

# The political cybernetics of organisations

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1253

**Keywords** Cybernetics, Systems theory

**Abstract** Viable systems theory is a development of managerial cybernetics within a critical systems theory context. The theory not only addresses cybernetics, it also shows how politics is fundamental to it. Politics used power and power processes to shape structures, manipulate information, and influence the way that people behave. The concept of centripetal politics used by Ionescu in his discussion of the changes over the last century to society is applied to organisations and their political processes. The outcome suggests the possibility of a political map that has the potential to explain organisational behaviour.

## 1. Viable systems theory

The legacy left to us by the sad demise of Stafford Beer in August 2002 is managerial cybernetics. It provides us with an appreciation of the cybernetic nature of coherent autonomous social communities, which we call organisations. In a development of this, Yolles (1999a) proposed a theoretical approach that ultimately links critical systems thinking (Midgley, 2000) with the viable system work of Eric Schwarz in 1997. This theory goes beyond Beer's conceptualisation in 1957 that the system has associated with it a metasystem which formulates the decisions that steers the system. It proposes that there are three domains: one that is phenomenological[1] or behavioural normally represented as the system; a virtual or organising domain within which we generate images that we wish to experience phenomenally; and a cognitive domain in which we have our worldviews/paradigms, and where we maintain our patterns of knowledge that enable us to gain meaning for the phenomena and behaviours that what we perceive around us. Interestingly, this construction has relevance to the definition of autopoiesis (Mingers, 1995): the ability of an autonomous system to manifest its virtual images phenomenologically. Midgley (2000) advocates the development of critical systems theory through Habermas's (1987). Yolles (2002) however, rejects this and rather adopts a cybernetic three domain model. This centres on the Habermas's theory of knowledge constitutive interests (which in any case underpins the three worlds model) that has today become a significant feature of critical theory (MacIsaacs, 1996), and this forms a basis for Yolles' viable systems theory (VST) (Yolles, 2000).

In VST, Yolles proposes that all coherent social communities that can be modelled in terms of the three domains also have cognitive properties (Table I). They are cognitive because they relate to human orientations that are manifested from worldview. There are three classes of such orientation:

Kybernetes  
Vol. 32 No. 9/10, 2003  
pp. 1253-1282

Cognitive properties	Kinematics (through energetic motion)	Organisational pattern	
		Orientation (determining trajectory)	Possibilities (through potential development)
<i>Cognitive interests</i> Phenomenal or behavioural domain	<i>Technical</i> <i>Work.</i> This enables people to achieve goals and generate material well-being. It involves technical ability to undertake action in the environment, and the ability to make prediction and establish control.	<i>Practical</i> <i>Interaction.</i> This requires that people as individuals and groups in a social system gain and develop the possibilities of an understanding of each others subjective views. It is consistent with a practical interest in mutual understanding that can address disagreements, which can be a threat to the social form of life.	<i>Critical deconstraining</i> <i>Degree of emancipation.</i> For organisational viability, the realising of individual potential is most effective when people: (i) liberate themselves from the constraints imposed by power structures, (ii) learn through precipitation in social and political processes to control their own destinies.
<i>Cognitive purposes</i>  Virtual or organising domain	<i>Cybernetical</i> <i>Intention.</i> This is through the creation and strategic pursuit of goals and aims that may change over time, enables people through control and communications processes to redirect their futures	<i>Rational/appreciative</i> <i>Formative organising.</i> Enables missions, goals, and aims to be defined and approached through planning. It may involve logical, and/or relational abilities to organise thought and action and thus to define sets of possible systematic, systemic and behaviour possibilities. It can also involve the use of tacit standards by which experience can be ordered and valued, and may involve reflection	<i>Ideological/moral</i> <i>Manner of thinking.</i> An intellectual framework through which policy makers observe and interpret reality. This has an aesthetical or politically correct ethical orientation. It provides an image of the future that enables action through politically correct strategic policy. It gives a politically correct view of stages of historical development, in respect of interaction with the external environment

**Table I.**  
Cognitive properties  
and patterns of viable  
organisations

(continued)

<i>Cognitive influences</i>	<i>Social</i>	<i>Cultural</i>	<i>Political</i>
Cognitive domain	<i>Formation.</i> Enables individuals/groups to be influenced by knowledge that relate to our social environment. This has a consequence for our social structures and processes that define our social forms that are related to our intentions and behaviours	<i>Belief.</i> Influences occur from knowledge that derives from the cognitive organisation (the set of beliefs, attitudes, values) of other worldviews. It ultimately determines how we interact and influences our understanding of formative organising	<i>Freedom.</i> Influences occur from knowledge that affect our polity determined, in part, by how we think about the constraints on group and individual freedoms, and in connection with this to organise and behave. It ultimately has impact on our ideology and morality, and our degree of organisational emancipation

Table I.

interests, properties, and influences. Taken together, this can formulate a picture of the cognitive properties of any purposeful activity system. This develops on the cognitive properties table of Yolles (2000a), including some of Vicker's (1965) ideas on the notion of the appreciative system, and a development of the organisational surfing table of Yolles (2000b) which we shall further discuss in due course. The organisational pattern that is represented in Table I through its columns refers to the idea that the organisation can be explored in terms of overall patterns within the organisation (Yolles, 2000c).

Of particular interest is the notion that cognitive purposes involve cybernetic, rational/appreciative and ideological/moral attributes. This domain is fundamentally one of polity that enables the creation of order and relates to the ability to organise (hence the organising domain). Fundamental to it is the political process of the social community, a feature of organisations that is often overlooked. The purpose of this paper is to examine the nature of the political processes that can occur in organisations.

## 2. Polity and politics

When discussing political processes we can refer to both macroscopic organisations involving a large number of participants that have the potential to interact with each other, or microscopic ones with relatively few participants whose interaction potential is smaller. Based on the works of Duverger (1972), we will say that the political processes that operate in macroscopic organisations are mediated[2] while those in microscopic organisations are unmediated or direct. This distinction is a reflection of the complexity of the organisation: mediated politics occurs with high levels of complexity. This is

because when patterns of political interactions becomes complex as in the case of macroscopic organisations, emergent formalisations[3] develop that make the patterns easier to represent and more understandable. Thus for example, formalised political parties emerge from a complex set of informal allegiances.

In unmediated political situations a social community operates through direct relationships between participants. Group alliances may develop between participants, but the direct relationships that occur can be harmonised because of the embedded complexity. In mediated political situations the political process is more remote, the social distance from those who have power is recognised, and the political relations tend to be formal and impersonal. Also, political struggle is as much collective as it is individual, while formalised political structures vie for power ascendancy.

One of the features of mediated politics is that a process of bureaucratisation normally accompanies it. Those who govern, the political managers who are also the power holders, do not make direct contact with those subordinated in the organisation; rather they make contact through transitory media [4]. As a result, there is a social distance between the power holder and the subordinates who are subject to the political manager's authority or control. We might say that the social distance is proportional to accessibility to the power holder.

Social distance is maintained when access to power holders is mediated by formal mechanisms. Examples might be a corporate customer service department that restricts access to leaders, or a web based firewall that restricts access to e-mail addresses. It is of interest that there is a tendency for e-commerce organisations to maintain a social distance from their customers by limiting communications to batch e-mail. It may then be the case that the nature of politics between consumers and corporations is changing, where consumer power is balanced against the corporate power.

