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# From ideas of power to the powering of ideas in organizations: Reflections from Follett and Foucault

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## Reflections from Follett and Foucault

**Abstract**

Research on organizational creativity tends to emphasize fairly static notions of coercive power as positional authority and control over scarce resources. The field remains largely silent about power as a positive and generative phenomenon that can *produce* creativity. We seek to break that silence by amplifying and integrating the work of Mary Parker Follett and Michel Foucault in concert with recent practice-based approaches to creativity. Power in organizational creativity, we suggest, should first of all be explored as processes of connection, abundance and collective agency. We show that whereas established ideas of positional *power over* is related to assumptions of linearity and singularity of creativity, ideas of *power with* and *power to* are associated with a more dynamic, relational and process-based perspective. The latter set of views implies more attention be paid to processes of interactional framing through which people jointly attend to situations, reach new integrations and produce new social realities.

Key words: organizational creativity, ideas, power, framing, pragmatism

We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production'

Michel Foucault (1975/1991, p. 194)


What is the central problem of social relations? It is the question of power; this is the problem of industry, of politics, of international affairs. But our task is not to learn where to place power; it is how to develop power. (…) Genuine power can only be grown, it will slip from every arbitrary hand that grasps it; for genuine power is not coercive control but coactive control. Coercive power is the curse of the universe; coactive power, the enrichment and advancement of every human soul.

Mary Parker Follett (1924/1951, p. xii-xiii)

## 1. Introduction

Work on ideas in organizations is inherently complex, intersubjective, often simultaneously competitive and collaborative. Ideas emerge from conversations within and across extant practices and dialogues with others. Generative ideas are never fully formed but always in the process of becoming (Carlsen, Arnulf, & Weitao, 2017); embryonic in their generation, they can be stripped down and simplified to their core through negotiations and disputations or worked up to a richness rarely imagined when the glimmer of an idea first emerged (Kelley & Kelley, 2013). The more that different ideas conflict or point in alternative directions, the more controversial work on and with them will be and the harder they might be to translate and align (Callon, 2008; van Werven, Bouwmeester, & Cornelissen, 2019). This is the case, whether we think of the focusing of organizational attention in order to achieve some desired premises as a prelude to the generation of ideas (Martine, Cooren, & Bartels, 2017); the selection and pursuit of some ideas over others as they emerge (Harrison & Rouse, 2015); the tensions between new ideas and existing practices and routines (Välikangas & Gibbert, 2015), or

the contestation for future prioritization of resources committed to the maturation and realization of ideas-in-the-making (Coldevin, Carlsen, Clegg, Pitsis, & Antonacopoulou, 2019). Yet, the generative use of conflicts and the productive use of power in creativity is largely uncharted in organization studies. How can we understand the positive use of power as a productive force in organizational creativity?

Power is largely missing from overviews of research on creativity in organizations (Anderson, Potočnik, & Zhou, 2014; George, 2007; Kaufman & Sternberg, 2010; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999; Zhou & Shalley, 2008, 2011). When power does get invoked in studies of creativity, it is cast in fairly negative terms, as static notions that stress the *possession* of *positional* power (Cattani & Ferriani, 2008; Hu, Erdogan, Jiang, Bauer, & Liu, 2018; Yuan & Zhou, 2015) that either represses creativity or excludes it through lack of resources. Indeed, Theodore Levitt's (2002) classic piece in *Harvard Business Review* portrayed creative people as necessary but dangerous and able to destroy an organization because they are unwilling, if not totally incapable, of conformity. Power, then, either works to thwart creativity or to control it, rarely being discussed as a way to enable and harness creativity positively. That is, power as a dynamic and positive phenomenon that is *generative* in relation and can *produce* organizational creativity, as the quotes from Follett and Foucault attest, is more or less absent. This is an omission that also characterizes the emergent practice-based approaches to creativity, though exceptions do occur (Coldevin et al., 2019; Hargadon, 2006; Munro, 2018).

