals and promotion panels. This approach towards discourse can be contrasted with Zanoni and Janssens' (2007: 1375) 'analytical distinction between identity regulation [via discursive structures] and bureaucratic control [via material structures]' for this rubs out the materiality of discourse or how discourse is embedded in practice. It represents discourse in a dualistic way as texts and talk whereas here discourse is understood to be inseparable from the material world. It is assumed that we can only access and represent the 'social' or 'outer world' (Leitch and Palmer, 2010: 1200) through discourse and that our understanding of the world and ourselves is produced through discursive power/knowledge relations (Foucault, 1982). From this perspective, the material and the discursive are 'inextricably entangled' (Brown et al., 1998: 79).

A Micro-Political Discourse

A micro-, meso- and macro-politics distinction is employed here as a heuristic device to represent the different ways in which OP have been understood in the literature. It is also used as a means to establish a distinctive position in relation to this literature and to distinguish between the different empirical dynamics in the case of Copperdale. They are not seen as separate for each flows into the other and all exercise power in relation to the other. The distinction is not made to invoke a deterministic causal chain that flows from top (macro) to bottom (micro).

The first discourse on OP is apparent in studies of micro-political relations some of which are positivist and managerial. Kacmar and Carlson (1997: 627), for example, focus on individual 'perceptions of politics' whilst Fedor *et al.* (1998: 1767–1768) consider 'the variables that predict perceptions of organizational politics and their various dimensions'. This focus on how individuals perceive politics is apolitical in the sense that it considers politics only in relation to extant corporate relations. Any change that flows from this understanding reinforces rather than

challenges those relations. As politics is considered from a managerial perspective it is also largely coupled with 'negative outcomes in the workplace' such as 'job dissatisfaction' (Hockwarter et al., 2003: 1010). In this sense, OP is seen as a distraction from the smooth playing out of the organisational game.

An alternative approach, which offers an interpretive account of micro-politics, has explored the use of nicknames in the workplace, arguing that this is related to 'marking group boundaries', 'cathartically venting frustrations' and 'adjusting to labelling' (Fortado, 1998: 13). This resonates with the case of Copperdale in that the CAs established 'group boundaries' by distinguishing their approach towards change from that of 'external' consultants. These insights allow us to understand how micro-politics facilitate and mediate everyday workplace relations but within this discourse subjects remain apolitical players because the preoccupation is with extant workplace interactions. According to Fortado (1998: 29), the 'micropolitics of organization' is linked to the 'informal organization' (ibid) and yet, as we shall see, micro-politics also infuse the formal organisation.

Buchanan and Badham (1999) have explored the 'lived experience' of politics through interviews with five individuals in five different organisations. They discuss the case of a management consultant who experienced political manipulation by members of a borough council. These scholars focus on how political plays relate to established positions within the game and the jockeying for power between parties. As Buchanan and Badham (1999) point out, 'more adequate accounts would have to offer significantly detailed background and context information' (op cit: 617) and this is what I have attempted to do in this book.

To sum up, micro-political studies provide rich insights into identity politics and how individuals and groups interact in the workplace. Metaphorically, a micro-political focus is preoccupied with the pieces on the chess board. But we also need to understand the broader political processes at work, if we are to avoid being apolitical and seeing the game only as it currently stands. Otherwise, the risk is that we become preoccupied with the minutiae of individual or identity struggles.

A Meso-Political or Group Political Discourse

According to Buchanan (2008), macro-political approaches 'address structural bases of organizational power and the role of coalitions in promoting collective agendas' (op cit: 50). By contrast, coalition-based politics are linked here with meso-political relations. This is because a macro-political discourse is understood to refer to politics at or beyond the organisational level and not to coalitions *within* the organisation.

Meso-political accounts have considered politics in relation strategy (Mintzberg, 1994; Pettigrew, 1977), Business Process Reengineering

(Buchanan, 1997) and technological change (Dawson and Buchanan, 2005; McLoughlin and Badham, 2005; Pichault, 1995). In contrast to a micro-political focus on 'identity', 'processual' theorists (Pettigrew, 1973; Pfeffer, 1992; Mintzberg, 1983) have attended to what Mintzberg (1985) describes as 'the Political Arena—the organization captured in whole, or in significant part, by politics and conflict' (op cit: 133). Most often this means attending to the power relations between different coalitions, factions or interest groups within organisations but also to individuals:

> Political processes in organizations evolve at the group level from the division of work in the firm, and at the individual level from associated career, reward and status systems. . . . Political behaviour is defined as behaviour by individuals or—in collective terms—subgroupings within an organization.
>
> (Pettigrew, 1977: 81)

In terms of the chess metaphor, this meso-political discourse can be equated with the posturing and manoeuvring of players as they attempt to gain advantage over each other during the game. Attending to politics in this way focuses our attention on individual/groups which can distract us from questioning the game itself. Although processual theorists challenge traditional functional thinking, a residue of managerialism remains, where politics is seen as temporary, resolvable and/or aberrant (for a critique see Buchanan and Badham, 1999; Knights and Murray, 1994; Knights and McCabe, 1998). This meso-approach is evident in Mintzberg's (1985: 148) assertion that 'most organizations' are 'relatively free of conflict' (Mintzberg, 1985: 148) where politics is understood as:

> Individual or group behaviour that is informal, ostensibly parochial, typically divisive, and above all, in the technical sense, illegitimate—sanctioned neither by formal authority, accepted ideology, nor certified expertise.
>
> (Mintzberg, 1983: 172)

According to Mintzberg (1983), politics resides in a domain that is separate from the formal organisation and yet this de-politicises organisations. It assumes that if only organisations ran along the lines sanctioned by formal authority then politics would slip away. Despite explicit concern with how 'social processes are deeply embedded in the contexts that produce and are produced by them' (Pettigrew, 1997: 340), which includes the 'outer context' (ibid), it is remarkable how little attention has been given to wider political relations when studying change for the focus of the OP literature has largely considered meso-political relations.

A Macro-Political or Organisation Political Discourse

A third OP discourse draws our attention to issues that for heuristic reasons I will describe as being supraorganisational or outside the organisation or as impacting upon the organisation in total. According to Cole (1985) a '[macro-]approach to organizational change helps us to see the forest for the trees in a way that traditional research approaches have often failed to do' (op cit: 560). Nevertheless, Cole's (1985) research into small groups reflects a managerial interest in identifying 'factors driving innovation' (op cit: 562). It displays a positivist concern to locate 'macrovariables' as a 'more generalizable predictor of [small group] success' (ibid). Though insightful about how national political/economic variations impact upon the politics of change, the approach is apolitical in the sense that it takes the status quo for granted and seeks to facilitate it through identifying ways to improve the performance of small groups. It is concerned with the game as it stands which means that it only partly see's the forest and it is blind to the forest being something other than it is. To return to the chess metaphor, it directs us to the architecture of the building in which the chess players compete but it does not question or ask us to reflect upon what is happening. Instead, it urges us to study the relationship between different architectures and how this impacts on the success or otherwise of different players.

A study of a Brazilian telecommunications supplier has provided qualitative insights into how different national-level political regimes impact on organisational culture (Rodrigues, 2006). It focused on 'internal political forces' (op cit: 537) but not on the role that local politicians and CAs might play in such processes. It is an insightful study that illuminates how different political regimes impact upon how the game is played within organisations but the danger is that we become fascinated by the links between the two and so once again accept the game as it stands.

This also applies to Burns (1961) account of the political consequences of government defence cuts, which led to meso-politicking between the sales departments and development laboratories. Burns (1961) usefully points out 'that politics are not only about the rules of the game—the game itself changes. It changes with the nature and extent of the resources which the game is about' (op cit: 279). Although Burns (1961) recognises that change is political and that the game changes, he does not urge us to reflect on the game or to consider how it could be otherwise. Indeed, he offers no insights or explanation for why the game largely remains the same or why we continue to consent to a game where the resources are so obviously unequally divided.

Buchanan (1997), referring to the 'political texture' of a hospital, argued that 'decision making in a public sector environment was rendered complex by factors and criteria that would not be considered relevant in a commercial setting with a preoccupation with profit' (op cit: 59). This

highlights that public sector organisations are political in a different way than private sectors organisations. In the case of Copperdale, decision making, policies and the phasing of change were all peculiarly political because of factors such as the timing of elections and local party political convictions. In this sense, both the process and context of change were infused with macro-politics. If we only attend to how political parties impact upon organisations, however, the danger, to use the chess metaphor, is that we become preoccupied with studying how lighting or heating impacts upon the players.

Hoggett (2006) argues that 'public organizations are inherently more complex than private ones' (op cit: 175) because they are at once 'moral institutions where questions of technical efficacy ('what works') can be integrated with value questions' (op cit: 187). The politics of public sector organisations therefore reflect the ambiguous and contradictory demands that they face, for unlike the private sector that has only the market to answer to, the public sector confronts multiple demands. As discussed in Chapter 4, in recent decades, the UK public sector has faced intense political pressure to ape the private sector (Bloomfield and Hayes, 2009; Hood, 1991; Hoggett, 1999). The demand to adopt NPM practices has intensified following the 2008 GFC and yet public sector organisations 'only have legitimacy to the extent that what they do has public value' (Hoggett, 2006: 189). In other words, 'they require consent from those whom they govern and serve' (Morrell and Hartley, 2006: 485). This gives rise to distinct political dynamics which reflect the tension between the demand for cost-cutting and the need to provide services for the public good (which is itself contested). How these tensions are played out will be examined below in the section on meso-politics or organisational politics.