Our interest lies in organisations that have some degree of rational/appreciative ordering that overcomes a tendency towards disorder. Behind the ordering process are purposeful virtual images that promote operational structure. We are dealing here with autonomous organisations that develop their own images through their own self-determined processes, and promote their own operational structure through automorphosis[5]. The ordering occurs through polity, which works through the establishment of a constitution or a set of recognised principles that lie at the foundation of the community, and that involves ideology and ethics. It is through polity that we can create and develop our social/operational structure that facilitates and constrains the way that people associated with it connect and communicate with each other. Polity also underscores the processes that allow people to work and interact with each other, and provides for the power that enables power holders to impose their own will on subordinates.

The original derivation of the word polity is policy [6], and it is therefore often used within the context of a system of governance [7] within which a coherent social community is governed, controlled or influenced. Governance may be best thought of as political management. Governing bodies like nation state governments or enterprise executive boards normally exert a determining or guiding influence on the behaviour of the social community which they govern. They do this through a formal or informal constitution that indicates the nature of the organisation, embodies the recognised principles that lie at its foundation, and conforms to the dominant culture based paradigm upon which the community sits. Across a network of social communities that does not have a dominant paradigm, agreements or conflicts about order occur through lifeworld processes. However, in centralised communities a plurality of dominant paradigms is a recipe for social schizophrenia.

When we refer to a formal or informal constitution, we mean the formal or informal set of rules or procedures that governs an organisation and determines what is more or less legitimate behaviour. These rules do not have to be formally and intentionally set down for governance to exist. In some cases the rules could be emergent and dynamic, and reflected through exemplars that constitute recognised custom and practice. Governance is undertaken by governing bodies, which after Landry (1999) may be defined as the continuous exercise of the power that constitutes the authority to control the individuals who compose the social community.

### 3. The nature of politics

Politics is the total complex of relations between people living in coherent social group, and enables organisations to become established in the first place. One way of doing this is by distributing power to role positions that result in the making of judgements, dispensing of decisions, and in general facilitating formal action. Legitimate action is that action sanctioned by due process within the organisation.

The view of politics adopted by Checkland and Scholes (1990, p. 50) relates to the work of Blondel (1978) and Crick (1962). For them, politics is taken to be a process by which differing interests reach accommodation through the dispositions of power. Blandier (1972) supposes that political power is seen in terms of the formal relations that express the *real* power relations between individuals. Thus, political structures, like social structures, can be seen as abstract systems which express the principles that make up concrete political organisations. However, these (dynamic) structures change over time through the development of incompatibilities, contradictions, and tensions inherent in organisations.

Politics can also be related to the social and cultural attributes of organisations through the consideration of political ideology. Ideology is a collection of rationalised and systemised beliefs that coalesce into an image

that establishes a phenomenological potential or experience. Political ideology can be instrumental in defining (Holsti, 1967, p. 163):

- (1) an intellectual framework through which policy makers observe and interpret reality;
- (2) a politically correct ethical and moral orientation;
- (3) an image of the future that enables action through strategic policy; and
- (4) stages of historical development in respect of interaction with the external environment.

When the groups operate from a given paradigm they are often prone to particular orientations that: exclude other orientations and predetermines ideology. When the groups operate in the political arena, this can be referred to as a political ideology. This can become a doctrine when it:

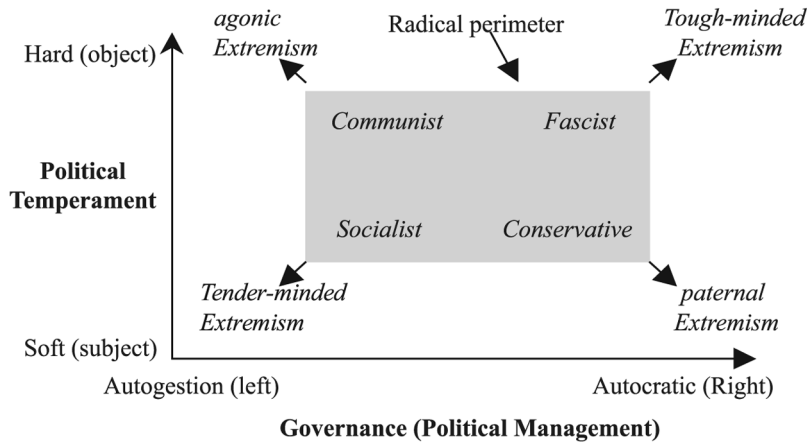
- (1) becomes a body of instruction about a specific set of beliefs which tends to explain reality; and
- (2) prescribes goals for political action.

Table I explains the linkages between the ideology that underlies political action, and ethics that conditions our behaviour. It adopts local rationality [8] and relations that operate as the basis for the symbolic virtual images we create. They incorporate information, and create polity necessary for politics. Power may be seen as a phenomenological event in that it is part of the behavioural process, impacting on it through the structures that arise and to which positions of power are attached. The images embed information, and manifest structural adjustment through operative management (Schwaninger, 2001). This is tied in with the strategic knowledge that enables the information to be interpreted.

#### **4. Governance, leadership and power**

##### *4.1 Types of governance*

Governance can be associated with political temperament. Eysenk (Duverger, 1972) produced a study that distinguished political temperaments across the different forms of political management, or governances (Figure 1) representing a form of management style within a political context. The study examined governance statistically, using factor analysis. In an attempt to assess the nature of the factors, he distinguished between left/right governances, and hard/soft temperaments. The terms left and right derive [9] from the seating arrangements in the 19th century European parliaments, where the conservatives would sit on the right side of a semi-circle (as seen from the point of view of the presiding officer, often the king) and the socialists on the left. The more radical a political group perceives itself to be, the further to the left it would sit. Radicalism supports fundamental change in society, and while it has traditionally been identified with the left, at present it is also seen to



**Source:** Developed from Duverger (1972), on Eysenk

**Figure 1.**  
Political management  
temperament

be part of the right. Far radicalism is often equated with extremism. The political left can include communism, socialism, or liberalism. The political right includes conservatism and nationalism, and can embrace the political ideologies of authoritarianism and reactionism. We find it useful to distinguish between the left and right political divide by distinguishing, respectively, between autogestion[10] or political self-management, and autocratic or centralised political management.

To understand the distinction between hard and soft temperaments, Eysenk suggested that more autocratic regimes (communism and fascism) tended to be hard, while less autocratic regimes (socialism and conservatism) tend to be soft. However, this does not satisfactorily distinguish between the left/right classifications. Duverger was not happy that the distinction was adequate either, and proposed that *hard* might refer to *tough-mindedness*, and soft *tender-mindedness*. Building on Duverger, we take tender-mindedness to be related to a lack of concern for traditional ethics, objectification of others[11] and perhaps utilitarianism. We consider *tender-mindedness* is sensitive to traditional ethics, individualistic involving consultation with others, and maintains a perception of duty (and honour) without external pressure. In the systems tradition the hard/soft divide is normally taken to broadly be an object/subject distinction. This also seems to have become the basis of hard/soft in considering governance and power, as we shall see in the next section. We have included other classifications. For instance we adopt two forms of extremism: paternal (autocratic and subject perceiving) or agonic[12] (autogestionic and objectifying). We may note that there is likely to be a connection between temperament and power. When people relate to each other as objects, they tend to maintain a balance of personal power in which one



person is manipulating another, perhaps for their own or some other perceived advantage.