Theorizing the positive use of power in creativity is important for at least two reasons. First, as a metaphor, growing collective power denotes not only championing and driving particular ideas forward against opposition or indifference but also creating transitional practices imbued with attention, energy, resources and direction (Callon,

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2008; Kazanjian, Drazin, & Glynn, 2000). Second, organizational creativity may be hampered by factors that disempower: disciplinary silos that limit engagement (Majchrzak, More, & Faraj, 2012), creating resignation and apathy leading to a lack of generative resistance in the face of rule-bound structures (Carlsen, Clegg, & Gjersvik, 2012; Catmull, 2008) and failure to co-create shared perspectives on the future (Pitsis, Clegg, Marosszeky, & Rura-Polley, 2003). These are relational processes whose specificities and significance may disappear from view if we ignore power or shoehorn it into flawed conceptions of reified resources and hypostasized ideas.

We explore the role of positive power through an explicitly relational and process perspective on creativity (Coldevin et al., 2019; Garud, Gehman, Kumaraswamy, & Tuertscher, 2016; Martine & Cooren, 2016). We do so by invoking ideas of power from the work of Michel Foucault and Mary Parker Follett. We show that there is a transatlantic commonality in ideas of power in Foucault and Follett that is commensurate with a process perspective on creativity – and indeed, of power. We use that commonality to draw a contrast between (1) an orthodox *positional* view of *power over* related to assumptions of linearity of creativity and reification of ideas and resources, and (2) a stream of insights associated with more dynamic *relational* notions of *power with* and *power to ,* which goes back to both Follett (1924/1951) in management and Hannah Arendt (1970) in political philosophy. We shall link this dynamic notion with a process perspective on creativity. It is the latter set of conceptions that we emphasize and seek to develop. Consistent with an analytical strategy of problematizing in theory building (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011), we highlight how each perspective carries assumptions of resources, the handling of conflicts and the nature of ideas in creativity. In conclusion, we discuss two sets of implications: the importance of recognizing variations of interactional

framing as a fundamental mechanism of coactive power and the potential dynamics between coercive and coactive power.

## 2. From power as position and control over scarce resources

It seems fair to say that existing theories of creativity in organizations largely ignore power relations; where they do not ignore them, they often use an implicit view of power as positional command and control that differs little from that of Levitt's arguments on the need for conformity (albeit lodged both institutionally and managerially). That is, power is conceived only as a form of *power over.* It is assumed that authoritative power relations must frame ingenuity and imagination, setting tracks on which the 'switchmen of history' (Weber, 1976/2013) must move and stage gates through which they must move. For example, such views are evident in static notions of power as *positions* in networks (Cattani & Ferriani, 2008; Hu et al., 2018; Ibarra & Andrews, 1993), the effects of power in terms of *hierarchical distance* (Gu, Wang, Liu, Song, & He, 2018; Sligte, De Dreu, & Nijstad, 2011; Yuan & Zhou, 2015) and how perceptions of individuals *possessing* (or not possessing) power (Magee & Galinsky, 2008) influence creativity. Conceived as such, power becomes a more or less finite resource that organizational actors compete for in zero-sum games.

Related to this dominant view of power is the widespread use of stage-gate models for handling implementation of innovations (see Cooper, 2001), a remarkably stubborn set of conceptions of linearity in creative processes (see for example Perry-Smith & Mannucci, 2017). Typically, the implementation of innovation is framed within the power of managerial control and formal authority, with power being exercised over the project teams by the tight framing of the stage gates. Related to this, ideas are viewed as reifications (e.g. Baer, 2012; Simonton, 2004) that are passed from one stage to another,

with a focus on the inherent qualities that determine their success rather than on the constitutive acts that keep them alive and vibrant (Coldevin et al., 2019). Under strict control, teams are expected to be innovative and creative, on time and on budget. These are tight constraints that function as a set of expectations that project leaders and team leaders may find very difficult to deliver on. The framing is quite contradictory: it seeks simultaneously a paradoxical commitment to conservatism combined with a spirit of radicalism.

