

Organizational control: Restrictive or productive?

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ABSTRACT

Organizational control is conventionally – from a critical stance – viewed as a negative and restrictive phenomenon, which in one way or another subjugates workers. In this theoretical paper, we argue that organizational control is often based on a particular understanding of power; an understanding that views power as repressive, equating it with domination and subjugation while paying little attention to its productive function. We question what the implications for understanding organizational control would be if we were also to see power as productive. We contend that the Foucauldian notions of pastoral power, disciplinary power, and governmentality can be used together through the concept of regime of practices to enrich our understanding of the workings of organizational control. We thus delineate an analytical framework for the study of organizational control based on an open-ended investigation of the regimes of control in local settings.

Keywords: Foucault, governmentality, organizational control, disciplinary power, pastoral power, subject

INTRODUCTION

Organizational control is conventionally – from a critical stance – viewed as a negative and restrictive phenomenon, which in one way or another subjugates workers (Jermier, Knights & Nord 1994: 1–24; Clegg 1994; Collinson 1993). To put it bluntly, accounts of organizational control often examine the constitution of a resistant subject and declare a need for the emancipation and liberation of this intrinsically alienated and repressed working subject (Marx 1884, 1976; Clegg 1994: 274–325). It is proposed that organizational control is often based on a particular understanding of power; an understanding that views power as negative and

repressive (Jermier et al. 1994: 1–24). We suggest this is because power is equated with domination and subjugation (Daudi 1986; Burrell 1998).

From our viewpoint, it appears that the accounts of organizational control are often based upon negative conceptualizations of power, and this conceptualization of organizational control seems to be taken as a fact that is seldom questioned in the critical organizational literature. Our question is: What happens to this understanding of organizational control if we reconceptualize power as regimes of practices consisting of negative as well as productive forms of power and subjectivity? We strive for an open-ended research process where a particular regime

of control is analyzed in its local setting, and suggest that Foucault's ideas on pastoral and disciplinary power and governmentality can be used as conceptual tools for enlarging our understanding of the workings of the organizational control. We contend that studies of organizational control should at the same time depict and analyze the systems of control as well as their consequences and outcomes at the subjective level.

The theme of power was both a persistent and contradictory one for Foucault. Although he never wrote a book on power, he touched on the issue of power and approached it from various angles throughout his work. Consequently, there is no single 'Foucauldian' conceptualization of power, but rather a prolific mass of works and writings approaching power from multiple viewpoints (Foucault 1977, 1980, 1981, 1982a,b, 1988, 1991a,b, 1997, 1998a,b, 2000, 2003, 2004a,b). In his work, Foucault did not develop an overriding model of power, but rather examined the various forms of modern power. For this reason, discussion of a 'Foucauldian' notion of power or subjectivity (see e.g. Newton 1998) become problematic and not very fruitful if they presume a consistent and overriding notion of subject or power presented by Foucault, when in fact this was a writer who tested and developed his ideas in a prolific way, changed his thinking, and did not aim to construct a coherent theoretical system.

Foucault is, however, important in studying power, because he dispels some misconceptions that are inherent in the labor process debate (Jermier & Clegg 1994: 4). 'After Foucault power is not something that can be tracked simply to some sovereign subject through control of resources, whether they be resource dependencies, strategic contingencies, ruling class control of capital or ruling elite control of key positions in the bureaucratic apparatus' (Jermier & Clegg 1994: 4). However, monasteries and the military are probably more important 'sites of institutional innovation for subsequent organizational mimesis' than prisons (ibid.). Although the liter-

ature of critical management studies contains much analysis of organizational power relations, Clegg points out that organizational theory has failed, for example, to address the role that organizations have played in some of the crimes against humanity, such as the Holocaust. (Clegg 2006: 426.)

Foucault does not offer an ideal model for the understanding of organizational control, but rather a conceptual 'toolkit' that can be employed when analyzing control systems. Townley (2005: 643) points out that Foucault is often quoted by those fascinated with *control*, though control is not one of the many concepts associated with his work. Examining organizational control from a Foucauldian stance is at the core of this paper, and the following three notions of Foucault receive particular attention – *power in relation to organizational control*: disciplinary power (Foucault 1977, 2000); pastoral power (Foucault 1997, 1998a, 2000); and governmentality (Foucault 2000, 2004a, 2004b).

We suggest that the various forms of power he discussed – disciplinary power, pastoral power, and governmentality – should not be postulated as an ideal model before the research exercise. Rather, they could be considered as possible options, and the task of the research is to describe the particular regime of control in its particular historical setting. Here we draw particularly on the notion of governmentality. We claim that it can be used as an 'open-ended' concept for organizational control, which allows for the investigation of the totality of the control systems.