As we shall see, meso-politics are infused with macro-politics. This, in turn, reflects that the 'authority' of local political leaders is 'potentially subject to challenge on a daily basis, from: their political party (most operate within a party structure), opposition politicians, the media, their constituents, and other bodies (e.g. charities, lobby groups, business confederations)' (Morrell and Hartley, 2006: 485). To extend our analysis of politics we need to do more than describe how the macro-political 'context' impacts upon the politics of change (e.g. Pettigrew, 1997). We also need to explore how OP, operating in multiple ways, combine to produce our everyday way of understanding the world and ourselves as subjects that take for granted the status quo, which is the aim of this chapter.

Towards a Critical Political Discourse

This final section discusses the literature on OP as a means to establish what a critical discourse on OP would look like. It focuses on the recent organisation studies literature that has attended specifically to politics.

One difference between a critical OP discourse and the more managerial OP literature is that it does not regard politics in a negative way (e.g. Mintzberg, 1983; Stone, 1997). To view politics as potentially positive, however, is not in itself critical. Indeed, there is a 'political skills' (Perrewe et al., 2000; Ferris et al., 2007) literature that offers managers ways to manage politics by being 'politically smart' where politics is understood as 'the reconciliation of different interests' (Butcher and Clarke, 2003: 478) or a means to produce 'consensus' (Perrewe et al., 2000: 120). To achieve a 'reconciliation' or 'consensus' from a critical perspective is implausible without radical reforms and this literature does not acknowledge, let alone address, the enduring hierarchical, gendered and racial inequalities that pervade the workplace. In view of this, managerial political machinations to foster reconciliation or consensus would, at best, only offer a temporary solution that bestrides deeper fault lines. Indeed, its unintended or perhaps intended purpose is merely to mask and reproduce extant power relations. The 'political skills' literature then is redolent of Lukes (1974) second dimension of power as it suggests that managers possess power in the form of political skills so as to be able to manipulate others thereby aligning employee subjectivity with a corporate worldview:

> People high in political skill are quite calculating and shrewd about the social connections they form, inspiring trust and confidence in others, which allows them to effectively leverage such social capital.
>
> Executives high in political skill seek out and relish personal interactions, and their control over others contributes to a sense of confidence that goes along with predictability of success.
>
> (Perrewe et al., 2000: 116)

These authors present political skill as a means to allow executives to 'control the processes and outcomes of interactions with others', which in turn allows them to 'disarm their detractors' (op cit: 120), which presumably means eliminating resistance. It is assumed that executives who 'possess political skill' (op cit: 117) also possess power. This allows them to 'adjust their behaviour to different and changing situational demands in a manner that appears to be sincere, inspires support and trust, and effectively influences and controls the responses of others' (Ferris et al., 2007: 291–292). As explained in earlier chapters, this is problematic because it ignores how power is continually exercised in multiple ways by multiple parties not just executives. It also assumes that individuals are political dupes easily manipulated by others and fooled by 'Apparent sincerity' (op cit: 292).

An earlier literature also recognised that politics is not just negative hence Burns (1961) posited that 'political action is the necessary instrument for the accomplishment of internal change' (op cit: 266) of certain kinds. Nevertheless, he presents politics in a largely functional way,

which is evident in his belief that 'administration, manufacturing, and teaching are not political. They may, however, become involved in or coloured by politics' (op cit: 259). Burns (1961) therefore creates a division between some aspects of life that are deemed political and others that are seemingly not. This division would not be recognised by a critical political discourse and it is curious because elsewhere Burns (1961) suggest that politics is endemic for 'it is through political action, in small as in large social systems, that changes in the structure of society have occurred' (op cit: 281). Moreover, he argues that 'To live, as we do, with other men (sic), we must put ourselves out to use and make use of others' (op cit: 278).

Burns (1961) offers a 'resource'-based view of politics whereby 'Politics are the exploitation of resources, both physical and human, for the achievement of more control over others' (op cit: 278). Similarly, citing Mintzberg (1983) and Pfeffer (1992), Ferris *et al.* (2007) argue that 'Within the political arena, the acquisition and control of resources is paramount to the *possession* of power' (op cit: 300; emphasis added). Overall, this presents a highly functional and rational if not Machiavellian view of politics, whereby power is *possessed* according to position/resources/political skills. It attends to issues around identity to the extent that it considers how politically skilful individuals are able to manipulate others (op cit: 302–304) and how the possession of political skills impacts upon those individuals who possess such skills (i.e. sense of control, stress and security). This analysis reflects the belief that politically skilled individuals can possess power over others hence they 'know precisely how to execute a specific tactic or strategy in just the right way to demonstrate the desired effect, thus ensuring the success of the influence attempt' (Ferris et al., 2007: 304). It therefore rubs up against the arguments of this book, which is premised on a 'relational' understanding of power.

In a critical approach towards organisational politics, Knights and Murray (1994) asserted that politics is 'the very stuff, the marrow of organizational process . . . managerial and staff concerns to secure careers, to avoid blame, to create success and to establish stable identities within competitive labour markets and organizational hierarchies' (op cit: xiv–xv). According to these authors, politics is a normal and pervasive feature of everyday life rather than a negative, temporary, dysfunctional or deviant phenomenon. This more critical approach posits that we, as subjects, are constituted through power relations such that we accept or take for granted the game as it stands. In a similar way, Thomas and Davies (2005) describe the 'micro-politics of resistance':

> as a constant process of adaptation, subversion and reinscription of dominant discourses. This takes place as individuals confront, and reflect on, their own identity performance.
>
> (op cit: 687)

This critical discourse does not just focus on micro- or identity politics for politics is understood to be related to wider discourses such as the NPM but, at times, it slips towards a micro-focus on identity and a meso-focus on groups. Hence Essers and Benschop (2007) argue that 'Micropolitics calls attention to influence, networks, coalitions, political and personal strategies to effect or resist change, emphasising the social accomplishment of identity construction' (op cit: 50). Whittle and Mueller (2010) share a similar focus but draw on Actor Network Theory to explore the 'micro-political tactics and power plays involved in the strategy-making process' (op cit: 641) of a telecommunications company. To avoid this narrow focus on identity politics, more explicit attention needs to be given to how politics operates in multiple ways simultaneously as will be attempted below. In doing so, the concern is to elucidate that politics does not simply operate in a rational, Machiavellian, top-down or bottom-up way as exercised by individuals or groups but rather that it pervades organisational life contributing to its messy, unpredictable condition and outcomes.

Fleming (2007) sought to develop a 'political understanding of sexuality' by focusing on how 'sex and gender are closely implicated in the political networks of the employment relationship' (op cit: 241) but he focused on politics *within* a call centre. This and other critical accounts of politics (Deetz, 1994; Dick, 2013; Fleming, 2005; Knights and McCabe, 1998) are concerned with matters of inequality and so transcend the individual workplace but empirically the focus has remained stubbornly on meso- and/or micro-political interactions.

It has been argued that there is a need to extend our analysis of change or 'strategic management as a process of "local" organizational politics to a perspective that locates these politics within the political-economic context of advanced capitalist societies' (Alvesson and Willmott, 1995: 95). In this way, the truly political nature of organisations can be revealed and yet such macro-politics rarely feature in accounts of politics in organisation studies. Although Morrell and Hartley (2006) posited that politicians are subject to challenge from the media, it needs to be noted that the media is also political, whereby it 'appropriates, organizes and constructs certain representations of the world according to its own logic and purposes' (Chouliaraki, 2000: 296). In this way, as we shall see, the media can also play a role in the production of apolitical subjects that accept the game or world as it is.

This reflects the politics of representation in that 'every system of representation and mode of analysis has a moral-political dimension' (Deetz, 1994: 25), which also applies to the media. In view of this 'it is not possible for researchers [or the media] to adopt a neutral position' (Dick, 2013:663) and so politics are reflected in 'the questions' (ibid) one asks and the decisions one makes in terms of how to represent others. We need to be aware then of 'our own role in the production of

knowledge' (op cit: 665). It is important to understand this because the macro-politics discussed in the next section are largely explored through exchanges between national and local politicians on radio news channels. The journalists who represented these exchanges alluded to politicians not being neutral whilst representing themselves as unbiased or objective. Journalists, however, are not 'neutral' because they must also make decisions about whose voice to include or exclude and how to represent them. Overall then, we can observe that politics imbue everyday life in multiple ways as the following empirical extracts aim to make clear.

The Case Study

The following three themes of micro-, meso- and macro-politics arose through the research. In terms of micro- or identity politics, this was evident in the way in which the CAs endeavoured to elevate *their* change programme and in doing so *themselves*. This involved representing 'external' consultants and a prior change programme in a negative way. This micro-political discourse fostered a positive sense of self for the CAs that affirmed their position within the extant order. It did not encourage them or others to reflect upon how they contribute to the reproduction of the status quo. To draw on the chess metaphor, this micro-political discourse reflected a concern with the '*pieces*' on the chessboard rather than questioning the game itself. The way in which the CAs distinguished themselves from 'external' consultants was political because, as we shall see, the division between the two was blurred.

The second theme of meso-politics, was apparent in the power struggles between the CAs and local politicians who opposed, facilitated and helped to shape change. Here change was more overtly political because of the influence of party politics but to draw on the chess metaphor, the OP can be equated with a focus on the chess *players* in terms of the tactics they employ and who wins the game. To the extent that such intergroup power plays and party politics can absorb and distract us, this discourse can be understood as generating a preoccupation with political power struggles between players rather than the game itself. In view of this, meso-political discourses can contribute to producing us as apolitical subjects nevertheless, who wins the game is important because it impacts upon the lives of others in significant ways. This theme emerged because the CAs repeatedly referred to the peculiarly political nature of the organisation and it transpired that local politicians were heavily involved in shaping the programme of change. This also appeared distinctive because the role that local politicians play in change programmes has been neglected in the OP and Change Management literature.