Following the arguments of Levitt (2002) and others (e.g. Cooper 2001) may mislead us to focus on how managers and leaders might 'let' the creatives be innovative rather than how positive power can propagate the conditions for creativity. Moreover, the inherent brilliance of ideas or the rationality of group processes in generating ideas (Girotra, Terwiesch, & Ulrich, 2010) are insufficient as explanations of what makes ideas be translated (Czarniawska-Joerges & Sevón, 2005) and gain force when being connected to the ideas of others (Coldevin et al., 2019). The assumption of a strict separation between idea generation and implementation in creative efforts tends to dissolve the closer one gets to practice (e.g. Harrison & Rouse, 2015; Harvey & Kou, 2013). In short, we need to understand power in relation to creativity as the positive movement in the *work* done to ideas, from the early seeding of ideas to full-fledged innovations, without assuming linearity or a strict separation between idea generation and implementation (Coldevin et al., 2019).

Previous research on power in organizational creativity is neither invalid nor lacking important insights. Rather, it remains limited by its domain assumptions about power relations. We seek to broaden the basis for considering how power can be constructive in creativity by invoking a process perspective on creativity (Coldevin et al., 2019; Garud et

al., 2016) that regards power as fundamentally *relational* (Ansell, 2009; Boje & Rosile, 2001; Follett, 1924/1951). We thus suggest developing an alternative framework that recognizes the reflexive, bundled, scope-moving and entangled nature of power relations in idea work. See Table 1 for an overview and a contrast. The contrast we set up highlights that power should be framed as a constitutive and enabling force, powering ideas through connection, engagement and enrolment, stressing the positivity of *power to* and *power with*.

**Table 1 Conceptions of power in creativity research**

|  | Power as position and control | Power as connection and abundance |
|---|---|---|
| Main conceptions of power | Coercive power; *power to*, resulting from positions in networks and hierarchies, and control of resources; something one *possesses* | Co-optative power; *power with* and *to*; resulting from circular behavior of joint discovery and reaching better integrations; something one *does* |
| Assumptions of resources | Resources are finite, aquiring resources is a zero-sum game, enlarging power means transferring resources, delegating or reaching a compromiss | Resources are endogenous and produced in interactions; enlarging power means coming together in reciprocal influences and creating collective agency |
| Assumptions of conflicts | Conflicts are burdens; they are threats to established power balances and are resolved through compromise, acts of dominance or dividing power in new ways | Conflicts are sometimes blessings; opportunities for new interactions that are resolved through transcending differences when reaching new integrations |
| Assumptions of idea processes | Ideas are finished objects with inherent qualities; linearity of creative efforts in that evaluations are considered separate from and subsequent to idea generation; emphasis on stage gates & formal authority | Ideas are ongoing accomplishments constituted in circular and overlapping activities of generating, evaluating, re-synthesizing and communicating; emphasis on facilitating new connections and integrations |

## 3. To power as connection, abundance and agency

In sharp contrast to conceptions of "power over", notions of "power to" and "power with" are co-active in nature (Follett, 1940, p. 101) and facilitative of imagination through building connection and collective agency. The concept of "power to" was first systematized by Talcott Parsons (1963) and subsequently subject to critique by Giddens (1968), for a lack of attention to conflict, a criticism made from within the frame of conflict sociology, which rather curtailed attention to Parsons' important emphasis on a generative concept of power. It was not until ideas associated with Michel Foucault became widely circulated in social science circles that a generative concept of "power to" attained more widespread currency; thus, the most influential conception of "power to" is to be found in the productive power of which Foucault writes, rather than in Parsons' earlier systems conception.

