

Power Dynamics and Organisational Change: An Introduction

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Cet article propose un cadre conceptuel pour appréhender les dynamiques de pouvoir lors de changements organisationnels. Weick et Quinn (1999) établissent une distinction entre le changement épisodique, discontinu et intermittent, et le changement continu, évolutif et progressif. Après avoir discuté cette distinction, nous analysons comment les processus de l'influence et du pouvoir social peuvent constituer la base du changement continu. Les bases du pouvoir des agents du changement sont ensuite décrites. Puis nous portons notre attention sur les relations de pouvoir dynamiques entre les agents du changement et les cibles, ainsi que sur les processus sociaux qui facilitent le changement continu. L'article se termine par un survol des contributions à cette édition spéciale.

This article offers a framework for understanding power dynamics in organisational change. Weick and Quinn (1999) make a distinction between change that is episodic, discontinuous, and intermittent, and change that is continuous, evolving, and incremental. After discussing this distinction, we analyse how processes of social power and influence can form the basis for continuous change. Subsequently, the power bases of change agents are described. Then we pay attention to the dynamic power relationships between change agents and targets as well as to the social processes that facilitate continuous change. The article ends with an overview of the contributions to this special issue.

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There are many people whose assistance has been invaluable in the course of compiling this special issue. As Guest Editors we would particularly like to extend our gratitude to Miriam Erez for her support, and to the following reviewers who provided the authors with constructive and useful comments: Gerhard Blickle, Jaap Boonstra, René Bouwen, Patricia Bradshaw, Hans Doorewaard, Ben Emans, Martin Euwema, John Hurley, Birgit Iken-Brouns, José L. Meliá, Francisco Morales, José M. Peiró, François Pichault, José M. Prieto, Herman Steensma, Gillian Symon, Evert Van de Vliert, René van der Vlist, Bernhard Wilpert and Gary Yukl.

INTRODUCTION

Analyses of the role played by power in organisational change are increasing in force, scale, and impact. The complexity and diversity of power sources has become a widely studied phenomenon in the area of organisational development and change (Buchanan & Badham, 1999; Klein, 1998). Boonstra and Bennebroek Gravenhorst (1998) discuss how different perspectives on power are related to change strategies, the role of change agents, and influence behavior. Contributions to the special issue on power dynamics and change that they edited (Boonstra & Bennebroek Gravenhorst, 1998) are concerned with power processes, decision making, influence tactics, resistance to change, management of change, and the effects of change processes in organisations. Following this endeavor, the main focus of this special issue is on how processes of social power and influence can form the basis for organisational change. We focus on continuous change in organisations and identify the social processes that could facilitate this kind of change. We start with discussing two distinctive kinds of organisational change processes. Then we investigate the role of power dynamics in continuous change. The introduction ends with an overview of the contributions to this special issue.

EPISODIC AND CONTINUOUS ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

A recent review of organisational change by Weick and Quinn (1999) presents a detailed comparison of two different models of organisational change. They distinguish between change that is (1) episodic, discontinuous, and intermittent, and (2) change that is continuous, evolving, and incremental. The authors suggest that most of the analyses of organisational change written since the review by Porras and Silvers (1991) can be included within one of these contrasting forms of organisational change. The basic element that clustered the literature into these opposing forms is the tempo of change, understood as the “characteristic rate, rhythm, or pattern of work or activity” (Random House, 1987, p. 1954, quoted by Weick & Quinn, 1999). Tempo distinguishes the kind of innovation pursued and its implementation process. Different types of innovation are characterised by their radicalism in terms of the level of risk and novelty of the innovation (King & Anderson, 1995). Thus, radical innovation is distinguished from incremental innovation by a greater level of uncertainty and complexity during its implementation (Gopala-Krishnan & Damanpour, 1994). Following this perspective, Tushman and Romanelli (1985) suggest that radical innovations occur during periods of discontinuous change, in contrast to incremental innovations, which occur in adaptable periods.