We also suggest that these forms of power should not be treated as mutually exclusive. On the contrary, it is postulated that all these forms of power – disciplinary power, pastoral power, and governmentality – are likely to be active simultaneously in an organization. We claim that they can all be used together as tools to understand the workings of organizational *control* through their capacity to describe the various systems and techniques of control and the *productive* side of control/subject dynamics.

Furthermore, we suggest that organizational control in a particular historical setting can be understood as a *regime of practices* with certain outcomes and consequences for both the subjects of power and the organization itself. A particular regime may involve practices that, for instance, can be coercive or allow for freedom, characteristically inspiring or depressing, punitive or encouraging; they can alienate the subjects of power or make them committed, or render work meaningless or meaningful. All of these processes should be observed and understood through studies of organizational control.

We would like to point out that especially the productive side of organizational control should be taken seriously. In critical studies, it is rather commonplace to concentrate on the coercive side of organizational control and to view workers as struggling with and resisting the imposed system (e.g. Knights & McCabe 2003). We feel, however, that it would be equally important to understand the productive side of control systems as well as subject formation based on consent, cooperation and commitment (Kärreman & Alvenson 2004). We believe that the description of success and its conditions can also become a form of societal criticism, in many ways.

The paper is structured as follows: organizational control is discussed first, followed by an examination of the Foucauldian notions of disciplinary power, pastoral power, and governmentality. After this, we compare and contrast organizational control and the Foucauldian modern forms of power. Finally, we deliberate upon the dual nature of organizational control as both a productive and a restrictive instrument.

SOME PREMISES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONTROL IN ORGANIZATIONAL THEORY

Control has been a core concept in organization studies since the time of Max Weber and his theories of bureaucracy (Barker 1993: 408). Weber witnessed the growth of the Bismarckian bureaucracies with mixed feelings. The strict hierarchy, chain of command, and the outcome analyses of

the Prussian army were applied in both private and public organizations (Sennett 2006: 20–23). Weber (1947, 1978) discussed bureaucracy widely, calling it an iron cage in which an organization has replaced a group of equal individuals as the structuring element of work (Huhtala, Ketola & Parzefall 2006). He posited (1978: 987) that bureaucracy is the means of transforming social action into rationally organized action. With rational calculations, capitalists were able to manage the increasing uncertainty of the world. In this way, bureaucracy would cause work to become more predictable – hence also more *controllable*. Weber also saw bureaucracy as technically superior over other organizational forms. Where administration has been completely bureaucratized, the resulting *system of domination* is virtually indestructible (Weber 1978: 987; Barker 1993: 410–411; Clegg 1990).

The Weberian notion of bureaucracy, and the idea of rational control embedded in it, have become perhaps the most influential model of organizational control. The Weberian theories have contributed, in particular, to the notion of organizational control as domination, which is essentially restraining: it limits the spaces of freedom and attempts to close them up. Furthermore, it does this externally – from outside the self of the individual – and typically in pre-structured ways.

Another influential line of thought pertaining to the mechanisms of organizational control has been the critical Marxist tradition manifested, for instance, in the classic work of Braverman, who explored the development of the capitalist mode of production in the course of one century (1974: 4). According to Braverman, in traditional methods of production, such as craftsmanship, work remained under the immediate control of producers because the producers embodied the traditional knowledge and skills of their crafts. When the producers were gathered together, however, the problem of management arose. This was first illustrated in co-operative labor (1974: 59). Marx argued in a similar vein: ‘The work of

directing, superintending and adjusting becomes one of the functions of capital, from the moment that the labour under the control of capital, becomes co-operative' (1976: 313). In Braverman's view (1998: 62), control had been the central feature of management throughout its history. However, Taylor 'raised the concept of control to an entirely new plane' with direct interference in the workers' mode of performing the tasks instead of merely stating the general contents of the tasks, thus by management dictating the precise manner in which workers should complete the tasks (*ibid.*).

As many theories on organizational control have drawn either from Weberian or Marxist tradition, it has been rather commonplace to see organizational control in negative terms, as coercive domination. For instance, for Edwards (1979: 17) control is 'the ability of capitalists and/or managers to obtain desired work behaviour from workers'. Therefore, it is essential to examine the degree to which the control exists, how it is obtained, and finally how it leads to or inhibits resistance on a wider scale (1979: 17–18). His taxonomy of control (1979: 19–20) includes *simple control* exercised typically by bosses utilizing power personally and directly over their subordinates in small companies. *Structural control* is typical of large organizations, and comes in two types: technical and bureaucratic. *Technical control* is embedded in the physical structure of labor and is directed by machinery – as is aptly illustrated in the functioning of an assembly line. *Bureaucratic control* is directed by the organization's social structure and hierarchies.