Power produces its own truths, Foucault (1980) writes: it is not so much that knowledge is power but that power relations frame knowledge. For Foucault, power and knowledge are not seen as independent entities but as inextricably related. Knowledge that is taken for granted and accepted, whose "truth" is unquestioned, always conceals a history of power that, in turn, is always a function of knowledge. As a historian of ideas interested in power—explicitly one not formed in the Anglo-Saxon tradition in which Hobbes' (Hobbes & Dunn, 2010) central ideas of power as a causal relation were so significant—he was more inclined to think of power in terms of strategies, discourses and processes rather than positions and resources (Clegg, 1989). In terms of discourse, Foucault was interested in how the "truths" of practices such as medicine were constructed and taken-for granted, as he investigated in *The Birth of the Clinic* (Foucault, 2002). Medical knowledge as it has emerged historically is a process of evolution and

revolution, of ruptures and continuities, in which domain assumptions operate as a form of constraint on innovation. These domain assumptions are deeply embedded in institutionalized forms of power, such as imperial, gendered and professional jurisdictional relations. With these constraints unshackled, Foucault understood that power/knowledge could be productive as well as constraining. Foucault's examples are historical, taken from the emergence of 'modern' medicine as a practice that becomes reflexive on itself, when a new relation is forged between words and things, enabling one to see and to say what previously one could not.

To Foucault, all forms of disciplinary knowledge are a field of practice for power relations (Clegg, 1989). Forces of domination and constraint coexist with those of empowerment and creation. Highly professionalized and institutionalized practices are inscribed by productive power that can be less constraining and more innovative. Power/knowledge, as 'power to', can open up potentially new ways of acting and thinking. A well-known example of a management practice of power/knowledge would be the idea workshop in which practices such as verbalization (Majchrzak et al., 2012) and prototyping  (Ford, 2009) are used to make initial ideas visible and open to new connections across disciplinary and organizational borders.

A further form of coactive power is "power with", the type of power associated with the philosopher Hannah Arendt (Allen, 1999; Arendt, 1970) and the management theorist Mary Parker Follett (Ansell, 2009; Boje & Rosile, 2001; Calás & Smircich, 1996; Follett, 1919, 1924/1951, 1940; O'Connor, 2000). From Follett's perspective, power is always relational and not a finite resource, rather one that is grown in interaction and joint discovery (Follett, 1924). Central to the relational and processual approach of Follett (1940, p. 105) is the notion of "circular response" between actors and activities as well as

with evolving environments (Follett, 1924/1951, p. 71-72). Subjects and objects are not separate things but related in a dynamic way (Ansell 2009; Follett 1924/1951, p. 53-77) and inherently interdependent with reciprocal feedback effects in ongoing experience. Consequently, co-active power results from behavior in the sense of facilitating interactive influence between levels and boundaries in the organization (Follett, 1940, p. 105).

A relational ontology of power extends to assumptions about resources and conflicts. Handling conflicts constructively, according to Follett, should not be done by domination or compromise, but what she termed "progressive integrations" (Follett, 1940, pp. 35-40) where differences are brought into the open and used as fuel for joint discovery. Rather than dividing power, one builds it through jointly developing better solutions that transcend the starting points of actors (Follett, 1924, p. 157). For example, a recent study of Marvel Studios points to the ability to incorporate directors from indie movies, so-called "inexperienced experienced" (Harrison, Carlsen, & Skerlavaj, 2019) as key to the studio's superior performance in Hollywood over the last decade. Seemingly, this is a delegation of power to new types of creators. But the study is careful in pointing out that it is the *integration* of the ideas of new creators with an established core group of directors and actors that has been decisive in relation to other studies that have tried similar mechanisms and failed.