The idea that an organisation can have a temperament is interesting in that it links with the idea of society which we discussed earlier. The notion is, then, that the sociality of an organisation will include political temperament which will affect the way it is perceived in its environment by other organisations. This can condition the way that the organisation interacts with other organisations.

The traditional political classifications imply a variety of forms of governance that are underpinned by ideology, and operate with their own unique form of ethics. In Table II we list some classifications which can be used to represent the politics of corporations.

Most corporations tend to be hierarchical, characterised by authoritarian relationships that operate through leaders. A meritocracy is governance based on rule by ability, and meritocracies often arise in hierarchic organisations through a process of ranking employees based on some quality other than force (DeVoy, 2001). However, the criteria that determine what merit means are often variable, as the appointments to role positions change, or the interests of particular leaders change. Often appointment bodies are dominated by a particular individual, perhaps a chairperson, and overwhelm normative criteria. In other cases, appointment bodies may be tinged with emotional, racial or political motivations. True meritocracies might appear in organisations that pursue a critical knowledge paradigm (Clegg *et al.*, 1996), but it is likely that there are few of such organisations.

Since historically organisations tend to develop hierarchies, a form of governance emerges based on autocratic principles where an individual (the chief executive or chairman) will ultimately dictate to others. A despotic organisation may have an executive committee or board of directors which as a whole dictates to the rest of the organisation. This normally requires some form of decision agreement across the board membership.

Oligarchic organisations are ruled by a small group of its membership, in which political power has been invested. An example of such governance is the cooperative, where employees are shareholders who vote in the executive periodically. However, they are neither normally consulted about issues nor do they have participation in decision-making. Examples of democratic organisations might be legal or consultancy partnerships, where there is a central organisation, but where the partners have full participation in the policy decision-making. However, these organisations are likely to take the form of the ancient Greek democracies, where there was the democratic elite and token slaves or serfs who belonged to their masters in so far as they are tied to specific operations and were not able to participate in political processes. The distinction between slaves and serfs was that in the former case, masters were



Type of governance	Nature
Autocracy/despotism	Deriving from the words auto (or self) and monarchy, an autocrat was a ruler with unlimited authority, without checks on power. Currently, it is applied to governance that resides in the absolute power by a single authority (a person or cohesive group). It suggests a form of governance that exercises exacting and near-absolute control over all of its social membership. The word despotism is used in a similar way.
Meritocracy	A system of governance based on rule by ability rather than by wealth or social position. It can be argued that merit is defined by the power elite to legitimise a system in which social status is actually determined by local criteria for merit that are not objectivised
Democracy	Power is used to make political decisions that rest ultimately with the membership of the social community. Two forms of democracy are <i>direct</i> , in which the people express their will by means of a direct vote on each particular issue, and <i>representative</i> , in which the people express their will through the election of representatives that make decisions on behalf of those who elected them
Oligarchy	Rule by a few members of a social community in which political power is invested. The classical definition of oligarchy is of governance of the many by the few. In practice, a small minority of members runs most social communities. From this perspective, the major distinction between oligarchy and democracy is that in the latter, the elites compete with each other, gaining power by winning public support. The extent and type of barriers impeding those who attempt to join this ruling group is also significant
Constructive anarchy	The theory of anarchism, based on individualism and natural law, calls for the abolition of any governance control or regulation. There are a variety of theoretical forms. What some call constructive anarchism derives from Kropotkin (1901), and is seen as a voluntary federation of decentralised, directly democratic policy-making bodies. It is through the network of these bodies an organisation can self-manage through topological foci, as opposed to a bureaucratic focus serving the interests of the powerful

**Table II.**  
Types of political  
governance

able to make decisions about the life and death of a slave, but this was not the case for serfs (see Belbin Circ., 2001).

The last category we have listed of Table II is governance by constructive anarchy. This is a voluntary federation of decentralised, directly democratic policy-making bodies. It is through the network of these bodies that an organisation can self-manage through topological foci. An example of such governance occurs when a group of enterprises work together for some purpose, say to produce a single cooperative product all of which participate in creating. A network of outsourcing enterprises operating without a central

contract provider might well be the representative of such a political structure. The governance of the Internet has also been referred to as being one of constructive anarchy by Chark and Worthington in 1994.

Constructive anarchy may be considered as distributed governance, since it has no central authority. It is typically network based, and provides a unique way for corporations to develop their politics and distribute power. One vision of what appears to be a form of constructive anarchy was given by Belbin (2001). He talks about status power, which seems to be a critical knowledge based concept in which people work together in microscopic organisation called a team, and relate to each other from a position of equality. A person considered excellent by peers gains status and respect, and from this creates the possibility of achieving leadership, at least temporarily or for specific areas of activity. These attributes are often not recognised in hierarchies since there is no criteria for recognising them. While team-members see their peers in terms of status, members of the hierarchy see them in terms of rank position and its material trappings. The two perceptions provide a tension in that the team sees processes and networking, while the hierarchy sees structures. Those with position power are expected to perform well in all types of leadership situation, even where they do not have the knowledge. In more liberated hierarchies, they may obtain assistance from subordinates who are charged with particular undertakings, but the position holder maintains his or her rank in relation to that subordinate.

Leadership based on status is, for Belbin, consistent with democratic politics. However, adopting the notion of democracy in Table I, we see it to be more consistent with constructive anarchy in which role positions are replaced by status within networks.

#### *4.2 Leadership*

Landry (1998) suggests that a leader is someone who is capable of exerting authority, and it is therefore associated with power. Workable and sustainable authority comes to those who have the consent of those over whom authority is exercised; it stems from custom and tradition. Aristotle identified three qualities that must be possessed by a leader. They are *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*. *Ethos* is one's disposition or character; *pathos* is when one can readily touch the feelings of others and emotionally spur them into action; and *logos* is the ability to give solid reasons for the action, to move people intellectually. Amplifying on this through the ideas of the 19th century poet Shelley, leaders need to define themselves before authoritatively enabling the social group's situation to become defined. The primary function of the leader is diagnostic for both self and the group. The secondary function of a leader is to prescribe a course of action, and the third is to see that the action is taken. The cause of leaders must be the common cause. To do this they must be able to either change the thinking of the people or adopt the common cause as their own.

One of the features of hierarchical structures is that leaders do not often involve themselves in lifeworld[13] processes that seek debate, exposure of issues, and “consensual” agreement. Mostly, the compliance of subordinates to decisions that will affect organisational behaviour is sought. The impulse for compliance is, following Foucault (1982), already embedded in the structures of our organisations that have linked to them rules that guide and constrain behaviour in our organisations, and we shall discuss this shortly. “Added value” or enhanced compliance, where it is seen to be required for issues that seek subordinate behaviour that is beyond perceived norms (i.e. in change situations), can be sought through a variety of ways. It is not only compliance that is sought by authorities, however. Commitment and resistance avoidance are also desirable, and techniques for this can be found in the Organisational Development literature (Yolles, 1999a). A feature of resistance is, in the soft human resource management tradition, one that encourages the organisation to see the subordinate as a subject rather than an object, and so undertake a process of consultation and personal involvement rather than object manipulation. This is fundamental to the subjectification of the subordinate, and is a first peg towards the emancipation of the individual.