To further explore the contrast between episodic and continuous change, Weick and Quinn (1999) drew on the properties suggested by Dunphy

(1996) that are generally found in any comprehensive theory of change. Three of these properties are especially relevant in reference to our analysis of the role that power dynamics plays in organisational change. The first refers to the basic metaphor of the nature of organisation, the second to the analytical framework to understand the organisational change process, and the third one to the role played by the change agent.

First, the metaphor of organisation implied by the conceptualisation of episodic change is of organisations that are inertial and where change is infrequent, discontinuous, and intentional. The underlying presumption is that episodic change attempts to reach a new equilibrium condition that resolves the grown misalignment between an inertial deep structure and environmental demands. In contrast, the basic metaphor of continuous change is that of organisations as emergent and self-organising, where change is constant, evolving, and cumulative. "The distinctive quality of continuous change is the idea that small continuous adjustments, created simultaneously across units, can cumulate and create substantial change" (Weick & Quinn, 1999, p. 375).

The second property that differentiates episodic from continuous change refers to the analytic framework considered. Episodic change tends to be dramatic and intentional. It is associated with a radical innovation that has an enormous impact on organisations and affects every area and job within a relatively short time-span (Carrero, Peiró, & Salanova, 2000). Because it requires both breaking the current equilibrium and moving to a newly created equilibrium, it is most closely associated to a planned intentional change promoted by the change agent. The continuous change intervention is characterised by the "logic of attraction" that induces constant adjustments and improvements. "People change to a new position because they are attracted to it, drawn to it, inspired by it" (Weick & Quinn, 1999, p. 380).

The third property that contrasts episodic change with continuous change refers to the role played by the change agent. As Cheng and Van de Ven (1996) point out, innovation and change have to be understood from the point of view of the actors involved. From this perspective, the role played by managers who act as internal change agents affects the coworkers' behavior and is directly related to the kind of change that is taking place (Buchanan & Badham, 1999). In episodic change the manager's role is that of the prime mover who creates change, while in the continuous change model this role is characterised as a sense-maker who redirects change (Weick & Quinn, 1999). That is the difference implicit in Kotter's (1996) question: "Is change something one manages or something one leads?" Weick and Quinn (1999) state that to manage change is to tell people what to do (a logic of replacement) but to lead change is to show people how to be (a logic of attraction).

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Differences between the kind of role played by the change agent in episodic and continuous change models reflect the two basic leadership styles, labeled transactional (replacement) and transformational (attraction) leadership, which were identified by Bass (Bass, 1995; Hater & Bass, 1988). Direct support for such differences and their effects on target compliance with change is reported in this issue by Emans, Munduate, Klaver, and Van de Vliert. Transformational leadership has, first of all, an impact upon coworkers' value systems and ambition levels. Its ultimate effect is that coworkers are going to appreciate projects and options that they would not appreciate unreservedly on their own. It transforms value systems of coworkers in such a way that they start pursuing new ideals. Thus, the role played by the transformational change agent or leader is to attempt to bring about coworkers' acceptance of change by inciting positive feelings with regard to desired behaviors. Change, then, comes about through an induced re-evaluation of behavioral options by coworkers. In contrast to transformational leadership, transactional leadership does not intervene in the coworkers' value systems. Leaving these systems untouched, it tries to perceptually or materially model the contents of influence attempts in such a way that those contents come to fit the existing values of the coworkers. It does so by clarifying or guaranteeing the profitability of requested efforts. Thus, the role played by the transactional change agent or leader is to attempt to bring about coworkers' attitudinal compliance with change by showing them that change is for their own good, or by deliberately modifying communicated requests in such a way that change evidently serves their self-interest (Emans, Klaver, Munduate, & Van de Vliert, 1999).

Table 1 summarises the distinction between episodic and continuous change. In clarifying this distinction, we focus on tempo, metaphor, analytical framework, and role of the change agent.