For Follett, power is not a finite resource that can be delegated or balanced amongst competing needs. Power in its coactive form is a *capacity*. Moreover, since resources are endogenous and produced in interactions, conflicts may be blessings as they spur opportunities for new interactions on issues that in turn are resolved when reaching new integrations. Follett's theorizing here follows pragmatist maxims of the situated and

processual nature of human experience (James, 1890/1950, 1907/1977), including its inherently situated creativity (Joas, 1996). Problem solving needs to follow the law of the situation (Follett, 1940, pp. 58-64, 106), and the fusion of groups is an active unifying process, not a final achievement (Ansell, 2009, p. 476). As summed up in the introduction to *Dynamic Administration* (Metcalfe & Urwick 1940, p. 14), coactive power results when people evoke "each other's latent ideas based upon the facts of the situation" and integrate those viewpoints in the pursuit of common goals.

Turning to Follett's coactive power leads to a further recognition of collective agency as the fuel of creative work (Pratt, 2011). Purpose and will are collective achievements derived from the specificity of the situations that people attend to. Since "there are no static purposes for us to lay our hands on", (Follett, 1924, pp. 82-84) coactive power stems from activities of ongoing unifying, activities that in turn produce a collective will. Follett (1924/1951) holds that will, or agency, and activity "do not dwell in separate spheres" (p. 206) and that "[every] living process is subject to its own authority" (p. 207). Enlarging collective power thus means coming together in reciprocal influences and by that *creating* collective agency.

This feature of Follett's work foreshadows current attention to the emergence of relational agency (Cooren, 2018; Putnam, 2018; Tuominen & Lehtonen, 2017) as something resulting from collective action as much as preceding it . An agentic practice is one in which people jointly produce power together through assemblages of framings, doings, artifacts and ideas (Callon, 2008; Välikangas & Carlsen, 2019). Ideas in discourse are not atomistic; they grow not in the heads of individual subjects but in the communications between them. Ideas of a geological prospect needs to be convincingly connected to regional work; ideas of a new television series may gain headway by being

tied to successful exemplars and to larger societal purposes (Coldevin et al, 2019). The powerful idea is not only one that is co-produced across disciplinary and organizational boundaries, but one that is connected to predecessors, to ideas of social meaning and to the evolving desires of its makers, connecting parts and wholes, intuitions and prototypes, materiality and practices. In short, coactive power stems from how ideas-in-the making are convincingly connected to wholes-in-the-making.

## 4. Implications: Dynamics of power and interactional framing

We have seen that taking the lead from Follett and Foucault involves acknowledging that organizations are constituted by and through positive power relations, and that these relations in turn are performative; They are best seen as ongoing activities of attending to, coordinating and co-creating progressively better unifications. What does this mean for research on organizational creativity? We chart two sets of implications.

### 4.1 The dynamics of coactive power as interactional framing

There are several points of contract among the ideas of Foucault and Follet that point to the work of Erving Goffman. Foucault, in many ways parallel to Goffman (1974), sees power/knowledge as a form of framing as a fundamental building block for all construction of meaning, whether retrospective or prospective. Frames constitute the power to imagine or not, to be creative or compliant with authority. Goffman (1974, p. 21) used the idea of frames to label those "schemata of interpretation" allowing individuals or groups to make sense of events and occurrences. Framing functioned in his thought much as the truths of power/knowledge do in Foucault (Jenkins, 2008). Through such framing, meaning is rendered, experiences organized, actions guided.

Likewise, the work of Follett parallels interactional framing in seeing ideas and meaning as produced relationally in everyday interactions and linked to particulars of situations and their contexts. Goffman (1974, p. 10) often referred to this situational grounding of all meaning making as the interactional framing of "strips" or "slices" of experience. Here Goffman was influenced by James (1890/1950) as well as Schutz (1967) in seeing situational meaning as embedded in and shaping contextual meaning. There are frames within frames within frames, all guiding doings, beliefs and the shaping of ideas. Frames are masters concepts (Creed, Langstraat, & Scully, 2002) that may "enter into the bone and blood of our daily activities" (Follett, 1924/1951, p. 145) from where new conceptions arise.