It is not only the structures that induce compliance. Leaders need to deal with their immediate subordinates directly in order to achieve it, and they use control power to do so. Many of the evaluations of leaders relate to the effectiveness of their leadership, which is often interpreted as maximising success. There are two problems with this conceptualisation of success. Firstly, it converts the notion of effectiveness to one of efficiency, the former normally relating to qualities and the latter to amount, and the second is that this is a positivist concept that has little real meaning or value in the complex world in which we live. Success then, is a relative notion that must necessarily be related to context.

Having said this, there is some well-known research about the effectiveness of leaders. For instance Green (1999) has described the research of Yukl (1981) in this respect. Yukl considered whether effective leaders have more power or different sources of power than ineffective leaders, and whether they exercise power in different ways. He found that most research classified five different types of leader control power, relying upon the typology (Table III) developed from French and Raven (1959) and presented by Luthans (1973). He also found that leaders are often concerned with obtaining compliance from their staff, though other interests also concerned commitment and resistance.

Coercive power through psychological and physical violence is a possible means to engineer compliance. For instance, bullying practices by leaders against subordinates have been a source of concern. It has also been an issue about the interaction between police and the public as a tactic that they use to extract confessions[14]. Its principles stand strongly against constructivist

	Type of control power and its nature	Outcome		
		Commitment	Compliance	Resistance
Legitimate role position	The target person complies because he or she believes the agent has a right to make the request and the target person has the ethical obligation to comply	Possible if request is polite and very appropriate	Likely if request or order is seen as legitimate	Possible if arrogant demands are made or request does not appear proper
Reward	The target person complies in order to obtain rewards he or she believes to be controlled by the agent	Possible if used in a subtle, very personal way	Likely if used in a mechanical, impersonal way	Possible if used in a manipulative, arrogant way
Coercive	The target person complies in order to avoid punishments he or she believes to be controlled by the agent	Very unlikely	Possible if used in a helpful, Non-punitive way	Likely if used in a hostile or manipulative way
Expert	The target person complies because he or she believes that the agent has special knowledge about the best way to do something	Likely if request is persuasive and subordinates share leader's task goals	Possible if request is persuasive but subordinates are apathetic about task goals	Possible if leader is arrogant and insulting, or subordinates oppose task goals
Referent	The target person complies because he or she admires or identifies with the agent and wants to gain the agent's approval	Likely if request is believed to be important to leader	Possible if request is perceived to be unimportant to leader	Possible if request is for something that will bring harm to leader

**Table III.**  
Power typology based on French and Raven (1959) and presented by Luthans (1973), with outcomes by Yukl, 1981

principle of management theory as much as within the context of ethics. Bullying is normally thought of as personal, but when it becomes institutionalised it becomes a part of structural violence (Galtung, 1972). This is the passive violence that acts on one group in an organisation through the structures established by another. It can also be seen as a suppressed form of conflict between the groups within a coherent situation. The nature of

the conflict tends to be unclear and can be interpreted as generic in nature. This enables us to distinguish qualitatively between the different groups (e.g. leaders and their subordinates). Neither side may acknowledge the existence of the structural violence, but it is normally recognised when one group, seen to be dominant over another, is undertaking exploitative practices. The exploitation may be preconscious, and thus not recognised. Neither it may be for the perceived benefit of the dominant group. It may further be institutionalised. It bounds the potential of individuals, thus constraining their capacity to contribute to the development and improvement of their organisation.

The two types of power most likely to produce compliance are *reward power* and *legitimate power*. When we talk about legitimate power, we really mean formalised role position power, because the power is a representation of an appointed role position of authority. Such authority is supported within the constitution of the organisation, and exercised by making a legitimate[15] request, either verbally or in written form. Compliance with the request is more likely if it is perceived to be within the leader's scope of authority. An illegitimate request is likely to be ignored or resisted.

Making an explicit or implicit promise to give a person something under the leader's control for carrying out a request or performing a task most commonly uses *reward power*. The reward, which may also be a symbolic token, works to create compliance if the intended recipient values it. Reward power, especially if it is a token, can be a source of increased referent power over time.

Commitment can be induced in subordinates through engendering trust and the emotional pledge that accompanies it, and this can be enhanced by the use of *expert* and *referential* control powers. The notion of the "expert" has a bad press in the consultancy context. For instance, Riddington (2002) illustrates how consulting "experts" are problematic to organisations hiring them because they have (undeclared or unrecognised) biases in their assessment, and they have the capacity of talking over the heads and beyond the comprehension of the problem owners. Provided that internal experts are aware of these problems, they can provide a good source for expert power. Having said this, it is becoming more usual at present to refer to the power of knowledge rather than the power of the expert, though this is something we shall consider further shortly.

It is commonly argued that expert power is commonly exercised through logical or rational persuasion. Here, a leader presents logical arguments and supporting evidence for a particular proposal, plan, or request. Having said this, all people are susceptible to their local rationalities which will to a degree cohere to the social norms that derive from the predominant paradigm. However, there will be some distinctions between the two that will likely be conditioned by ethical, ideological and other images. Success depends on the leader's credibility and persuasive communication skills in addition to technical knowledge and logical or analytical ability. Rational persuasion is

often seen to be most effective when the subordinate shares the leader's objectives. However, it is not only the objectives that must be shared. For communication to occur semantically a leader and subordinate need also to share a similar culture. Too often, leaders in a management culture have very little capacity to communicate semantically to other employee sector cultures. Historical battles between leaders and production staff unions are commonly attributable to this.

Green (1999) notes that effective leaders tend to rely more on personal power than on legitimate position or role power. However, position power is still important, and interacts with personal power to influence a leader's subordinates. There is limited success in using position power to influence peers or leaders, where personal power takes predominance. A leader with extensive reward and coercive power is tempted to rely on position power to a large extent, instead of using referent and expert power. This can lead to resentment and rebellion. However, a leader lacking sufficient position power to reward competent subordinates, make necessary changes, and punish chronic troublemakers will find it difficult to develop a high performing group.

#### *4.3 Power*

A common definition of power [16] is the ability to: do or act, and to: do so with vigour, or energy; influence or have authority; be under one's control; have personal or political ascendancy over another; have authorisation or delegated authority to do something; be an influential person, body or thing, or a constituted authority.

Power influences the normal processes of communication and the reaching of agreement and consensus. This is discussed at length in the work of Habermas' (1987) theory of communicative action, which supposes that communication occurs through a:

- semantic field of symbolic contents that assigns meaning to symbols used to provide self-approval for people's values and attitudes,
- social space defined as a group of actors engaged in purposeful communications, and
- historical time that provides (a cybernetic) ability to audit behaviours and, where appropriate, their originating decision processes.

Communicative action provides an expression for the semantics of social communications. However, it may become steered by power media. When this happens, communication in action can be simplified, and replaced with a symbolic generalisation of negative and positive sanctions. Power also replaces any sets of norms and values that exist within the worldview of the organisation. Debate about an uncertain situation calls for communicative interaction between the participants of a decision process. Thus, steering communicative action diminishes from the expenditures and risks of communication, and conditions decisions.



According to Holsti (1967), power is the general capacity of a social community to control the behaviour of others. Max Weber (Henderson and Parsons, 1947, p. 152) defined power as the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance. An alternative definition comes from Yolles (2001), where it is defined as the ability to marginalize others. We shall discuss this a little more later. Robbins (1983, p. 314-315) defined it as a capacity that A has to influence the behaviour of B, so that B does something that it would not otherwise do. This definition implies that there is a potential that need not be actualised, a dependence relationship, and that B has discretion over its own behaviour. According to Luthans (1973, p. 447), power is intertwined with the concepts of authority and influence, authority being represented as “legitimate power”. Authority legitimises and is a source for power, and is the right to manipulate or change others.