Barker (1993: 411–412) adds to Edwards' taxonomy the notion of *concertive control* – a form of control in which the locus of control has shifted from managers to workers themselves, who thereby participate in developing the means of their own control. A distinctive trait of this type of control is its subtle and normative character, through which the organizational members come to control each other. In his study on self-managed teams, Barker (1993: 435) finds that work-

ers 'create a communal value system that eventually controls their actions through rational rules'. The creation of rational rules thus resembles traditional bureaucracy; however, the locus of authority has shifted from a hierarchical system typical of bureaucracy to the values, rules, and norms of teams. Barker (1993: 435–436) draws the conclusion that in such organizations, the iron cage actually becomes stronger as strong peer pressure is combined with rational rules.

Ouchi puts forth (1977: 97) that when studying control systems, behavior and outputs resulting from behavior are the only two phenomena that can be observed, monitored, and counted. Thus control systems are based upon *behavior control* or *output control* (Ouchi & Maguire 1975: 559, Ouchi & Johnson 1978), and to these two types of control he later adds *symbolic control* (Hatch 1997: 337). In his later works, Ouchi (1979) sees *markets*, *bureaucracies*, and *clans* as three different mechanisms through which organizations cope with the problem of control and evaluation (1979: 1). Ouchi emphasizes that efficient control strives, above all, for clarity of performance assessment and for goal incongruence between different aims (1979: 13–14).

Gupta and Govindarajan (1991: 768) examined how organizational control varies systematically across subsidiaries of the same corporation. They emphasize the strategic roles of different subsidiaries and their implications for the formal and informal control mechanisms in use. Henderson and Lee (1992: 757) report that both managerial and team-member control co-exist and increase the total level of control, which in turn positively correlates with performance. In a similar vein, Ezzamel and Willmot (1998: 358) have shown how the replacement of line work by teamwork *extended* traditional, hierarchical systems of management control in a global retailing company.

Barley and Kunda (1992: 384–385) differentiate between rational and normative surges of control in the 20th century. They suggest that industrial betterment, human relations move-

ment, and organizational culture paradigm were based on normative forms of control, whereas scientific management and systems rationalism have their premises in rational forms of control. The locus of the *normative control* is in shared values and moral engagement. The principles of *rational control*, on the other hand, suggest that productivity is a result of carefully defined methods and procedures (Barley & Kunda 1992: 384).

CONTROL AND THE SUBJECT: THE PRODUCTIVITY OF POWER

Since Weberian and Marxist theories of organizational control emphasize the workings of the control system and domination, Foucauldian organizational analysis can be seen as an option for understanding organizational control from another angle. Though Foucault's core concepts do not include control *per se*, his works have been widely used to examine organizational control mechanisms in the field of organizational studies (Townley 2005).

Perhaps the most characteristic element in Foucault's conceptualizations of power and control is his persisting emphasis on subject formation. Power works through its subjects, and while power controls and dominates, it also calls and allures its subjects and engages them in active work. Foucault explores, in particular, the *making* of a subject through particular forms of subjection and subjectification (Foucault 1980: 97–98). This Foucauldian interest in subject formation takes various forms in his writings on disciplinary power, pastoral power, and governmentality.

In *Discipline and Punish* (1977), Foucault illustrates the making of a disciplined subject by making the penitentiary subject and object for him/herself (1998a: 459–461). Overall, disciplinary power operates *upon* subjectivity. The subject is constituted as his or her own object through 'the formation of procedures by which the subject is led to observe himself, analyze himself, interpret himself, recognize himself as a domain of possible knowledge' (Foucault 1998a: 461). Disciplinary power is omnipresent in every

perception, every judgement, and every act (Deetz 1992: 37). It is a constitutive capacity, both enabling and constraining (Foucault 1980: 70–108, 119).

The success of disciplinary power derives from hierarchical observation, normalizing judgments, and a combination of these: examination (Foucault 1977). The perfect disciplinary apparatus would be a control system based on a single *observing gaze* that would see everything. However, in order to increase its productive function, especially in workshops and factories, the gaze has been broken down into smaller elements. This new type of surveillance has also taken into account the activity, promptness, and skills of men (Foucault 1977: 174, 183). The penalty governs as it compares, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes, and differentiates – and hence normalizes (Foucault 1977: 183, see also 178–179).

Disciplinary power works through methods of *objectification*, which claims to know the subject 'objectively', thus making the individual manageable. The worker is transformed into an object that can be controlled externally by specific techniques. Furthermore, objectification makes the worker self-perceptive, and the gaze of an external controller is internalized into subjectivity. The core technique of objectification is *examination consisting* of the previously discussed techniques of hierarchical observation and normalizing judgement (Foucault 1977). Each worker is typically documented as a separate 'case' that can be compared and contrasted with other workers ('cases') as well as with his or her own performance over time.