The final theme of macro-politics arose because during the research the outcome of the UK's 2010 Compulsory Spending Review (CSR) was announced and this had a major impact on the change programme. The

political wrangling that ensued between national and local politicians was played out through the media. One could not avoid being struck by the importance of this in terms of its impact upon the LGA and the change programme but also, in terms of how the OP and Change Management literature has largely neglected such politics because of its focus on individuals, groups and organisations.

In terms of the chess metaphor, this discourse is equivalent to considering how the architecture impacts upon the players. It once again constitutes us as apolitical subjects through directing our attention towards the relationship between the environment and the players. These are not trivial issues, however, because central government plays a significant role in terms of shaping the environment within which players play. The players can be left to their own devices in a dog-eat-dog contest where the loser suffers great hardship and the spoils go to the winner. Alternatively, central government can try to create a more level playing field, supporting those who are disadvantaged by the game, who do not have fair or equal access to the table or indeed the room in which it is played.

The Change Programme

Micro-Politics or the Politics of the Self

This section examines the politics of self, which is evident in how the CAs sought to legitimise and elevate themselves. The COT programme began in 2009 but it was preceded in 2005 by the Copperdale Improvement Plan or CIP. Although the CIP led to approximately £50 million in savings, it was not represented by the CAs a complete success, for it was said to have been a cost-cutting initiative that had antagonised people:

> CIP people were all external consultants brought in to do a job. Didn't know anybody, didn't know their way around. Didn't know how it works in this City, didn't last very long . . . I've been here 10 years. I know everybody, I know how it works, I know who gets on with who, I know what presses different people's buttons . . . There's a few people [external consultants] who were already here so the good ones have stayed and we've filled the gaps with other people from the City Council. . . . We've persuaded some people to come across and so suddenly COT isn't this horrible thing anymore it's just your colleagues.
>
> (Philippa, head of transformation)

The CIP and the problems with it were attributed by Philippa to the use of 'external' consultants and, in this way she elevated the COT initiative and, in so doing herself, as a politically skilled insider. The CIP initiative was, however, *led* by a senior *internal* manager and so Philippa's

comments are indicative of the type of politics which include providing selective information, creating a favourable impression and blaming others. According to Philippa, as 'outsiders', the CIP team did not understand the politics of Copperdale, which led to its failure. Philippa lauded her knowledge and the COT team's knowledge of OP and so elevated COT through contrasting it with the 'horrible thing' that was CIP. This castigation and 'scapegoating' (Sturdy, 2011: 523) of 'external' consultants has become part of the folk law of the transformation team. Hence Beverley, a programme manager and an employee of two years, who was not employed at Copperdale at the time that CIP was in operation stated:

> we like to think and again I don't know because I wasn't here, that there was a greater reliance than there is now on contractors and consultants and things. So I guess the erm, the COT team . . . they think in terms of the delivery, resource, a lot of it [CIP] was not permanent Copperdale staff, it was quite often external people.

Beverley aggrandised the COT team and the COT programme by suggesting that the 'external' consultants who were responsible for CIP did not think in terms of 'delivery, resource'. Similarly, Miles, a COT programme manager, stated 'I'm not a big fan of consultants' and referred to the research that informed CIP:

> It didn't have a huge amount of credibility because it was saying there were these massive opportunities for savings as some consultants will do.

This criticism can be interpreted as the CAs ennobling themselves whilst decrying CIP and 'external' consultants. This did not, however, prevent the COT team from working with 'external' consultants. Indeed, the COT 'methodology' was purchased from an 'external' consultant and it followed this consultant's diagnostic of Copperdale's systems and processes. Moreover, another 'external' consultant has been contracted to review Copperdale's ITC systems:

> ITC's in a bad way. We're just turning it around, only just. 'Worst ITC in the world' is how the Consultants described it.
>
> (Paige, director of transformation)

The argument that Copperdale has the 'worst ITC in the world' is obviously political as this helps to sell the Consultant's products and Paige used this argument politically to justify the changes that she wanted to introduce. The politics of the CAs representation of 'external' consultants is also evident in that the line between the CAs and external consultants was blurred. Michael, a project manager, who has worked for

Copperdale for five years, explained how the negative perception of the CIP arose:

> a bunch of consultants would turn up spend some time talking to you in a workshop, go away, compare what you did with other organizations, play with the figures, redesign your service, deliver it, say 'Cheerio' and move on to the next one.

Michael attributed CIP to 'external' consultants and yet he failed to fully acknowledge his role in CIP as he had worked with these 'external' consultants on the CIP programme as a full-time Copperdale employee. The COT team included a number of consultants who had previously worked on the CIP. Moreover, the majority of the COT team (70 per cent) are from the private sector and have worked as 'external' consultants and so the distinction between CIP and COT and the CAs and 'external' consultants is opaque.

This section explored how the CAs in Copperdale 'scapegoated' (Sturdy, 2011) 'external' consultants, which is political because it served to elevate *their* careers, *their* change programme and their *sense of self*. Moreover, it is political because the distinction between the CAs and the 'external' consultants is blurred. These micro-politics served to wed the CAs and others more tightly to the game that they are playing and, if we were to limit our analysis of OP to such micro-issues, it would be like studying only the individual pieces on a chessboard.

Meso-Politics or Group Politics

This section explores the meso- or group politics that informed and shaped the change programme, which the first section alluded to. The COT programme is influenced by the politics of the incumbent Labour Party, which impacted upon the CAs. Bradley is a CA and a member of the COT programme team, who has worked for the council for three years. He was originally employed as a human resource consultant on a temporary six-month contract and he articulated the political nature of Copperdale:

> The majority of what I'd call strategic decisions would require a kind of political sign off or a political opinion. Just as much as my days in the private sector might have required a senior management or a board-level type of approval, it was almost as though the Counsellors were almost the equivalent of the Board of Directors.

Local political priorities and traditions infused the COT programme, for example, in response to a question about whether the trade unions were involved in COT, Carl, a programme manager, commented:

> Absolutely, because back to politics, where the Labour politicians come from and where the trade unions come from, is the same place. You know, the Labour Party was formed from the Labour movement. So it's important that they work together and that's what they are doing.

This insight endorses the argument of Hartley *et al*. (1997), that change in LGAs requires 'explicit attention' to the 'political as well as managerial structures, cultures and processes' (ibid: 62). Indeed, the director of transformation expressed that the CAs are dependent upon the incumbent Labour party:

> The Opposition group will often say we are a cost to the Council that the Council can't afford. Erm, the Head of the Party is very good at turning round and saying 'You should always be able to afford improvement otherwise you die as an organization'.
>
> (Paige)

Politics also influenced the ideas and solutions that the CAs promoted:

> *we've* got a real challenge in that *we* cannot make any redundancies because politically *we've* made that decision that *we* will not make redundancies because *we* know that a large proportion of *our* staff are also residents. So *our* commitment to the residents is that *we* will not increase or exacerbate that problem in terms of unemployment.
>
> (Beverley, programme manager, italics added)

Beverley remarked that 'the job would be far, far easier if you just said this is your current structure. It has this many people in it, it costs you this much, we're going to reduce it by 25%'. Nevertheless, she appeared to identify with Copperdale and the no-compulsory redundancies policy as her allusions to 'our' and 'we' suggest. The CAs had identified solutions that were politically unpalatable to the local Labour party and the political influence of party politics is evident in the following quote:

> there is an opportunity to say 'Do we want to outsource that? Would somebody else be better to do that?' Now, doesn't go with the politics of Copperdale to do that but that's what you could do.
>
> (Philippa, head of transformation)

It is evident that politics permeate and have shaped the change agenda, as Beverley explained:

> there might be some services that from an efficiency point of view are quite inefficient or cost us a lot of money. But politically, they are a priority, so, therefore, we need to maintain that service.

These comments refer to community and social welfare concerns that take precedence over cost cutting, which reflects the political priorities of the local Labour Party:

ROSE: It's a different environment to work within, very political.
DARREN: Political in the?
ROSE: In both sense of the word. In terms of a decision making process involving members and so on and it was just things I wasn't used to. You know, I had come from a finance-type background and the first project I worked on was the creation of a finance shared service centre. . . . very process driven from a private sector point of view. Bad debt being an example, probably naïveté on my part, you know, for bad debt there's a set process you follow. You know, can sell your bad debt on and then coming into Local Government you can't do that 'cause you're talking about Mrs Green, who is maybe 80 years old and has meals on wheels and you can't approach things in the same way.
(Rose, senior project manager)

This section has explored meso- or group politics and its peculiarly political nature due to the involvement of local politicians. This is broader than micro-politics but still reflects the politics of identity because it is bound up with the way in which local level politicians and CAs understand the world and themselves that in turn impacts upon change. If we were to limit our analysis of OP to meso-politics, we would continue to interrogate the power struggles between politicians, CAs and other groups such as management, which was the focus of Chapter 6. In short, we would focus only on the players and their dynamic interrelations thereby accepting the game as it is currently played.

Macro-Politics or Supraorganisational Politics

This section examines the interrelationship between local and national level politics, how this was represented through the media and how it impacted on the change programme. The COT programme was set-up in 2009 in part to prepare for budgetary cuts in the wake of the 2008 GFC. It was anticipated that whichever party was elected in the 2010 UK general election, significant cuts in public sector spending would follow. The COT programme sought to achieve savings of £100 million between 2010 and 2013. The 2010 Compulsory Spending Review (CSR) destabilised these plans because it required far greater savings/cuts of £170 million between 2011 and 2013. This meant that plans to avoid redundancies through relying on natural wastage and a freeze on recruitment were abandoned.