It follow from these connections that power *with* and *to* implicate interactional framing: How do people create shared realities through interactional framing (Fairhurst, 2010), with the power of framing animating the power to co-create? One example: A manager at Snøhetta, the world-renowned architectural company behind the Oslo Opera, describes the process of arriving at high-quality ideas as staging very long conversations:

> There is an incredible amount of contextual conditions that we have to talk through, again and again, ranging from function to environmental issues to the constellation of objects that are needed to materials to the situation of the building and the wider landscape. We try to integrate all these elements. There are these circles of conversation, a joint walk in references. (…) We also invite a larger group of people who do not work here into these conversations, for example a composer, a libretto writer, or a ballet director. Nobody decides the agenda for such a meeting. We just start talking freely about the opera, what opera is, what storytelling is, inside the building or in terms of how the actors meet the audience and vice versa. (Carlsen, Clegg and Gjersvik, 2012, p. 18)

We see this effort as set up precisely to use interactional framing as a relational resource in the power to co-create. By inviting internal and external stakeholders into a prolonged exploration of the problem space, one can build shared resources for joint imagination and bolster ownership in whatever may be produced. Thus one might

investigate interactional framing as an emergent aspect of creativity, simultaneously creating a rationale for action (Snow & Benford, 1988, p. 202) that serves to mobilize and enroll people (Callon & Law, 1982) while co-creating shared imaginings of what could be.

Co-active power in interactional framing may be researched as resulting from fundamental questions that are all variants of Goffman's (1974, p. 8) famous "What is it that's going on here?' This ranges from motivational framing ("what is at stake when moving forward?"; "why and how can this opera be important different stakeholders?") to diagnostic framing ("what kind of problem is this?"; "what is an opera in the first place?") and propositional framing ("which types of solutions and prototypes do we have?"; "what are exemplars of prior opera houses that were successful?").

Interactional framing seems particularly relevant for creative efforts of high epistemic uncertainty (Mengis, Nicolini, & Swan, 2018) and where escaping from schema-driven perception (Weick, 2006) may be decisive. Framing a political problem in terms of monetary economics, for example, will generate monetarist propositions (MacKenzie, 2008). Reframing it in Keynesian terms creates a distinctly different propositional universe (Clegg, Boreham, & Dow, 1983). Attending to reframing may mean researching how alternative problem spaces (Harrison & Rouse, 2015, p. 393) and creative synthesis are brought to bear on "a new way of understanding what an idea is" (Harvey, 2014, p. 330).

In obverse terms, Karl Weick (2005, 2006) has written insightfully on the failure of imagination in organizations. Using examples from the NASA space shuttle disaster and the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Weick shows that organizations favor schema-based perception. Weick's argument is largely cognitively oriented but there is a subtext of power.

Organizations favor schema-based perceptions in the interest of coordination and control. For instance, the National 9/11 commission stated that the attacks on the Twin Towers fell into the void between foreign and domestic threats. That vehicular attacks had been made on American assets previously, such as the USS Cole, was not generalized by the FBI to the possibility of domestic attack nor countenanced within the remit of the CIA (Cunha, Clegg, & Kamoche, 2006). The underlying battle for hegemony between the CIA and FBI, as well as between fractions within these organizations, did not entertain this likelihood. Labels may function as deadening frames that stick and impede imagination in part because they are used as tools for legitimizing and control.

*4.2 The dynamics between power with and power over*

Another set of implications following from our appropriation of Follett and Foucault is the necessity of acknowledging the dynamics between coactive and coercive forms of power in organizational creativity. Attention to coactive power does not rule out the coercive dimension. *Power to* may have an inverse side of *power over*. The result of successful co-creation in reciprocal interactions may over time build resources in the form of collective agency and unifying insights that subsequently enhances the status positions of actors and in turn produces coercive power.