Influence and power are common polity controls. Power is used for the pursuit of individual or particular goals associated with group compliance. Luthans sees influence as the ability to alter others in general ways, like changing performance, satisfaction, or motivation. However, Lin (1973) defines it more concretely as the ability to make changes in patterns of behaviour or attitudes. It is within decision-making processes in particular that power can have an influence, and they occur as a result of the interaction between knowledge, information, and cognitive purpose or interest.

Power in a given situation can also provide a *capability*, to be used as an instrument of inducement. This can occur through the provision or withholding of information, or offering misinformation so as to engineer images in a desirable way. Information power can therefore condition decision processes. We refer to this as information power, which occurs when power is applied to the control of information. If in a social community one member has information power, then that member can attempt to mobilise certain capabilities that are evident in the situation that satisfy political motivations. It is the capability to mobilise that defines the successful wielding of influence, and it does this without any knowledge transmission process.

Unlike the notion of *capability*, all members in an organisation have a potentially equal power to influence. This can however, be conditioned by the relationships that exist between the participants in the situation. They may be *soft* relationships (that occur when people are seen as subjects) with concern over their individuality, emotions or feelings. However, they may also be *hard* relationships (that occur when people are seen as objects), when individuals are perceived in terms of say their formal or informal role position. It is tempting to argue that the objective/subjective perception of people is a function of whether an organisation is macroscopic or microscopic, because then we are able to claim that seeing people as objects is a function of bureaucratisation. This would seem likely to be the case, but we should note that political temperament



may also vary with context. This is a question that can only be responded to through empirical research that has not yet been done. While large organisations may develop a frame of reference in which objectify people, this does not need to happen given a particular context. It is the political temperament of an organisation that determines whether it is hard or soft, and the resultant when taken with its governance determines whether it is paternal or agonic. Conversely, small organisations that have little mediation may well be agonic thus having power holders who see people as objects. There is little difficulty envisaging that small groups can be agonic. For instance, given the right context the paedophile sees the child as an object, as does the bullying husband see the wife that he hits. The object/subject temperament is not a rational attribute of people; it is more a function of the ability of a power holder to see people in de/humanising terms (Shimizu, 1999; Vaknin, 2002).

Influence is not a direct power; rather it is the indirect or apparently effortless power to affect a person, thing, or course of events. Lin (1973) suggests that it is the ability to make changes in behavioural patterns or attitudes. According to Holsti (1967) influence may be intended when it becomes an act, when it can be as a means to an end. Following Habermas' (1987) conceptualisations of the lifeworld, the act may also be seen as a steering medium, and used primarily for achieving or defining goals, which may include prestige, territory, souls, raw material, security, or alliances. The ability to influence will also be connected to the relative worldviews of the different members. As such, influence will ultimately be the result of a knowledge transmission process.

The above considerations have been summarised in Table IV (Yolles, 1999b). The control through polity is applied in order to uphold certain beliefs about normative behaviour, and may be interpreted in a variety of ways. Examples refer to knowledge style of an organisation, for instance interpretation might be fundamental or pragmatic. In discussing information power, it will be appropriate to consider attributes of power given in that table.

#### *4.4 A critical view of power*

There is a preoccupation with the notion of leadership in Anglo-Saxon culture, more than in other cultures. For instance, in Switzerland the word leadership was hardly known (Galbraith, 1977). Strong leadership is popularly associated with politically based role power, and places the leader in ascendancy above others in the organisation who become subordinates, and therefore susceptible to any structural violence that is manifested. In companies that are product centred, this position of ascendancy is often reflected in the salary, and there have been ethical worries that the salary of a leader may be absolutely non-relatable to the wages of subordinates.

According to Ward (2002) there is a great value in the idea of leadership, but it should be separated from the exercise of power if coercion is not to become a

Ways to control through polity	Explanation
Influence	The ability to make changes in behavioural patterns or attitudes (Lin, 1973). Influence may be intended when it becomes an act, when it can be as a means to an end. The act may also be seen as a steering medium like money, and used primarily for achieving or defining goals, which may include prestige, territory, souls, raw material, security, or alliances (Holsti, 1967)
Capability to mobilise	A <i>capability</i> is any physical or mental object or quality that can be used as an instrument of inducement, to reward, threaten, or punish (Holsti, 1967). If an actor or condition A has power over another, say B, then A mobilises certain capabilities that apply to B. The capability to mobilise can also be thought of as the successful wielding of influence. However, <i>capability</i> is not the same as of <i>influencing</i> . Unlike influence, capability is an instrument that <i>induces</i> a behavioural change that would otherwise not occur
Process relationships	The act of influencing B involves a relationship between A and B. This may not involve communication, and indeed according to Habermas, power as a steering medium has the capability of replacing communication (Holsti, 1967)
Steering media	Habermas (1987) refers to power and money as the steering media in an organisation that replaces semantic communications. Power replaces any sets of norms and values the perspective of an organisation. It can simplify the active communicative process, replacing it with a symbolic generalisation of negative and positive sanctions. Thus, the transfer of action over to steering media appears both as a relief from the expenditures and risks of communication, and as a conditioning of decisions in expanded fields of contingency. Media like power can largely spare us the costs of dissensus (that is the inability to reach normative agreement). This is because they uncouple the coordination of action from consensus formation in language, and neutralises it against the alternatives achieved against failed agreement. The transfer of action coordination from ordinary language to steering media thus results in denuding the semantic communications process
Relative quantity	If A can get B to do something related to a given issue, but this situation cannot be reversed, then A has more power than B in relation to that issue. Power may therefore be seen in terms of relative quantity, meaningful only when compared to others that are participants in a given context (Holsti, 1967)
Ability to marginalize	Power is the ability in a defined context for an actor or condition to marginalise another in terms of an issue of consideration, or in terms of the elements of that issue (Yolles, 1999b)

**Table IV.**  
Typology of control  
through polity

predominant feature of an administration. The engineering of compliance or commitment through the use of power is broader than simply adopting coercive behaviour, however. From a critical perspective, all of the control power approaches used by leaders are intended to ensure the maintenance of

role position in an existing structure within the organisation, and in doing so to provide the illusion that the followers are participating in its processes.

The creation of commitment and compliance by subordinates through the steering media that disturb the lifeworld would seem to subvert the true political task of those within the social community, which is to “criticise the workings of the institutions which appear to be both neutral and independent; to criticise them in such a manner that the political violence[17] which has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked” (Foucault, 1974).

This Foucaultian notion is supported in 1999 by Alvesson and Deetz when they explore claims to authority, for instance when power and authority become concentrated in the hands of an elite that successfully mobilises their privileged access to materials and symbolic resources to secure controlled forms of coercion. They argue that Critical Theory seeks to highlight, nurture and promote the potential of human consciousness to reflect upon oppressive practices, and thus to extend autonomy and responsibility. Oppressive practices include the subjugation, diminution, or exclusion of certain groups of people because of their physical, mental or cultural attributes. Examples of this are embedded in leadership behaviours that result from racist or phallogocentric attitudes. This necessarily means that “there must be a capacity in human beings to make informed judgements that are not impeded and distorted by socially unnecessary dependencies associated with subordination to inequalities of wealth, power and knowledge”.