An internal statement by Copperdale City Council in response to the CSR in 2011, articulated that Copperdale now 'needs to make 25%

savings during the next two years . . . the size and speed of savings demanded means they can no longer be achieved through efficiencies alone.' In this statement, the leader of the council remarked that 'Copperdale is one of the most deprived local authority areas in the country but is among the worst hit local authorities'. In doing so he presented the CSR as unfair and 'the most difficult, and in many ways the most unpalatable, process I have been involved in'. In contrast to the implied unfairness of central government, Copperdale's 'strategy' to cope with these cuts was depicted as 'targeting funding where it will make the greatest difference to residents, particularly the most vulnerable, and fostering economic growth to promote investment'. This emphasis on growth resonated with the political discourse of the national Labour Party. The overall 25 per cent savings that Copperdale planned to make translated into a 21, 26 and 29 per cent cut in spending for adult, children and neighbourhood services respectively. The internal statement continued:

> In back office areas such as finance and human resources, £34m of savings will be delivered. This represents 35% of the central service's budget, which is considerably higher than the savings being asked of frontline services.

These cuts resulted in 2,000 job losses, which were achieved through voluntary severance and voluntary early retirement. These job losses were funded through council reserves set aside for major capital programmes. Of the 2,000 posts that were cut, 41 per cent were management and so the job losses fell most heavily on management and back office positions rather than front line services. This may help to explain the management resistance that was discussed in Chapter 6.

The responsibility for the job losses was the subject of political wrangling between local and central government politicians and one could interpret the internal statement as, in part, a political response to the political arguments of central government. Hence the UK's coalition government sought to attribute responsibility for job losses to local politicians for having hoarded reserves; inefficiency and high managerial salaries. By contrast, local political leaders blamed central government cuts in public sector spending. The discourses both sides employed can be understood as 'political resources that serve to maintain and advance the positions of individuals and groups [political parties], while delegitimizing the accounts and positions of others' (Dawson and Buchanan, 2005: 859). The redundancies at Copperdale were reported by a journalist on a local radio channel in 2011 as follows:

> The Labour Council blames the Government but the Government has responded saying the cuts were a political act. The Government

> claims that the City Council is a wasteful authority that has not taken opportunities to save money.

If we accept 'that the discursive practices of the media construct social processes' thereby 'cueing audiences to "preferred" meanings whilst suppressing others' (Chouliaraki, 2000: 295), this accounts suggests that neither position is truthful and both national and local politicians were represented as presenting political positions. A central government minister speaking on a different radio channel responded to the jobs cuts by stating that Copperdale needed to share more central services including legal, human resources and planning:

> My initial concern and indeed anger is that I don't think the Local Authority has done everything possible like sharing services that it could be doing before making people redundant. . . . to me if you want to see an indication of a Council that's just not got it. That thinks it can take the easier option of redundancies rather than taking some of the pain itself—just look at those senior salaries.

The minister described the salaries of senior Copperdale managers as 'outrageous' and in this way deflected criticism and responsibility for jobs losses away from central government. On a local radio channel, this same minister stated that the council is facing a 15 per cent reduction in spending whereas it is making 25 per cent cuts. This was described as 'way above their reduction in their ability to spend money on behalf of their residents and that can only be because they were profligate and they are using today as an excuse to pass the responsibility onto someone else'. The minister referred to the 5 per cent salary cut and five-year pay freeze for coalition cabinet ministers and suggested that senior managers' salaries within Copperdale should also be cut. His statement implied that job losses could have been avoided through reducing senior management salaries and by sharing services whilst ennobling coalition politicians for their wage restraint.

A journalist on this radio programme interviewed the leader of Copperdale about this politicking and began by asking how 'he [the government Minister] can say one thing and you say the other'. Although this highlights a political conflict there was no attempt to resolve or elucidate it for the viewers by providing an analysis of the figures under discussion. The leader of Copperdale stated that 'the minister is speaking out of ignorance'. It was argued that the 15 per cent reduction in government spending omits that central government is also cutting grants, which impact disproportionately upon regions where there is the greatest poverty. As an illustration of this, it was stated that Copperdale's supporting people grant has been reduced by 35 per cent. It was suggested that this is a political act because in an adjacent, more affluent, Conservative-led

council, the grant had increased. Central government criticisms regarding inefficiency and particularly increasing levels of middle management were deflected by referring to Copperdale's plans to reduce management costs by 41 per cent compared to 17 per cent for all other employees. It was also averred that Copperdale is not on the list of the most highly paid chief executives and other senior officers in local government.

Both local and national politicians accused each other of being political whilst presenting their own position as apolitical—or a neutral representation of the facts. The media discourse, in this instance, 'brings together and organizes other discourses' (Chouliaraki, 2000: 296) but it failed to analyse the different positions and simply implied that politicians cannot be trusted. Hence the discourse of austerity was not questioned and the media presented itself as a neutral reporter of factions fighting over responsibility for job losses. Despite the apparent neutrality of its coverage, the media therefore helped to support and construct a 'political consensus' (Chouliaraki, 2000: 308) around the need for public sector spending cuts. Hence positions that opposed or offered an alternative position to such cuts did not feature in the debate or press coverage.

This section has presented an account of how macro-politics impacted on change. If we were to simply focus on such dynamics the danger is one of presenting OP as a struggle between different factions within and without the organisation. Metaphorically, the focus would be on how the chess players respond to external pressures. This focus is exemplified by the media that displayed a fascination with the jostling between political players, which locks us into the game because we begin to take it for granted. In short, we see no alternative to the positions that those who play the game articulate. Institutions such as the media reinforce this through reporting on what the players said and their relative positions without offering other positions, an analysis of the positions or alternative explanations.

In the next section, we will explore the interweaving of micro-, meso- and macro-politics in terms of how they are part of the context and content of change programmes and how change is an outcome of ongoing multiple political struggles.

An Interweaving of Macro-, Meso- and Micro-Politics

The impact of macro-politics discussed in the previous section on the COT programme was significant because of the need to secure greater savings over a shorter time scale than had been previously anticipated:

> The behaviour changed. . . . I came to work here because I believed in the values and the leadership. And values are really important to me and suddenly it was like they threw everything out of the

> window. . . . suddenly they went into finance mode instead of transformational mode. They went into cutting mode.
>
> (Paige, director of transformation)

Rather than simple cost cutting, Paige was committed to radically changing services and so Copperdale's shift towards a focus on costs impacted upon her identity (micro-politics) not least because she defined herself as someone who has 'values'. Meso-politics ensued as different areas of Copperdale fought for resources. Kacmar and Carlson (1997: 630) describe such 'jockeying for a position' as 'quintessential political behaviour'. A casualty of this meso-politics was the 'transformation team' as plans were announced to reduce it by 75 per cent over three years. Paige 'fundamentally disagreed' with this and argued that, in the face of such cuts, you need 'transformation more than you've ever needed it'. By contrast, the leadership of the council argued that the change team had done 'a good job' and that change should now be 'devolved' to the different service areas.

The devolution of change to the service areas was significant because it diluted the authority of the director of transformation. The majority of the CAs resigned from Copperdale within a few months of the announced cuts and so they did not wait for the three year stay of execution. This culminated in the resignation of the director of transformation:

> My people just went, like that [snapping her fingers]. At a time when you need creativity most, I said to him [Chief Executive] you know 'You don't cut your way out of crisis'. You need creative thinking. You need leadership more than you've ever needed it. Our Chief Executive hasn't driven transformation at all. It's the political leader and myself that drove it. . . . We weren't just the savings team. We were the creators of all the innovation in the Council that had ever taken place. So it's gone basically, all my great people have gone . . . so it's quite sad really if I'm honest . . . It's quite sad for me cause I've built it all up.

This extract expresses micro-, meso- and macro-politics in the sense that Paige elevated herself (micro) and the role of the transformation team within the council (meso). The demise of the transformation team was argued to have arisen due to macro-politics or the 'government's cuts' and the meso-politics that followed as different divisions and services fought over the remaining resources. Nevertheless, even though Paige resigned and was serving her notice, she supported Copperdale's position in relation to central government, which coincides with her political position and identity as a Labour Party supporter (micro-politics). Paige described central government arguments as 'Political propaganda' because it 'wasn't true' that Copperdale had failed to engage in change.

This is certainly evident in that the Copperdale Improvement Plan (CIP) was initiated in 2005, producing savings of £50 million. Moreover, the Copperdale Organisational Transformation (COT) programme began in 2009 as a means to prepare for and deliver budgetary cuts of £100 million. Paige also used the national Labour Party's political position against the leadership of Copperdale by arguing that you cannot 'cut your way out of crisis'. Macro- and meso-politics impinged upon her sense of self (micro) as she expressed sadness about the loss of her team but also pride in its achievements.

Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the political nature of OP and it has suggested that in order to understand organisations along with change programmes, it is necessary to examine the interrelationships between micro-, meso- and macro-politics. It has gone further, however, through employing a chess metaphor to cast new light on this literature and OP. Morgan (1986) sought to show how metaphors 'can frame and reframe our understanding of the same situation, in the belief that new kinds of understanding can emerge from the process' (op cit: 340). This is consistent with the chess metaphor because it provides 'a novel or surprising likeness' (Davidson, 1978: 31) between seemingly incompatible things. This metaphor has been used to highlight that if we attend only to micro- or identity politics, this can be equated to scrutinising the positions of chess pieces on a chess board. If we focus only on meso-politics then this is equal to attending to the chess players and the power struggles between them. A focus on macro-politics considers the impact of the wider political environment on organisations and introduces new 'external' players. In relation to the chess metaphor, this can be compared to focusing on how the building or lighting impacts on the chess players. None of these approaches question the game itself indeed they direct us away from such a challenge and the danger is that through engaging with them we risk constituting ourselves and others as apolitical subjects in the sense of accepting rather than questioning the game itself.