Moreover, returning to the issue of interactional framing, just as some ideas and voices are unleashed and freed by dominant frames so others might be hindered, restricted, not enabled (Creed et al., 2002; Goffman, 1974, p. 345). It could not be otherwise. There will always be those ideas that dare not speak their name, those ideas that, within the frame of normalcy that is contextually fixed, simply would invite opprobrium, ridicule or resentment if they were articulated. It is not so much that there is anything that is in principle unthinkable but some of that which may be thought may be

so inscribed neutrally that it impedes generation of ideas dependent on alien metaphorical frames (Johnson, 2007). There is still a need to explore how different forms of power are linked to specific learning processes (Lawrence, Mauws, Dyck, & Kleysen, 2005) and how they interact (van Baarle, Dolmans, Bobelyn, & Romme, 2019). After all, Follett's ideals of "power with" processes will almost inevitably take place within organizations with at least some hierarchical arrangements in place (Salovaara & Bathurst, 2018).

All this said, the active use of *power to* and *with* for doing idea work may be subtler than *power over* but potentially it is also more powerful, which brings us back to interactional framing. Framing is powerful because organizes perception, constitutes meaning and invites involvement, thus *producing* the social realities (Fairhurst, 2005, 2010) with which people may be creative, or not. Frames may constrain by being unnoticed, built into habits of working and ways of seeing, constituting the very fabric of organization. Framing provides meaning structures that anchor activities. In the words of Goffman, framing is "not merely a matter of mind but correspond in some sense to the way in which an aspect of the activity in itself is organized" (Goffman 1974, p. 247). The power at work in framing is thus not something we drop on top of activities or prepare before or after their occurrence – rather it is an entwinement of doing and thinking built into *power with* others, power constituted in the everyday matters of social practice (Carroll & Simpson, 2012). Framing may in itself pass from the deliberate into the taken-for-granted and is a process that inevitably unfolds one way or the other.

## 5. Conclusion

We have charted how established ideas of positional *power over* is related to assumptions of linearity and singularity of creativity and suggested that ideas of *power with* and *power to* are associated with a more dynamic, relational and process-based

perspective. The latter set of views implies more attention be paid to processes of interactional framing through which people jointly attend to situations, unearth differing opinions and insights, reach new integrations and produce new social realities. The overall conception of power is one of connection, abundance and collective agency, not position, scarcity and dominance. Seen in the context of interactional framing, a vocabulary of coactive power contributes to the ideas of relational leadership (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011; Fairhurst & Connaughton, 2014; Salovaara & Bathurst, 2018) taking place within everyday activity and where managers may use language to create a shared sense of what is at stake and a landscape of future possibilities (Cunliffe, 2001).

We have further suggested that dynamics of coactive and coercive power in organizational creativity need attention. Coactive power may grow into coercive power, which again may stifle the former. On this latter point, a sobering reminder is needed. More wholeheartedly embracing coactive power may necessitate a rethinking of the normal architectonics of organizational design. Too often, these depend on assumptions of managerial control and hierarchy (Child, 2019). Follett's conceptions of coactive power were inspired by and part of a movement towards industrial democracy where Dewey had led the way (Ansell, 2009; O'Connor, 2000; Stout & Love, 2017; Whipps, 2014). The coactive power to be imaginative and creative is not merely an individual phenomenon or even a collective phenomenon on group level. It depends also on enabling organizational and institutional contexts that allow idea work to flourish or not (Coldevin et al, 2018; Clegg & Burdon, 2019). Still, following Follett (Stout & Love, 2017) but also other voices (Bushe, 2011; Greenwood & Levin, 2006; Nilsson, 2015), such work democracy is in itself a continuous achievement that cannot be taken for granted and that in its distributed form will always depend on the collective orientation and personal initiative of individuals (Espedal & Carlsen, 2019).

The emergence of forms of collaborative and more open organization enables members to have a *de facto* informal right, if not a formal *de jure* entitlement, creatively to contest and make decisions, despite and within a normal organizational framework of organizationally hierarchical authority. More democratic, and creative, organizations, as Follett realized, are not absent of power; they privilege neither power over nor unfettered anarchical individualism; instead, they cultivate powers to and powers with others.

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