We have mentioned responsibility, which might more usually be defined as: an obligation for predeterminable courses of action to a power to which one is accountable. This definition would be appropriate, for instance, when thinking about empowerment as the distribution of responsibility while intensifying or maintaining the centralisation of power. However, as Alvesson and Deetz indicate, responsibility within a critical theory context relates to social emancipation. This suggests in another definition of responsibility: a developed awareness in ones social interconnectedness and, thus, ones realisation of ones collective responsibility to others. They further consider the nature of autonomy within critical theory. It is not simply relating to individual potential. It rather anticipates the possibility of developing a critical reflective social community that has an interest in emancipation. It is not only a critical perspective, but also a cybernetic one (Yolles, 1999a), that a critical appreciation of autonomy recognises interdependence. It is here where notions of politics and ethics meet.

## 5. Governmentality

Governmentality is the rationality of governance (Jackson and Carter, 1998) and Foucault (1982) builds a theory around it that explains how subordinate compliance is ensured by the membership of organisations. By compliance the

acquiescence of subordinate members of the organisation is meant such that they are morally obedient to the rules of governance in their behaviour. Underlying this is a commitment to moral autonomy and responsibility so that subordinates become docile, used, transformed and improved. Penalties against compliance become embedded in the structures of the organisation, and they are made paradigmatically explicit. The need for obedience is a manifestation of autocratic governance that has associated within implicit or explicit coercion that has been rationalised and justified as being for the good of the collective whole of the organisation. This results in the altruistic perception that becomes an obligation to the system of governance. However, the framework of governance maintains its own value system that supports its vested interest. There is now seen to be a tension between the perceived obligation to the system of governance, and perceived self-interests of the perceiver.

Governmentality controls deviance, with the expectation that the paradigm it sets out will be assigned to by all its subordinates. The structures that emerge will attempt to both facilitate and constrain particular types of behaviour that are perceived to be appropriate, and therefore legitimate, to the organisation. Where illegitimate behaviour significantly differs from normative or accepted standards of the organisation, it is considered to be deviant. The options available to deal with this include applying penalties or constraints, and ultimately exclusion. The nature of constraints on behaviour varies with context, determined by the nature of the organisation and its embedded paradigm. Following Yolles (2000a), this is conditioned by ambient emotionality, egocentricity and type of worldview (shown in Table V), associated with knowledge profile because all represent independent dimensions of conditioning behaviour. In corporate bodies, a penalty may simply be that the negation of a rule will mean that the subordinate will be unable to claim back an expense. In more extreme cases it may mean that the subordinate experiences organisational death through dismissal. In nation states constraints may include financial penalties (fines) or incarceration, while exclusion may take the form of execution. The landmark value provides a way to convert qualitative values to quantities (Yolles, 1999a).

### *5.1 Mediating hard temperaments*

Foucault has talked about the notion of pastoral power, which comes from the idea that individuals serve others in the capacity of pastor [18]. Pastors practice self-sacrifice to look after other individuals and the community as a whole with the aim of assisting spiritual salvation. Knowledge plays a part in this power process through a search for truth. Pastoral power has evolved into a modern form of that replaces salvation with security (Stillerman, 2001).

This has led to the development of “token pastors” who take on the formal role positions and responsibility of governance in organisations. Foucault’s

interest lies with mediated hard organisations, where intrinsic political temperaments objectify groups and individuals within it. He argues that the mediating process is *individualising*. This notion is connected to Foucault’s belief that organisations usually encourage the process of normalisation (Popen, 1997), and people resist this in favour of a governance of individualisation. In this Foucault advocates that normalisation involves struggles against the effects of power that are linked with knowledge, competence, and qualification. The struggles are against the privileges of knowledge, and an opposition against secrecy, deformation, and the mystifying representations imposed on people. The struggles involve the creation of new forms of subjectivity, which is what is meant by individualisation.

For Foucault groups within the organisation who have competing interests contest organisational identities to serve their own purposes. This results in struggles among groups to define the nature of the collective identity, leading to rival identities and thus different power relations. According to Foucault (Rabinow, 1984), this goes together with the need to develop knowledge about the “totalising procedures” of power. Identity is characterised as an essential, unitary, and unchanging concept (Dunlap, 2001), and totalising procedure occurs with the reduction of the complexities of a formative and negotiated process, thus distancing themselves from the understandings and misunderstandings that occurs through the creation of simple descriptions. In different terms, totalising procedures appear to be equivalent to Habermas’s (1987) technicising of the lifeworld. This occurs when communication is simplified through the use of steering media, and symbolic generalisation of negative and positive sanctions occur. Thus, the transfer from communicative action to steering media appears both as a relief from the expenditures and risks of communication, and as a conditioning of decisions in expanded fields of contingency.

As a consequence of these constructions, Foucault introduces the concept of bio-power that has two dimensions. One is a scientific approach to the human species. The other is that the human body is objectified as something that can be manipulated and controlled, and this results in the idea of a disciplinary

**Table V.**  
Qualitative landmark  
values

Possible landmark values and their associated terms					
Characteristics	0	0.25	0.50	0.75	1
Ego	Detached	–	Small	–	Attached/Large
Worldview	Self-actualising	Adaptable	–	Robust	Rigid
Emotion	Stoic	–	Reactive	–	Emotive
<i>Knowledge profile</i>					
Elaborators	Responsive	–	–	–	Insulated
Executors	Pragmatist	–	–	–	Fundamentalist
Identifiers	Ideational	–	Idealistic	–	Sensate

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technology that is used to control the “docile” body. It is through bio-power that the knowledge-power couple becomes an agent for the transformation of human life.

The political  
cybernetics of  
organisations

### *5.2 Emancipation through personal power*

In modern day human resource management the approach that is encouraged in organisations is to adopt a soft approach towards subordinates. The difficulty with this is that it requires intention and effort, because the discourse and communication that is central to this approach can be difficult and unpredictable. While this very unpredictability is something that the chaos paradigm (Stacey, 1993) would embrace, most leaders find the illusion of positivism comfortable and pursue it. Also, it is much less trouble to perceive subordinates as objects that need to be manipulated. However, it is from such a stand that the seeds of structural violence emerge that those who are aware of it struggle with.

Foucault proposed a personalised approach that would enable subordinates within a power structure to liberate themselves through their own actions. This radical and in some ways revolutionary approach to emancipation has been well considered by Rabinow (1984, p. 8). He enters Foucault’s position on emancipation by saying that subordinates (who are to themselves subjects) are objectified in the organisation by a process of division either within themselves or from others. These dividing practices are modes of manipulation. This notion is encapsulated by the old military adage “divide and conquer”.

A move to liberation occurs with a transformation from the objective to the subjective, through the use of “personal power”. This objective-subjective relationship leads us to reflect on Figure 1, in which, after Eysenk, we referred to political temperaments. He developed the notion of political temperament from his factor analysis study. Duverger conceptually developed this in a limited way, and we slightly extend it. Temperament is measured in terms of degree of hardness and softness, and this can be expressed in terms of objectivity and subjectivity. As such the application of Foucault’s construction opens up the possibility of not only transforming the subordinate’s relationship with the organisation and its instruments, but of transforming the organisation itself. Are we to argue then, that a transformation from object to subject of the subordinates results in the transformation of the organisation itself? It makes a nice rationality to think that: if all the members of an organisation are subjects, then the dominant paradigm that they communally adhere to will also favours subjectivism, which implies that the organisation responds to other organisations as though they are subjects.