TABLE 1
Episodic and Continuous Change

	<i>Episodic</i>	<i>Continuous</i>
Tempo	Short time-span development of radical change	Sequence of events in the development of incremental change
Metaphor	Reach new equilibrium	Constant adjustment and growth
Analytical framework	Change is intentional and has dramatic impact	People are attracted to new situations that gradually evolve
Change agent	Transactional leadership (Replacement)	Transformational leadership (Attraction)

POWER DYNAMICS IN CONTINUOUS CHANGE

Many organisations are involved in continuous change processes. In fact, the challenge for modern organisations is to continuously adapt to their constantly changing environments. As we have seen before, change agents who exercise the logic of attraction play a crucial role in this process. They promote a transformational dynamic that gradually attracts people to this process of adaptation and permanent adjustment. Thus viewed, change processes start as a result of actions that actors enact over time at micro or individual level. This ongoing adjustment—usually small but frequent—is considered as the essence of the continuous change model (Orlikowski, 1996). When these adjustments are sufficiently widespread, they often generate platforms for transformational change. As Weick and Quinn (1999) pointed out: “The challenge is to gain acceptance of continuous change throughout the organization so that . . . isolated innovations will travel and be seen as relevant to a wider range of purposes at hand” (p. 381).

In this introduction we focus on understanding power dynamics in continuous change. As Peiró and Meliá state later in this special issue, although power cannot be understood as the unique source of the social forces that change organisations (Dorriots & Johansson, 1999), the dynamics of power relationships promoted by the change agent and their effects on organisational change have been frequently underlined (Scholl, 1999). In order to analyse power dynamics, we first distinguish between the conceptualisation of social power and influence tactics in change processes. Later, we consider different responses that the change agent may obtain from the target and analyse which responses provide an appropriate platform for continuous change. Then we consider the interpersonal influence framework provided by Raven (1992, 1999a, 1999b) that allows us to identify the bases of social power that are used by change agents and the responses they elicit in the targets. The “metamorphic effects of power” analysed by Kipnis (1976) and Rind and Kipnis (1999) provide us with insight into how change agents may also change themselves as a result of using power strategies that evoke change in other people’s attitudes and behaviors. Metamorphic effects refer to the newly created power relationships between organisational members.

In trying to understand how change is achieved, social psychologists have used the concepts of *social power* and *influence tactics*. The two terms have sometimes been used interchangeably. However, as has been suggested in the literature (Hinkin & Schriesheim, 1990; Stahelski & Paynton, 1995) a clear distinction needs to be made. *Social power* reflects the repertoire available to an individual whereas *influence tactics* refer to the actual usage of a certain behavior in a specific situation (Schwarzwald & Koslowsky, 1999). The definition of both conceptions by French and Raven (1959) helps to understand differences between them. Following Lewin’s initial

conceptualisation (1941), French and Raven (1959) defined influence as a force one person (the agent) exerts on someone else (the target) to induce a change in the target, including changes in behaviors, opinions, attitudes, goals, needs, and values. Social power was subsequently defined as the potential ability of an agent to influence a target. Thus, influence is “kinetic power, just as power is potential influence” (French & Raven, 1959, p. 152).

In studies into the response to influence attempts by the agent, there is a clear difference between, on the one hand, yielding to direct or indirect social pressure from a group or an individual, and on the other, being genuinely persuaded (Hogg & Vaughan, 1995). Therefore social psychologists distinguish between *public compliance*, *private acceptance or identification*, and *internalisation* (Kelman, 1956, 1961). *Public compliance* refers to a surface change in behavior-expressed attitudes, often as a consequence of coercion. Since compliance does not reflect internal change, it usually persists only while behavior is under surveillance. In contrast to compliance, *private acceptance* is not based on power but rather on the subjective validity of social norms “that is, a feeling of confidence and certainty that the beliefs and actions described by the norm are correct, appropriate, valid and socially desirable. Under these circumstances the norm becomes an internalized standard for behavior” (Hogg & Vaughan, 1995, p. 183). Thus *internalisation* means a subjective acceptance and conversion (Moscovici, 1976) that produces true internal change that persists in the absence of surveillance.