10 Conclusion

The purpose of this book was to change, Change Management, so what have the foregoing chapters delivered in relation to this aim. The central concern was to challenge the way in which power is generally conceived in the literature on Change Management but also, more broadly, in relation to management and organisation studies. Hence power tends to be seen as something that is *possessed* by management as they roll out their strategies and visions from on high or pick them up, like scattered leaves, in an emergent way. We have observed that this is a poor reflection of organisational life as it occludes much of what goes on in organisations. It limits understanding to the intentions, knowledge, subjectivity and actions of a handful of top or, at best, middle managers whilst rubbing out the vast, multifaceted and complex sway of life beneath and around them.

In terms of understanding Change Management and organisations more generally, the difference between a planned or even an emergent representation of change and the lived experience of organisational life, can be compared to that of a first sketch of a likeness and the finished portrait with all of its light and shade, contours and curves, life and beauty, blemishes and flaws. And yet, the metaphor of a portrait sketch is limited and problematic because it risks presenting organisational change as the product of a single hand or consciousness. It would be better therefore to understand that each stroke of the portrait is performed by a different hand each of which exercises power to produce the developing picture. It is an image that is never finished and appears in unpredictable, intended and unintended ways not least because the strokes are often at odds with each other, reflecting different impressions of what the end design should look like. The strokes may resist or support the intentions or outcomes of other strokes as the image materialises. Strokes are rubbed out, redrawn, re-crafted, rethought, contested and fought over because the outcome and the activity are not neutral for some will suffer through the production of the portrait while the gains for others will far exceed those of the majority.

The centrality of resistance to Change Management is largely silenced, omitted or grossly understated in the Change Management literature and this is repeated in textbook after textbook as discussed in Chapter 1. This

book has attempted to reverse the established emphasis on power as a property of management. It has sought to peel back the layers of organisational life in order to represent something of its complexity, uncertainty and its contested nature. It has endeavoured to elucidate how attempts to exercise power run alongside resistance not as something that is minor, secondary or marginal but a fundamental part of the attempt to exercise power (see Foucault, 1977, 1982).

In particular, the book has sought to advance our understanding of Change Management through focusing on the following themes that will be explored in more depth in the subsequent sections. First, how Change Management is bound up with metaphors that are a means through which power is exercised but also an expression of opposition in the guise of counter-metaphors. Second, how managers, as much as employees, may be a source of resistance, which has been neglected in both the Change Management and much of the resistance literature. Third, how resistance to change can be understood and approached by CAs in contradictory ways as productive/positive versus repressive/negative. Fourth, how cynicism, as a response to Change Management, should not simply be equated with individuals rather than the collective or, dis-identification rather than identification, with corporate discourses. As we have seen, these distinctions are not mutually exclusive and the boundaries between them are far from clear.

Finally, we explored organisational politics (OP) in relation to Change Management and considered how OP needs to be understood as operating and interacting in multiple ways simultaneously. If we focus only on or maintain a sharp distinction between micro-, meso- and macropolitics, wider political dynamics will slip through the net of our comprehension and we will fail to grasp the complexity of organisational life. Most importantly, it was argued that if we attend to only one or even all of these different facets of OP, there is a danger of merely focusing on how the organisational game is played rather than understanding and questioning the game itself. There is a need then to recognise the broader politics at work that operate as we consciously slumber or, in other words, when we fail to comprehend how the everyday life of organisations plays out politically, in ways that lead us to accept the status quo.

Metaphors as Power

This sub-section will reflect upon metaphor in relation to Change Management at Copperdale. In Chapter 5, we considered how Copperdale sought to effect a strategic transformation of its services. It explored how change and the struggles it encompasses can be understood through focusing on the metaphors used to enact but also to resist change. It provided a number of insights into the attempt to create spatially flexible, transient subjects. First, it highlighted the role that central government may play

in programmes of public sector change. Central government provided a major impetus for change through cuts in public sector spending but also documents (e.g. *Working Without Walls*, *Working Beyond Walls*) that metaphorically re-envisaged work as a place without walls or borders. Its insights allowed us to question whether the enterprise discourse, the NPM or neo-liberalism are really about 'choice' because economics and central government play a significant role in shaping the context and the options that both employees and managers may choose from. The choice around whether one accepts change is already imbued with power. The walls metaphor and Change Management, like the NPM aim 'to institutionalize the idea of change as an organizational capability ('change for the sake of change')' (Diefenbach, 2010: 903) such that change becomes normalised, continuous, accepted and beyond question. In doing so they strive 'for standardization and formalization of strategic and operational management' (ibid).

As an employee one can, of course, choose not to embark on change and thereby avoid the insecurity and demands of becoming a spatially flexible, transient subject. In doing so, the shadows of poverty and economic desolation lengthen and draw close—a fine choice indeed. As the central government documents *Working Without Walls* and *Working Beyond Walls* testify, there is an assumption in government circles that spatial flexibility is entirely positive for managers and employees. It envisions this as a means to foster community for it allows 'people to work closer to where they live and to balance work, personal and community commitments more flexibly' (Sir Gus O'Donnell's foreword in Hardy et al., 2008). As we saw in Chapter 5, however, the outcomes of flexibility appear far more ambiguous, 'mixed' (see Kossek et al., 2010) and potentially 'dark' (Linstead et al., 2014) for employees and managers. Hence the spatially flexible subject confronts the danger of insecurity, individualisation and intensified control as established careers, skills, identities and communities are threatened.

Second, Chapter 5 provided insights into the role that CAs may play in terms of how change is constructed, represented and implemented and how they may also draw on metaphors whilst instigating change in this case—the metaphor of a journey. The CAs at Copperdale appeared to share the type of spatially flexible subjectivity that central government espoused through publications such as *Working Without Walls*. Hence the CAs saw no merit in stability or community and sought to impose a transient self on others. The CAs lived this discourse in terms of their own preferred career trajectory and, in terms of how they saw themselves, as being on a journey. The chapter highlighted that metaphors can be understood and experienced in very different ways depending upon whether one is the architect or recipient of change.

Third, the chapter introduced the concept of *metaphors-as-power* to encapsulate how CAs may use metaphor both as a means to exercise

'power' (Foucault, 1980) through others but also in relation to themselves. Hence through the journey metaphor the CAs defined themselves and others as transient beings. We can observe that metaphor is not only a lens through which to understand organisations (Morgan, 1986) or ourselves (Inkson, 2004). It is an important aspect of governmentality (Gordon, 1991) that contributes to how the world of work and ourselves are shaped. If we ignore its power implications, the journey metaphor may seem innocuous and appealing. It says that we should embrace and enjoy the now, the becoming, the process, the learning, the change, the flexibility. Simultaneously, however, it also says do not question where we are going or why nor should you consider what we might lose along the way. In short, it says do not resist and instead become the type of person that others demand us to be.

The notion that 'organizations are many things at once' (Morgan, 1986: 339) is central to Morgan's (1986) thesis and so his metaphors are seen as 'intertwined' (op cit: 341). Nevertheless, his approach leads us to focus on metaphors in a singular, consensual and unified way. Organisations are seen as machines, brains or cultures, etc., and we can analyse organisations using them but the metaphor remains the same and appears uncontested. Inkson (2006), by contrast, has highlighted that the same metaphor (e.g. the protean) can have a different meaning, for example, in academe (e.g. Hall, 1996) versus that in Greek mythology. The intriguing insight that Chapter 5 has added is that the same metaphor can have multiple empirical meanings as part of the 'contested terrain' (Edwards, 1979) of employment relations. Hence the CAs saw the journey metaphor as an attractive way in which to represent change and secure employee support; implying that the experience should be enjoyed. Yet some employees mocked the metaphor for being about public relations and for its lack of substance. Others introduced what I have referred to as *counter-metaphors* including the 'butterfly', 'nomad', 'number', 'nest', 'family', 'machine' and 'Jack-of-all-trades' to criticise the implications of a generic, transient worker. This highlights that the meaning of metaphor can differ for its 'originators' and 'recipients' (Inkson, 2006: 51). We can also observe that counter-metaphors serve different purposes hence some mocked the journey metaphor (e.g. butterfly, nomad, number, machine) whereas others are its 'antithesis' (ibid) in that they pointed to the need for stability (i.e. nest, family). Metaphors then, are not simply done to others because 'the individual 'nomad' can reshape or re-order their sense of self' (Lucas, 2014: 212) in opposition to the metaphors they confront.

Through a *metaphor-as-power* lens, we can observe that the 'journey' metaphor is not simply a harmless or engaging way through which to represent or understand spatial flexibility because it loaded with a rationale for how work should be organised and how individuals should act and be. Rather than accepting the metaphors that government, management or CAs use or alternatively seeing them as ill-fitting descriptive devices

(Rodrigues and Guest, 2010), interrogating them can help to 'illuminate the Shadow side' (Nord and Jermier, 1994: 398) of metaphor. Hence the seemingly innocuous, if not pleasant metaphor of a journey, carries with it a threat of rootlessness, transience, individualisation, existential and career insecurity, isolation and fragmentation. The journey metaphor implies that there is no harbour of safety to which one can moor one's organisation, career or sense of self. Instead, to use another metaphor, work becomes a dark corridor that one must continually attempt to traverse in the knowledge that there will be no atrium of light at the end. This was welcomed and prescribed by central government and the CAs, who saw such developments as a means to improve lives for the public, employees and themselves. The CAs embodied and thrived on insecurity but those subjected to it were more critical as we discussed in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

Finally, Chapter 5 explored the consequences of the 'journey' metaphor for the managers and employees on the receiving end of it. As we saw, some embraced it but, for the majority of those interviewed, it was a disturbing development that many opposed. The journey metaphor was fraught with antagonism. Promoting a spatially flexible subject has the potential to improve but also impair services. The latter is evident if we consider that much 'explicit' and 'tacit' knowledge (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995) may be lost and devalued through imposing transient and generic ways of working and being on others. Hence the knowledge embedded in, and generated through, a work community may fade or not develop or be shared.