This can happen, but one of the curiosities of human beings individually and through their organisations is their ability to maintain contradictions in their patterns of knowledge. They do this by creating a set of frames of reference, each at a distinct focus of phenomenal reality, each operating autonomously,

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1273



and each maintaining its own independent local pattern of knowledge. Hence individuals are able to shift focus without being aware or needing to take account of the inherent contradictions across their patterns of knowledge. Thus for example, the husband who abuses his wife in front of his children will likely not abuse the same woman who works as a colleague in his workplace since the context is different. Similarly, the corporate enterprise that bullies its workforce will not bully its competitor enterprises unless the context promotes it.

Foucault's (1982) conception of power concerns the dynamics of power relations in a social interaction. Power exists within a network of actions, and the exercise of that power involves a series of actions and reactions that can be analysed and carried out strategically through choice. As such power creates influence and order in a social network. The power relations are represented within the whole structure of actions that affect the potential occurrence of other possible actions, or that produce an ensemble of actions that induce others to undertake related actions. This notion of power through self-interest, it would seem, operates as a steering medium within the lifeworld, because games of strategy are partial to positioning ascendancy [19], and they condition the contrary processes of cooperation essential to the lifeworld and achievement of agreement.

Foucault was interested in situations concerning the exercise of power. For him power can only be exercised if those subjected to it are free and have a range of possible responses to it. It is this particular notion of freedom that enables the exercise of power to occur, noting that as soon as it is exercised it disappears. That is, the exercise of power immediately limits the options that are available to those subjected to it, and that enables the power to be recognised in the first place. As freedom disappears so resistance arises, leading to the notion that power relations create, maintain, and are maintained by resistance to them, which in turn fuels the power itself. This context shows that power is fundamental to the way in which people operate in social organisations where self-interest conditions lifeworld processes. Discourse [20] (with its embedded knowledge) is fundamental to it, and it shapes our view of the world and ourselves.

Foucault sees power in terms of the relationship between people seen as objects and subjects. He considers that power is a social phenomenon in which there is a tension that guides interactions that affect aspects of everyday life through a process of *individualization*, which we introduced earlier, *identification*, and *categorization* (see Table VI). Foucault's theory of relationships has three modes. The first is "dividing practices" in which a subject can be seen as a victim caught in the processes of objectification and constraint. Prisoners and slaves may be seen to come under this classification. The second is "scientific classification", which has to do with the scientific method of the world of objects that is historically characterized by discontinuous, abrupt changes in discourse.



Tensions against power    Nature of the tensions		The political cybernetics of organisations
Individualisation	Organisations normally promote normalisation of their social environment. People resist this in favour of a governance of individualisation. They represent struggles against the effects of power that are linked with knowledge, competence, and qualification. They are struggles against the privileges of knowledge, and an opposition against secrecy, deformation, and the mystifying representations imposed on people. They involve the creation of new forms of subjectivity	
Identification	Individuals take an active role in creating their identification through a process of self-formation that develops self-understanding (Rabinow, 1984). This is a process of subjectification in which people participate in their being recognised as a subject rather than an object	1275
Categorisation	Subjects are often objectified in social contexts. One way that this occurs is by <i>dividing practices</i> in which the subject is socially categorized and spatially or socially excluded. Rabinow (1984, p. 8) points to Foucault's model of the isolation of the physically and mentally ill as an example of this procedure. Racist practice is also an example	

**Table VI.**  
The nature of the  
tensions that work  
against power

The third new mode that Foucault proposed was “subjectification”, concerned with how people can make themselves into subjects. It occurs through *self-formation*, requiring a process of self-understanding mediated by an external authority figure (like a confessor or psychiatrist). Metaphors can be used to represent particular forms of objectification, as in the case of token prisoners or token slaves. Crofts (1998) briefly referred to such tokens when he talked of organisational slaves: those who believe and accept everything the organisation is trying to achieve. Emancipation from this condition for him appears to occur when the slaves achieve commitment to the work that the organisation has been established to pursue, and the operating principles and methods which it has decided to adopt leading to practical conclusions despite, pressures from those with other agendas. However, this notion of emancipation is not easily reconcilable with the Foucault notion of self-formation, since it is susceptible to power inducements, and does not require that conversion from object to subject will materialise. The very process of recognising that, and enabling people to exist as subjects (that is implicit in critical theory) is also fundamental to the formation of viable organisations.

## 6. Centripetal politics

Changes in the nature of political processes is just as indicative of organisational change as is the clear representation of changes in their paradigms. Whether political processes can be identified as intrinsic or extrinsic will be suggestive of the capacity of organisations to behave in one way or another.

This conceptualisation comes from the work of Ionescu (1975), who was interested in the industrial/technological revolution that society has been passing. It has brought about such close international relationships that all representative governments find their normal policies constantly being disrupted through international developments. This affects the nation state both internally and externally. Internally, governments are encouraged to seek “partnerships” or “contracts” with corporations to help address the disruption. In the past they have sought social relationships with labour unions, and they seek industrial and financial relationship with national and multinational enterprises. They also seek political-administrative partnership with the regions with constitutional devolution. Through this, a representative government develops a new relationship with corporations, recognising that its partners will condition any decisions that it takes. However, since the partnerships are plural, and each corporation will have interests that may be contradictory to that of the others, a government may emerge as umpire with its own interests.

Externally, and at a higher focus of examination, governments also seek partnership with each other in order to gather sufficient strength through the sharing of power and responsibility, to deal with the pressure of disrupting international developments. This supra-national community recognises that their partners, who can now be seen to operate in a web partnership, condition the decisions that they take. The socio-economic and the supra-national partnerships are interdependent. The modern industrial/technological society is characterised by socio-economic emancipation of the corporations. This increase in social intensity may be connected with what Lennin (1893) referred to as a *deepening of capitalism*. It is seemingly consistent with the notion of turbo-capitalism, that Held *et al.* (1999) indicates occurs when global finance and corporate capital (rather than nation states) exercise decisive influence over the, location, distribution and organisation of economic power and wealth. Held *et al.* is in particular concerned with the nature of globalisation, characterised by four types of change:

- a *stretching* of social, political and economic activities across frontiers, regions and continents;
- an *intensification*, or the growing magnitude, of interconnectedness and flows of trade, investment, finance, migration, culture, etc.;
- a *speeding up* of global interactions and processes, as the development of world-wide systems of transport and communication increases the *velocity* of the diffusion of ideas, goods, information, capital and people;
- a growing *extensity*, *intensity* and *velocity* of global interactions can be associated with their deepening *impact* such that the effects of distant events can be highly significant elsewhere and specific local developments can come to have considerable global consequences; in

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this sense, the boundaries between domestic matters and global affairs become increasingly fluid.