French and Raven (1959) and Raven (1965) proposed six bases of power: reward, coercion, legitimacy, expertise, reference, and information. An influencing agent possesses these resources and can use them to change the beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors of a target. *Reward* and *coercive power* rely on others believing the agent can provide them with the desired rewards or can punish them, respectively. Using either of these bases will induce only a superficial change in the target. In other words, none of the target’s privately held beliefs, attitudes, or values are changed. Only public compliance is obtained, the continuation of which depends on successful surveillance of the target by the agent. An individual possesses *legitimate power* when others believe that he or she has a legitimate right to exert influence over them, and they are obliged to accept this influence. It leads to private acceptance that comes from within the target and as such it initially is socially dependent on the influencing agent, but it does not require surveillance by the agent in order to be successful. *Referent power* refers to target identification with the agent. It again leads to private acceptance by the target by enabling him or her to maintain a satisfactory relationship with the agent and see himself or herself as similar to the agent on certain relevant dimensions. *Expert power* depends on individuals’ perception of having expertise or knowledge, in a specific domain. If a target perceives an agent as an expert, this will

result in private acceptance on the part of the target. Finally, *informational power* leads to internalised and lasting changes in the target's beliefs, attitudes, or values. Compared to other bases of social power, the changed behavior resulting from information is maintained without continued social dependence on the influencing agent, and is instead based on the perceived relevance and validity of the information. Only informational power leads to cognitive change in the target, as it immediately becomes independent of the influencing agent (Bruins, 1999; Raven, 1999a).

Raven (1999b) suggested that an example of an elaborated model that essentially emphasises informational power would be Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980) widely utilised model: the behavior (e.g. smoking) is changed by an informational campaign in which the undesirable behavior is associated with negative outcomes (cancer, increased costs, inconvenience) or a desirable behavior is associated with positive outcomes. Informational power is subsequently considered as having definitive advantages over other bases of power, since it is grounded in cognitive changes in the target, so that, when compared to coercive power, surveillance is not important and in contrast to other bases of power, the changed behavior or cognition is no longer dependent upon association with the influencing agent. Raven (1999b) stated that although some have questioned the need to distinguish between expert and informational power, Petty and Cacioppo (1985) have demonstrated the need for this distinction in their elaboration likelihood model—where they distinguish between peripheral and central techniques of influence. They found that expert power might be sufficient to change a person's beliefs, attitudes, and behavior, if the consequences of such a change have no great effect on the target. But informational power becomes more necessary if the consequences of the change have important practical implications.

Recently, Raven (1992, 1999a) extended and reworked the original bases of power into a Power Interaction Model of Interpersonal Influence. As Bruins (1999) pointed out, the model's main advance from the original classification of power bases is that it offers a *dynamic view of power and influence processes*. In essence, the model describes the agent as a rational decision maker who weighs various costs and benefits of the power bases available to him or her before invoking one of them to influence the target. Also, on the part of the target, various effects other than public compliance or private acceptance can occur as a result of an influence attempt. Some side effects refer to changes in the influence agent as a result of persuasive influence in others. "We cannot expect to change other people without also causing changes in ourselves. There is no free lunch when it comes to the use of power" (Rind & Kipnis, 1999, p. 154).