A curious contradiction arose in the case of Copperdale between the standardisation that we associate with Fordism/Taylorism and a more varied, interesting work experience that one links, at a common sense level, with flexibility. Both managers and employees suggested that the spatially flexible subject, in the guise of generic workers/managers, is removing specialised skills and knowledge due to standardisation. This leads to the 'dark side' because the danger is that one becomes an anonymous, individualised number, shunted from one work station or place to another, over which one has 'little control' (Lambert, 2008: 1205). The threat is that this results in an individualised worker/manager without group or community bonds. It poses a risk to solidarity and collective resistance as the ties that bind groups and individuals together as part of a community are shredded. Although this appears to be a utopia for those seeking to save costs much may be lost not only from a humanistic perspective but also from an economic one too. Hence knowledge is fostered through and resides in communities that are potentially shattered through the journey to a spatially flexible workplace. Nevertheless, despite the threat of such an exercise of power, this book has illuminated that such interventions are continually contested and this was the case even in relation to management, to which we now turn.

Management Resistance

The literature on resistance has largely focused on individual and collective expressions of employee resistance. Chapter 6 sought to add to our understanding of resistance to change interventions by exploring how managers resist and how managers and CAs may resist each other. The chapter provided insights that both question and support the argument that 'so many senior and middle managers in the public sector are so much in favour of managerial concepts such as NPM' (Diefenbach, 2010: 902). Certainly, this can be said of the CAs but not all of the managers at Copperdale supported the changes that were introduced. It is certainly questionable whether it can be said that 'Managers are the major beneficiaries of the introduction of NPM and simply see it as a fantastic opportunity to further increase their power and control, influence and personal advantages' (op cit: 906). This was doubtful before the 2008 GFC but it now seems even less likely as a general statement given that the careers and economic livelihood of many managers are threatened by the NPM along with the services that they deeply care about and have spent their working lives trying to deliver.

Although there have been accounts of isolated groups of managers resisting different aspects of change, it is evident that the managerial resistance at Copperdale was not temporary nor was it limited to a specific group of managers (e.g. Courpasson et al., 2012; Thomas et al., 2011). Hence middle managers used the bureaucracy to slow down reform; they exited and refused to be martyrs. They contested the numbers that the CAs used to support the case for change and this echoes findings in the NHS, where medical consultants have resisted through arguing that 'action should be based on current and accurate data' (Buchanan, 1997: 61). The problem for CAs, of course, is that the numbers can always be contested not least because managers have a far superior knowledge of what those numbers mean and represent than CAs.

Senior managers resisted and took advantage of the bureaucratic structure of the organisation, whereby authority was delegated to strategic directors, through engaging in non-compliance. To resist this resistance, the CAs used persuasion. First line managers resisted 'post-bureaucratic' ways of organising (see Backlund and Werr, 2008) through continually requesting separate offices in an open-plan work environment and this can be understood as 'resistance through persistence' (Collinson, 1994). The chief executive even refused to support some change initiatives and the CAs understood that change framed in a particular language (e.g. Target Operating Models) was likely to incur resistance from certain managers and so needed reframing.

According to Prasad and Prasad (2000), *employee* resistance was 'not a constant or pervasive feature' (op cit: 393) of the organisation that they observed and yet *management* resistance at Copperdale was constant and

pervasive. It suggests that these authors may have understated the nature of resistance. One explanation for this is that they did not understand bureaucracy to be both a form of control and a mechanism for resistance. Organisations have to be continually enacted through bureaucratic rules, procedures, documents, meetings, the hierarchy and different functions. Although this is a means to exercise power, so as to discipline others, as we have seen, it also provides scope for resistance. Coercion underpins rules but to function, rules require the consent of others, which can be withdrawn as a means of resistance. The withdrawal of consent can take many different forms from non-compliance, to questioning figures, to exiting, to insisting that extant rules are followed. This means that there are continuous opportunities for the forms of micro-resistance that surfaced in Copperdale to appear in response to the domination of central government and CAs. The CAs sought to resist the resistance they confronted through persuasion, trying other routes, avoiding certain words/acronyms, by-passing committees and procedures and building relationships. Overall, this points towards an everyday, complex dynamic of control, resistance and consent (see Mumby, 2005).

Chapter 6 highlighted that our analysis of resistance to Change Management should not be limited to *employee* struggles against *exploitation*, which has been the focus of many labour process and industrial relations scholars. These studies have been supplemented by post-structural accounts that focus on *employee* struggles over *subjection*. Neither seems to fully explain or fit with the managerial resistance that was observed at Copperdale which can be understood as struggles against *domination* by central government and the CAs that were tasked to implement change. In view of this, our analysis and understanding of resistance can be enhanced through greater attention to the ways in which domination is resisted. We nevertheless need to remain sensitive to the interrelationships between struggles over exploitation, subjection and domination. These struggles are not mutually exclusive and yet different struggles clearly have a different emphasis. For instance, a strike over pay or zero hour contracts most clearly fits with struggles against exploitation whilst employees or managers exhibiting cynicism (Fleming and Spicer, 2003) or distance (Collinson, 1994) in relation to a culture change programme most closely relate to struggles against subjection.

The forms of managerial resistance in this study do not sit easily with either struggles against exploitation or subjection and so it seems more appropriate to understand it as resistance against domination. The resistance the CAs engaged in, to counter management resistance, can also be understood as a struggle against the domination of management rather than resistance against exploitation or subjection. It is important to identify how CAs exercise power and resist managers because this avoids positioning 'management as the active and successful agent in the power dynamic', which Mumby (2005: 27) argues is common in much of the

literature on control and resistance. Moreover, it illustrates that the forces of management are far from united in terms of an 'irresistible march of managerialism' (ibid). Indeed, the CAs appeared to be spearheading the march of managerialism in the teeth of opposition from management and employees as we will explore in the next section.

Employee Resistance: From Negative to Positive/Productive?

Chapter 7 contributes to our understanding of resistance in relation to Change Management in both empirical and theoretical ways. First, it adds to our understanding of the role that CAs may play in relation to Change Management and resistance. CAs have been neglected in the literature and the chapter examined how CAs may understand and seek to manage resistance in contradictory ways. Hence in relation to some issues, resistance was regarded as positive or productive whilst in relation to other issues it was resisted and deemed negative. This contradictory or inconsistent approach towards resistance elucidates an obstacle to Change Management as it is likely to hinder the enrolment of others. We examined how the CAs were unable to eliminate resistance whether through productive or repressive means which is indicative of a 'relational' (Foucault, 1982) understanding of power. It highlighted that resistance cannot be understood as 'a powerful tool' (Ford and Ford, 2009: 100) of CAs because power is not their possession to wield. Indeed, even if it were, unintended consequences are apt to arise that will thwart CA endeavours.

Second, the chapter raised questions about how to conceptualise resistance. It highlighted that commentators who consider resistance to be 'a resource—an energy to be channelled on behalf of the organization' (Ford and Ford, 2009: 100) fail to appreciate the context of power and inequality through which it emerges. The argument that resistance can make 'a positive contribution to change' (Ford et al., 2008: 363) has not been explored in relation to frontline employees nor has it been considered in a context where resistance was not fully accommodated. This chapter provides some insights into these issues and it suggested that a managerial understanding of productive resistance is both relevant and irrelevant in such settings. It was relevant when the CAs regarded some marginal forms of resistance that they were willing to accommodate as productive. It was irrelevant when the resistance posed a challenge to the CAs vision of change. At this point, the CAs no longer viewed the resistance as positive or productive and it would be really useful to explore instances when CAs/managers are more accommodating or flexible in relation to resistance that threatens their strategy or vision.

The case of Copperdale suggests that if managers and CAs are to recognise the role that they play in creating resistance, they must be willing

to undo or substantially modify their original decisions. A compromise 'to adjust the pace, scope, or sequencing of change and/or its implementation' (Ford et al., 2008: 369) is insufficient if the vision of change is the source of contention and yet remains unchanged. Ford *et al.* (2008) correctly question the assumption that resistance is always negative and that it is always the fault of change recipients. Yet to assume that resistance can be 'a powerful tool' (Ford and Ford, 2009: 100) of management, is equally problematic because it omits the wider conditions of inequality that imbue organisational life along with the relational nature of power.

Third, the chapter provided evidence in support of but also against, the proposition that resistance can be considered 'productive' (Courpasson et al., 2012) or 'facilitative' (Thomas et al., 2011) of change. A case study of a bank by Courpasson *et al.* (2012) provided examples of original decisions being undone in the sense that top managers intervened following resistance by branch managers and reversed decisions made by marketing managers. Nevertheless, this related to a middle management dispute and overcoming middle management decisions. The leader of the resistance in the bank was a powerful manager who became its CEO and this seems significant in understanding its success. There is a need to examine whether frontline employees are able to achieve similar outcomes although in the case of Copperdale, frontline employees and many managers, shared similar concerns. In another case study, Thomas *et al.* (2011) found that middle management resistance could be accommodated without senior managers having to abandon their culture change programme. The case of Copperdale raises questions about whether such an accommodation will occur if the change initiative itself is challenged. Hence, the vision of a flexible, open plan, hot desking work environment appeared to be something that the CAs were not willing to compromise.