The political  
cybernetics of  
organisations

1277

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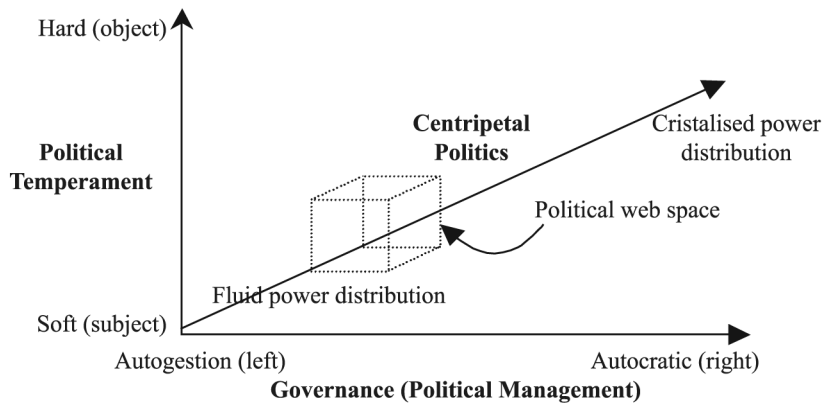
As such, globalisation can be thought of as the widening, intensifying, speeding up, and growing impact of world wide interconnectedness. Ultimately, it can be thought of as the complexification of a web partnership, which Ionescu (1975) refers to as occurring in a centrifugal society. The term centrifugal means tending towards the centre, while centripetal is the opposite, tending outwards from the centre. For Ionescu centrifugal society is seen to occur with socio-economic corporate emancipation, and it is accompanied by a social intensification and political mediation. His idea of a centrifugal process is a move towards the centre, hence intensification and complexification. Societies may be centripetal, but their political processes are centrifugal, enabling corporations to accumulate power and make decisions that are unrepresentative of government.

The significance to organisations of a centrifugal social with its associated centripetal politics depends very much on the context and focus that is being undertaken. While the context might be that of the nation state, it can also occur where the web partnership is a joint venture with a corporation commissioning other companies to outsource its products. It is clear then, that the lead commissioning corporation loses power in the very process of commissioning, and may have to assume the role of an umpire. Where the web partnership is an organisation and the actors within it are people, the very fact that it employs them also indicates centripetal politics. However, this distributed power is conditioned and mostly overwhelmed by the political ideology (that drives governance) and political temperament (that drives objectification) adopted by organisations.

In Figure 1, the idea that governance could be related to political temperament was introduced. However, we are now in a position to propose an extension of this into three dimensions, the third being centripetal politics. It presupposes that the three dimensions are independent, and can be related to each other meaningfully. Thus for example, an actor can be autocratic, objectify those associated with it (intrinsically or extrinsically), and power will be crystallised within the autocratic role positions. A Stalin type characterisation of an actor with a political iron fist and absolute control is typical of this. An alternative for an actor can be autocratic, objectify those associated with it (intrinsically or extrinsically), and power will be fluidly distributed. In this case the autocrat will act as a gatekeeper, encouraging competitive enterprise.

We refer to Figure 2 as a political web space, intended to represent the texture and flavour of a web partnership of actors involved in political management through the use of power. It is therefore a descriptor of the political condition of the organisation. This construction has the potential of seeing organisations in a new way and consequently developing a way of

**Figure 2.**  
Political web space



looking at the use of power and politics in web partnerships, with more or less social complexity.

The political web space also has the potential of exploring the way that power is used cybernetically within the organisation. Since part of this is information power, the space may also be indicative of the way that information is likely to be used and represented in the web partnership. Evaluation of how this may occur through qualitative measurement approaches has not yet been considered.

## 7. Summary

VST is a critical systems theory that operates from a managerial cybernetics base. It proposes that autonomous organisations can be explored in terms of three domains, each of which have cognitive properties. Some of these clearly represent cybernetic attributes, but political attributes are central to their implementation.

Autonomous organisations can be seen in terms of coherent web partnerships, that can be classified according to whether or not their relationships are mediated or not. Coherence develops through a process of polity that enables the organisation to order itself. The interactive process of polity is called politics, and politics normally accomplishes this through the distribution of power.

Power may be deployed in a number of ways, depending upon the governance of the organisation. Intrinsic and extrinsic organisational relationships would also seem to be conditioned by the political temperament of the organisation. Governance is manifested through leaders and their *modus operandi*, which use power to control others.

The development of organisations involves the distribution of power through a centripetal process. However, as this occurs, other mechanisms develop such that this is overwhelmed by oppressive practices (in the sense of

Habermas). These are often embedded within the political temperament of objectification (in the sense of Foucault), and subordinates who experience this can become emancipated through a process of subjectification. Effectively, this is equivalent to liberating oneself from the structural violence that the organisation has instituted (often unconsciously) in order to counter the centripetal distribution of power.

Organisations have distinct forms of political management, pursued with a certain style (political temperament) and through their ideology distribute power (centripetal politics) in a way that is consistent with that political management style and with the state of intensity or complexity of the web. This creates a political web space that is indicative of the political state of the organisation. This space has the potential, if it can be evaluated, to explain the behaviour of organisations, and indicate what might be expected from them in the future.

## Notes

1. After Husserl (1950), where “physical reality” is seen in terms of conscious experience.
2. By mediated we mean to effect or convey as an intermediate agent or mechanism.
3. When we talk of emergent formalisations, we mean in the sense of Cohen and Stewart (1994, see chapter 2).
4. By transitory media we mean the media that enable communications to be transmitted, which may be anything from a letter to a representative like an intermediate manager.
5. Automorphosis is phenomenological self-organisation, experienced as changes in organisational form or structure.
6. According to the Webster on-line English dictionary, 1996 ed.
7. Governance is the exercise of authority; control; government; arrangement (Webster online dictionary, 1996 ed.).
8. The relationship between power and rationality is discussed at some length by Clegg (1975).
9. According to the Fast Times online political dictionary, <http://www.fast-times.com/political/political.html>
10. Gestion is a latin root currently used in Spanish for the word management.
11. Objectification in this sense means when an object of attention is externalised by disassociation from the personal, assigned it the status of an object – as opposed to that of a subject where the object is associated with the personal.
12. Agonic means aggressive, individually territorial, and hierarchical, according to Chance (1988), who was interested in innate human characteristics, and we use it here to imply an autogestionic and objectifying organisation.
13. Lifeworld (Habermas, 1987; Schutz and Luckman, 1974) is the cultural linguistically organised stock of interpretative patterns in a space of semantic communications intended to deal with a teleological social environment entailing action situations that are to be managed. It appears as a reservoir of taken-for-granted, or unspoken convictions that participants in communication draw upon in their cooperative processes of interpretation.
14. In the UK Ludovik Kennedy has been a campaigner against police bullying and injustice. For instance, the Timothy Evans case can be found at <http://www.innocent.org.uk/cases/timothyevans/timothyevans.pdf>

15. By legitimate behaviour (including requests), we mean that behaviour that occurs in accordance with established or accepted norms, patterns and standards that reflect current interpretation of the constitution.
16. Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 1957.
17. Violence is a common means used by people and governments around the world to achieve political goals. Many groups and individuals believe that their political systems will never respond to their political demands. As a result, they believe that violence is not only justified, but also necessary in order to achieve their political objectives. By the same token, many governments around the world believe that they need to use violence in order to intimidate their populace into acquiescence. At other times, governments use force in order to defend their country from outside invasion or other threats of force. It can be used by citizens, groups, or governments in different contexts (source: <http://polisci.nelson.com/violence.html>)
18. A shepherd or one who has spiritual charge over a person or group.
19. The notion of positioning ascendancy is consistent with the creation of winners and losers.
20. We should realise that discourse is composed of symbols which have conceptual configuration that defines knowledge.

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