These changes in the target's perceptions of self and of the agent, and changes in the power relationship are labeled the metamorphic effects of

power (Kipnis, 1976). In one study Rind and Kipnis (1999) found that the successful use of influence transforms the influencing agent's view of self and others as a result of causing behaviors in others. These metamorphic effects involve two sets of variables (Rind & Kipnis, 1999). On the one hand, the strength of the influence tactics used to change the person being influenced and, on the other, the subsequent attributions (Weiner, 1980) of the influencing agent. These attributions have to do with who controls the target person's behavior: the target person or external forces including the influence agent. Considering both sets of variables, the model proposes that the stronger the means of influence used by the agent, the more the agent will tend toward making an internal attribution for the target's compliance, which in turn leads to a more negative evaluation of the target and a tendency to increase the social distance toward the target (Bruins, 1999). In conclusion, under the name of "metamorphic effects" of power, some changes occur in the leader's perception of self and of the followers, which affect the power relationship between them.

Weick and Quinn (1999) also suggest that power use affects both targets *and* change agents. They state that: "When deep personal change occurs, leaders then behave differently toward their direct reports, and the new behaviors in the leader attract new behaviors from followers. When leaders model personal change, organizational change is more likely to take place" (p. 380). By means of these self-empowerment processes that the leader can promote, the relationships between leader and followers embrace a dynamic perspective that often results in a collective endeavor to enhance other changes. The social psychological studies previously discussed show how processes of social power and influence can form the basis for organisational change. These studies highlight the kind of social practices and power dynamics that need to be inherent in people to pave the way for evolving, pervasive, and cumulative organisational change that characterises continuous change.

The fact that changes start at a micro or individual level does not mean that they are small or trivial: "When such individual-level problems become sufficiently widespread they often result in a collective endeavor to change the situation" (Bruins, 1999, p. 8). Weick and Quinn's (1999) observation also represents this view: "Micro-level changes also provide the platform for transformational change and the means to institutionalize it. . . . The success (of continuous change) may actually lie in its connection with the past and its retrospective rewriting of what earlier micro-changes meant" (pp. 378–9).

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE

While drawing on very different frameworks, assumptions and research methods to analyse power dynamics and its influence on organisational

change, the authors in the present issue organised their work with the same set of questions in mind: What kind of power is used to effect changes? What are the most prominent change strategies and influence tactics? What is the role of the agents involved in the change process? What makes change difficult and what facilitates change? Taken as a whole, these articles re-emphasise the importance of tackling power dynamics and influence processes in order for transformational change to be enabled.

The articles in this special issue are organised around two main themes. The first four contributions deal with ways of analysing power and influence processes. The research described in these contributions is well known, it extends and builds on previous studies, and thus shows advances, new ideas in the field, and new research questions that are being raised as a result of previous findings. The next four contributions deal with power and change in practice, and their reports are about actual change in organisations.

Rich case material and data from a fairly large survey provide many examples of what happens during change processes and how power plays an important role in these processes. As mentioned, the authors use different frameworks and research methods to conduct their studies and interpret their findings. Most of them lie on quantitative research based on positivist beliefs about the conduct of change, while other articles draw attention to the insights that qualitative methods, informed by alternative research beliefs, can provide to the topic of power and organisational change. As some authors have recently pointed out (Hartley & Benington, 2000; Symon, Cassell, & Dickson, 2000) there is a need in our journals, training programs, and organisational interventions to expand our research and practice through innovative research methods. Together, these articles with different beliefs and alternative research methods are adding a valuable dimension to the special issue.

José M. Peiró and José L. Meliá's "Formal and Informal Interpersonal Power in Organisations" describes the structure and properties of power bases in organisational settings. Drawing on French and Raven's (1959) sources of power model they develop a Bifactorial Theory of Power. Sampling 155 employees who reported their power and conflict relationships with their 1,093 role-set members, the authors analyse the bidirectional agent-target power relationships in these role-sets. Their results are discussed in terms of Raven's (1992) Power/Interaction model and its implications for the empowerment approach to power relationships are considered.