Courpasson *et al.* (2012) argue that the goal of productive resistance is 'to foster the development of alternative management practices that are likely to benefit the organization as a whole' (op cit: 801). In the case of Copperdale, there appeared to be little scope for agreement over what might benefit the organisation as a whole or for an 'accommodation' (op cit: 806) to be reached over the CA vision. It could be argued that at Copperdale there was the potential for a half-way house that maintained extant communities but delivered greater flexibility on the basis that this would provide a more efficient *and* a happier place of work. Yet employees failed to organise a campaign, an 'enclave' or a 'report' to articulate 'a new agenda' to achieve this end (Courpasson et al., 2012: 806). Nevertheless, elsewhere this has been found to be insufficient in and of itself as a means to ensure that management compromises or regards resistance as productive (see McCabe, 2018). Despite the presence of trade unions at Copperdale, there was little evidence that employees were prepared to act in an organised and collective way so as to formulate and mobilise resistance. Indeed, resistance was largely individual and fragmented and

no doubt economics and fear played a role in this given the context of the 2008 GFC and the large scale redundancies that followed. It may be problematic then to assume that employees will be willing or able to engage in the type of 'productive' resistance that Courpasson *et al.* (2012) outline in the sense that it detaches those who may want to resist from the individualising emotional and economic vulnerability of what it means to be a wage slave and indeed to resist.

It remains unclear whether the concept of 'productive' resistance is relevant if 'top managers' refuse to regard resistance as productive, positive or if they are unwilling to make an accommodation. In the case of Copperdale, the CAs were not willing to compromise and yet this does not seem possible from the analysis of Courpasson *et al.* (2012), because 'top managers' were said to have 'no choice but to take the resistance seriously, which meant cooperating' (op cit: 813). This is inconsistent with a 'relational' (Foucault, 1977) understanding of power because it suggests that power can be possessed by those resisting, which is evident in the argument that 'change is made possible by what resisters bring to the social situation, not by what top managers decide to accept or reject' (op cit: 816). Of course, we do not know what would have happened had employees organised and articulated a new agenda but a 'relational' understanding of power suggests that outcomes would remain uncertain. This is due to the fact that power is exercised by multiple parties, irrespective of how expertly resistance is mobilised or how forcefully management reasserts 'the prerogatives of rule' (op cit: 815).

According to Courpasson *et al.* (2012), 'resistance is likely to be productive when it is couched' in ways that prove 'useful for the organization' (op cit: 814). The case of Copperdale highlights problems with this argument because what was deemed to be 'useful for the organization' was not seen as necessarily useful for employees and vice versa. This was certainly the view of the CAs at Copperdale when resistance posed a threat to their vision. Indeed, the *CAs* viewed any challenge to their vision as unacceptable and so *they* appeared to believe that *only their* vision would 'benefit the organization as a whole' (ibid). The difficulty involved in placating CAs or top management then, clearly poses an obstacle to a productive approach towards resistance.

Another problem with the concept of 'productive' resistance is the rational assumption that representing resistance in a way that benefits the organisation will be sufficient for resistance to be seen as 'productive'. In the case of Copperdale, even if employees had developed a 'new agenda' around, for instance, a flexible community that would benefit employees and the organisation, we cannot assume that the CAs would have accepted it for a whole host of reasons that may or may not be rational. CAs may oppose resistance, irrespective of the rationality of the arguments they confront, if this rubs up against their goals, objectives and identity. Indeed, CAs may become so locked into their vision of work

that they cannot see or hear an alternative rationality. In short, we cannot assume that management will respond rationally to resistance and see it as productive or positive irrespective of how it is presented (see McCabe, 1996, 2018 for example).

In the case of Copperdale, the resistance could have been seen as productive had the CAs been willing to compromise on their vision or had the employee resistance been organised so as to secure this end. Nevertheless, had the resistance been organised and successfully delivered an alternative vision, extant inequalities would have remained. This productive resistance would not have taken 'us beyond capitalism, beyond the dictatorship of needs' (Burawoy, 1979: 177). The employees of Copperdale would have remained 'employees' (Jacques, 1996) who accept inequality, the hierarchical order, consumerism, the rat race, the need to work continuously and their place within the existing order of things. Power would have continued to be exercised so as to constitute employees in this way but resistance would also have endured. These arguments and insights are not meant to suggest that resistance cannot be productive—far from it. Indeed, we owe many rights and our standard of living to the resistance of those who have gone before us. Our contemporary way of living was not bestowed upon us by accommodating and benevolent bosses or owners but was won through sacrifice and strife. To the extent that resistance is productive in the future it will have to be achieved through struggle, the outcomes of which remain uncertain.

Cynicism in Service

Chapter 8 focused on cynicism in relation to the changes introduced at Copperdale. It identified features of the Copperdale corporate culture that created a shadowland where all is not as it appears. This reflected the imposition of managerialism, the enterprise discourse and corporate speak that rubbed up against the ethos and traditions of public sector service. It was described by the staff and managers as a 'tick box' culture, where things are done for show and image, which seemed to them to be more important than service and indeed potentially detracted from it. This appeared to have a corrosive impact because it created a sense of illusion or pretence. The danger is that as game playing gains traction it fosters the view that it does not really matter what you do so long as it appears to conform to the demands of managerialism and central government.

The sense of unreality was compounded through the proliferation of an often 'alien' (Diefenbach, 2010; Sturdy, 2011) business language that was describe variously as nonsense, propaganda and Orwellian. This added to the sense of disconnect with reality because employees were required to define themselves in relation to nebulous terms such as 'belief' rather than the specifics of what a job entails. Reality was redefined in a way

that sought to obscure or dress up what was happening and so instead of job cuts, redundancies or downgrading a myriad of terms were used such as de-tiering; redeveloping; reorientation or disestablishing. The CAs enacting and introducing change also used obscure titles to define themselves such as a 'solutions architect', which one employee equated with something from Harry Potter, the children's books and films about a world of magic and wizards.

It has been suggested that 'although many employees have lost their collective voice, they occasionally raise their *individual* voices in opposition, cynical rejection, or questioning of managerial practices and discourses' (Gabriel, 2008: 310; emphasis added). This gives rise to the first insight of the chapter. In the case of Copperdale, employees had not lost their collective voice because they still had trade union representation. A number of employees nevertheless shifted union affiliation because they felt that their union was insufficiently opposed to management's designs. Irrespective of trade unions, however, it would be mistaken to equate the cynicism, discussed in Chapter 8, with just individuals because it was clearly shared by employees and reflected a collective concern for colleagues and the wider public. Rather than embrace or align themselves with the ephemeral, the image, the pretence, the superficial, where employees position themselves in relation to the 'journey', this appeared to be precisely what employees were cynical about and indeed mocked. Employees who may be cynical about corporate discourses are part of a collective and may think and act with the collective in mind. It is, at least in part, a collective concern for the public and each other that helps to account for why these otherwise cynical employees continued to work rather than resist in other ways.

Second, the chapter sought to engage with the argument that 'cynicism may undermine effective resistance to corporate domination because even though the cynical worker disbelieves 'internally', their external actions believe for them' (Fleming and Spicer, 2003: 173). It posited that this position may conflate, confuse and entangle different knotted dynamics because it assumes that disbelief is an absolute position whereby through cynicism employees disbelieve in, or distance themselves from, everything that their employer represents. It also neglects that employees may find some reprieve or sense of freedom through cynicism and so, at least in this way, it is effective resistance for them. The chapter argued that the broad understanding that workers reproduce their plight through cynicism leads scholars 'to ignore and/or misinterpret the subjective meanings' that cynicism has for 'workers in a local context' (Nord and Jermier, 1994: 402).

Through engaging with the subjective meanings of employers and managers at Copperdale it was asserted that employees may disbelieve in or be cynical about corporate discourses that appear to them to be divorced from their everyday lives or that are bound up with image, box ticking,

pretence and nonsense. Nevertheless, for some of Copperdale's workers, running concurrently with this *disbelief* in managerialism or corporate speak, was a *belief* in the importance of public service (e.g. care for the homeless) and for each other (colleagues). It is this belief along with economic necessity that, in part, ensures that employees and managers continue to work. In short, they do not work *as if* they believe because they *do* believe in *certain* aspects of what they do and this helps to account for why employees do not resist more than they do. We therefore need to avoid treating identification and dis-identification in a dualistic way because this obscures the complexity and ambivalence of the subjectivity of cynicism.

Third, in addition to these dynamics there are economic and political realities to consider in relation to cynicism. Hence individuals understood that to resist government cuts would not be well received in 'the court of public opinion' (Rob). John articulated that 'it's a different financial world' and Tracy's remarks regarding the need to cut costs and set targets suggest an internalisation of political and economic demands, for as she put it 'I've recognised the need for all that'. This subjectivity meant that employees did not consider formal, collective resistance, in the post 2008 GFC economic climate to be an option. It is not the case then that cynicism somehow displaces other forms of resistance as if cynicism resides in a vacuum for it is bound up with the world beyond the individual and the organisation. Indeed, Mike explained that the driving force behind the tick box culture is 'to report to central government' and so to challenge these conditions would require a challenge to central government. It is not cynicism that prevents such resistance but the recognition that the forces of opposition are considerable. As Rob commented, in the current context, he does not blame the union for failing to stand up against his employers. Cynicism for these individuals, did not appear to support 'the fantasy of ourselves as liberal, free, and self-regulating human beings to whom multiple choices are open' (Contu, 2008: 370) because the employees and managers are all too aware of the obstacles and limited choices available to them. Instead, they appeared to be cynical about the manufactured, NPM, neo-liberal, enterprise subject, that they are required to become who must embrace self-promotion by playing the game in a way that places image over substance.