"Constructive Consequences of Leaders' Forcing Influence Styles", by Ben Emans, Lourdes Munduate, Esther Klaver, and Evert Van de Vliert, also reports on power use by leaders (forcing/non-forcing) and its effects on the target behavioral compliance. Based on Van de Vliert's (1997) conglomerate conflict behavior theory, they analyse the constructive consequences that may arise if the leader combines forcing influence styles with non-forcing

styles. As compared with the commonly ineffective consequences of using forcing influence styles found in the literature, they state that forcing, if combined with non-forcing, may nonetheless be quite effective, while both styles interact in such a way that forcing tends to strengthen the compliance brought about by non-forcing. By means of moderated regression analyses the interactive effects of these two types of leader influence styles upon coworker compliance are tested. In accordance with the interaction hypothesis, the use of forcing styles appeared to enhance the positive effect of non-forcing styles on coworker behavioral compliance.

Barbara van Knippenberg and Herman Steensma's "Future Interaction Expectation and the Use of Soft and Hard Influence Tactics" experimentally tests the extent to which the expectation of a future interaction between the leader and the target affects the use of hard and soft influence tactics by the leader. They found that the anticipation of future interaction reduces the influence employed and especially reduces the use of hard influence tactics. The authors state that presumably, employing coercive and controlling influence tactics is more attractive in a single interaction situation than in a multiple interaction situation. Results are discussed in terms of the effects of recruitment policy—tenure personnel vs. flexible workforce—on the use of influencing tactics.

Gary Yukl, Ping Ping Fu and Robert McDonald's "Cross-cultural Differences in Perceived Effectiveness of Influence Tactics for Initiating or Resisting Change" analyses the way tactics are used to influence change in organisations. They report cross-cultural differences in the perceived effectiveness of various influence tactics for gaining approval from a boss for a proposed change, or for resisting a change initiated by a boss. Two different scenario studies with participants from the United States and from China and other eastern nations are developed. Results show that in general, the western managers have a higher evaluation of direct, task-oriented tactics, whereas the Chinese managers have a higher evaluation of tactics involving personal relations, an informal approach, and avoidance of confrontation.

"The Change Capacity of Organisations: General Assessment and Five Configurations", by Kilian Bennebroek Gravenhorst, Renate Werkman, and Jaap Boonstra reports a study of factors that contribute to or hinder far-reaching change in organisations. The authors first explain that the change capacity of an organisation depends on characteristics of that organisation and on the design and management of the change process. They conducted a survey of mainly episodic change processes in various organisations. The results are submitted to a cluster analysis, which revealed five distinct patterns in the change capacity of organisations. These patterns are interpreted as configurations representing well-known situations in changing organisations.

Hans Doorewaard and Birgit Brouns' "Hegemonic Power Processes in Team-based Work" is a detailed analysis of hidden power processes in a work setting. Their contribution starts with a description of hegemonic power in organisations. They subsequently explain the methodological consequences of studying implicit power processes. Then, an ethnographic study is presented which describes how a nursing team deals with understaffing. Finally, the case is reconstructed to show how hegemonic power processes influenced the decision making of the team and the way it dealt with an organisational dilemma.

"HRM Practices in a Process of Organisational Change: A Contextualist Perspective" by François Pichault and Frédéric Schoenaers explores how HRM practices and contextual factors interact during organisational change. Their study starts with a typology of HRM models, which are then related to Mintzberg's organisational configurations. They subsequently present a contingent approach to change that is combined with a political perspective. Their analytical framework is used to understand a change process in a dairy firm. The contextualist framework offers insight in the power plays of different parties that take place in the presented case.

"Participation and Power: A Critical Assessment", by Frank Heller, examines the boundary between myth and reality in the area of power decentralisation. Through a review of the relevant literature on participation and power-sharing, Heller argues that very little progress has been made in implementing true participation systems. He goes on to discuss three issues that may explain such a situation—vague definitions of participation, weak theory, and lack of systems approach. Some contextual factors like the law or a competent labor force in the organisations are considered as conditions that could influence the prevalence of participation in organisations and societies.

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