Making Organisational Politics Political

Chapter 9 provided a number of insights into the different types of organisational politics (OP) at work in Copperdale. Firstly, in terms of micropolitics, the CAs attributed past mistakes to 'external' consultants and this insight is distinctive because as Sturdy (2011) has argued 'It is necessarily difficult to demonstrate scapegoating' (ibid: 523), which so far has been attributed to management but not CAs per se. This scapegoating

can be understood as an expression of micro-political resistance (Thomas and Davies, 2005) whereby the CAs resisted the negative image associated with 'external' consultants. Hence they 'distanced' (Collinson, 1994) themselves from 'external' consultants and sought to elevate *themselves* (identity) and *their* achievements (actions). This is all the more political because as we explored the boundary between the CAs and external consultants was far from clear.

Second, in terms of meso-politics, the chapter explored how local party politics influenced change and how this constrained the CAs in terms of what they could and could not do. It appeared that some of the CAs had imbibed or accepted the political priorities of the local Labour Party and so out-sourcing, cutting services and compulsory redundancies were initially ruled out. Meso-politics imbued the change 'agenda' and shaped the options or policies that could be pursued. The local Labour Party can be said to have imposed restrictions on the options for change that the CAs and a different political party might have pursued. This highlights the significance of local party politics. It also underlines, contrary to perspectives which define political behaviour as helping to 'promote or protect the self-interests of the actor' (Kacmar and Carlson, 1997: 629) that in an LGA, political party interests may be just as significant as self-interest. It has been argued that 'the political work that particular narratives seek to do in influencing the decision-making process needs to be uncovered' (McLoughlin and Badham, 2005: 834) and this chapter contributes to such an excavation through illuminating how local party politics can influence narratives of change and decision-making through meso-politicking that is not distinct from micro-politics.

Third, the chapter considered the impact of macro-politics on organisational change. It provided insights into 'the discursive processes through which behaviours come to be labelled as political, attributed with political intent, and socially constructed as political' which Buchanan (2008: 62) asserts is 'unexplored' in the literature. This was particularly apparent in the way in which local and national politicians presented each other's position as 'political'. The media's representation of this was also political in that 'it failed to place the events within an explanatory framework' and, in this way, 'excluded' (Chouliaraki, 2000: 306) debate regarding alternatives to Austerity or public sector spending cuts (see Lukes, 1974). Instead, the media coverage was reduced to who was responsible for the redundancies (i.e. local or national politicians).

The politicking at the national and local level can be understood to reflect a clash between the UK Conservative/coalition and Labour Party's economic and political philosophies. The media's failure to engage with the issues can be said to reflect 'the tension between fulfilling a public service and a market function—between providing information and entertainment' (Chouliaraki, 2000: 298). Indeed, the media's concern to appear neutral limited the public's understanding of the issues because

the reporting did not go beyond the supposedly entertaining spectacle of X saying this and Y saying that, which effectively silenced informed debate. This supports and extends Dawson and Buchanan's (2005) argument that technological change is a 'complex political process represented by multiple versions of events which compete with each other for dominance as definitive change accounts' (op cit: 845). Hence this argument does not just apply to 'technology' but to all programmes of change including BPR (see McCabe, 2004). In the public sector, the politicking does not end at the organisational level for, as we have seen, politics continued to be played out between local and national politicians. The role that the media plays in this further politicises matters because its representation of different positions tended to support a certain version of events—the inevitability of public sector cuts.

Aside from the political wrangling over responsibility between local and national politicians, it is apparent that the enormous central government cuts in public sector spending coincided with job losses at Copperdale. Macro-politics impacted upon meso-politics in the sense that the leader of the council considered it politically necessary to substantially reduce costs, in part, through significantly reducing the transformation team thereby preserving front-line services. Although this will reduce costs it is unlikely to foster a transformation of services. The leader of the council, according to the director of transformation, responded to the Coalition government's 2010 CSR in a way which was inconsistent with the ethos of the transformation programme and so she resigned in protest. As was pointed out, this elucidated the interrelationships between and the interwoven nature of micro-, meso- and macro-politics such that they are inseparable because the shift towards cost cutting threatened the director of transformation's team, authority and sense of self.

As was discussed in Chapter 9, it is too often the case that OP is understood in a way which aligns with a chess metaphor. Studies that attend to micro-politics tend to examine the minutiae of organisational life or identity politics, which can be compared to studying the pieces on a chess board. Meso-studies explore organisational politics, for instance, around the introduction of new technology or a new strategy. The politics is broader but still relates to political struggles within organisations and this can be compared to a fascination with the chess players. Macro-studies of politics are less common but have tended to consider how political influences beyond the organisation impinge upon organisational life. These studies can be compared to scrutinising the impact of the environment upon the chess players.

The danger of focusing on OP in this way is that we become preoccupied with how the game is played rather than questioning the game itself. If we step back, we can observe that these are all political plays that whilst altering the game in different ways nonetheless leave the game intact. Indeed, the wider political game itself is potentially obscured

through a focus on the pieces, the players or the environment. This chapter encouraged reflection upon the wider political play whereby we come to accept the game as it stands. It also introduced big 'P' politics into the analysis through its focus upon the media plus local and central government politics, which illuminated the peculiarly political nature of organisational politics in relation to local government and how this imbues organisational change.

Final Thoughts

This book has introduced a number of themes into the analysis of Change Management that have received limited attention in the literature. It has done so as a means to encourage a critical 'relational' understanding of Change Management. These themes are not exhaustive of a critical analysis and many other themes could have been included such as materiality, gender, ethnicity and ethics. These are equally important and equally absent in the analysis of Change Management especially in the mainstream literature. Other scholars may wish to focus on them as it would be particularly interesting and insightful to examine, for example, the gendered dynamics of Change Management and how, through the discourse of Change Management, gender inequalities are obscured and reproduced. This is particularly important in the context of local government and austerity because as mentioned in Chapter 4, the axe of cuts has fallen disproportionately on women along with other disadvantaged groups. Likewise, the ethics of Change Management would be fascinating to consider as CAs and managers generally present themselves or assume themselves to be ethical beings. It would be interesting to compare this with how those on the receiving end of change consider managers, CAs and the initiatives that they introduce.

Although the focus of the book has been on Change Management its insights could equally be applied to scholars interested in innovation, strategy, information technology, accounting, marketing and operations management, all of which tend to present power as a possession of those in positions of authority. It would be useful then to apply this type of analysis to these subject areas but also to consider such issues in different settings be that the public or private sector, services, construction, retail or manufacturing. There is enormous scope to rethink and re-examine the way in which these subjects have been traditionally represented and understood.

To do so would benefit students of management who need to understand the complexity of organisations, the hidden struggles that are part of everyday life along with the inequalities that are perpetuated through organisations and its sub-disciplines. It may also be of benefit and comfort to practitioners, who may wonder at their ineptitude, when they compare their own experiences with the glossed over accounts they read

in newspapers or management magazines. It could also offer comfort to trade unionists and those concerned to resist the inequalities that organisations reproduce for to understand power as relational illuminates that management are not omniscient/omnipotent and can be challenged. Indeed, the case of Copperdale suggests that managers and employees may have far more in common than is often assumed to be the case in many critical accounts. Both managers and employees resisted and both were on the receiving end of changes that they had little say over and from which they both suffered.

Finally, if we only attend to the tools, techniques, models and agents associated with Change Management, we may lose sight of what is reproduced through rational-technical prescriptions. We begin to accept and take for granted the inequalities that are silently engineered and reengineered through change programmes whether they are top-down or emergent. We begin to see the world through managerial eyes and therefore act in ways that serve a narrow range of interests. This is problematic for those on the receiving end of change whose jobs may be lost, rendered insecure or intensified through change initiatives. It is also problematic for those who seek to instigate and operationalise change initiatives because the rational-technical perspective is born of a false premise and understanding of how organisations operate. Power is believed to reside in the hands of strategists, managers or CAs but, as we have seen, this simply fails to countenance the reality of everyday life. It works from the illusion that governments or managers can simply do to others and fails to recognise that these others also exercise power and need to be enrolled in support of change interventions for them to have any hope of success. The problem is that the success of change programmes is often measured narrowly in terms of the 'bottom line' or 'cost savings' which may damage the lives of those on the receiving end of them whose support is needed to make them work. This goes some considerable way to explaining the resulting circularity whereby similar prescriptions are offered irrespective of the failings of earlier initiatives. There is no simple solution to this but there is a need to break out of the prescription-failure-prescription-failure cycle.

To begin to break this cycle, those in positions of authority need to understand that they do not possess power and so those who are tasked to make change work have to be the first not the final consideration. This does not mean that managers must search for ever more sophisticated ways to enrol or engage others if this is simply a ruse to deliver their intended designs. Change models that seek to incorporate yet more steps or processual approaches that endeavour to provide a more complex understanding of the context, content and process of change only serve to perpetuate the status quo. No amount of communication, consultation or involvement will resolve the problems generated through change initiatives that promise a better tomorrow but impoverish the lives of those

subject to them. Indeed, change interventions that attempt to fabricate new subjectivities through shared corporate visions are apt to fail when those on the receiving end of change suffer and experience inconsistencies or a disconnection with, their lived experience. The search then should not be for more complex change models either as prescriptive tools or as sense making devices but rather genuine attempts to share the benefits of change and to ameliorate the harm done through them. Otherwise, the circularity will continue with change initiatives simply perpetuating disengagement prompting yet more change efforts aimed at enlisting the support of those on the receiving end of them.

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