Foucauldian theories have been discussed widely in organizational research (Fournier & Grey 2000; Burrell 1988). Sewell and Wilkinson (1992: 280–281), in their study on electronic factory surveillance, found a practice enabling faults to be traced back to the individual worker, so when work was carried out in teams, this led to team-based control. As the team itself was responsible for meeting targets, a need to control the other team members was generated (Sewell & Wilkinson 1992: 280–281). This created a panoptic

power relation. Each individual experienced fear of failure and became a potential target for minor humiliation (Sewell & Wilkinson 1992: 283–284). However, according to Sewell (1998: 410, 420–421), the panoptic mechanism constitutes only one possible way to analyze contemporary control at workplaces. Moreover, it is not always totalizing in its effects; Quist, Skålen and Clegg (2007: 445, 459–460), in their analysis of the Swedish Institute for Quality model of performance excellence, found that the model was not totalizing in its impact on managerial subjectivities.

Pastoral power has its premises in the Christian method of confession (Foucault 1997, 2000: 333). Pastoral power *subjectifies*; it turns objects into subjects for themselves (Foucault 1982b: 212), and this subjectification is based, above all, upon the technique of confession. Confession pertains to the ‘inner reality’ of the individual and thus requires self-examination. For that reason, awareness and knowledge of conscience are needed, as are technologies for modifying and directing it. Hence, pastoral power necessitates knowledge of people’s minds and souls (Foucault 2000: 332–336).

Rose (1989) has illustrated, from a Foucauldian stance, how through self-actualization and self-development discourses, brought forth by the human relations movement, work has become increasingly subjugating as dignity and meaning in work have been aligned with the aspirations of the workplace (Rose 1989: 106–107). Knights and Willmott (1989: 535) suggest that by using Foucault’s concepts, it is possible to analyze the process of subjectification, a task that thus far has been overlooked in the labor process debate. According to them, ‘it is the comparative social isolation which subjects suffer as a result of the individualising impact of modern power that renders individuals vulnerable to precisely the demands or expectations that such power makes them’ (Knight & Willmott 1989: 550). Townley (1994, 1998) has illustrated how workers can come to modify and shape their character and competences according to the requirements of the

workplace, through the use of pastoral power and its techniques of confession and self-examination (Townley 1998; see also Townley 1993). Furthermore, according to Townley, interiority (of a person), through subjectification, on the one hand provides a new frontier of control, but on the other hand also offers the possibility of a retreat from the dyad of seeing/been seen (2005: 644).

According to Reed, corporations deployed new social and material control technologies during the 1980s and 1990s (1996: 577). On one hand, the new technologies offer more flexible forms of surveillance. On the other hand, social technologies of control are used to manipulate corporate culture. Expert groups have developed informational and communication technologies that enable a higher degree of transparency and visibility in organizations, which makes continuous monitoring and correcting behavior realizable in a more indirect manner. As a result, the members of organizations submit themselves to more thorough forms of discipline (Reed 1996: 581). Alvesson (2004: 207–218) suggests that the new control mechanisms that emerged in the context of knowledge work are increasingly linked with the identity formation of knowledge workers. The connection between identity and image makes it important for managers in knowledge-intensive firms to regulate identities so that they are in harmony with the organizational image projected.

Also the notion of *governmentality* provides a horizon for understanding the subjective side of managerial systems. Governmentality entails both the strategies of organizational governance and self-governance by the subjects of governance (e.g. Foucault 2000: 219; 2004a,b; Clegg, Courpasson & Phillips 2006: 236). The aim is to analyze how the technologies of the self are interwoven and at work with the technologies of domination (Foucault 1988: 19).

Foucault claimed that the core of modern governmentality is to be found in the links between the systems of organizational governance and the self-management of individuals, and in the associ-

ations between the objectives of the governing institution and the technologies of self employed in the management of that institution (1988: 19).

Governmentality, in particular, emphasizes the productive nature of power and control in relation to subject formation. Foucault emphasizes the 'productive' aspect of power. For instance: 'What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression' (1980: 119).

This productive aspect of power was captured especially in the notion of governmentality, which can be understood as a 'mechanism of life' a form of power in which the central tenet is to maximize life (Lacombe 1996). As Hindess (1996b: 144–145) points out, Foucault retreated from the traditional understanding of power as legitimate force and places *consent* at the center of his analysis. Follett (1949) argued decades ago that power can also be productive. Follett defined power simply as 'the ability to get things done' (Follett 1949: xii.) This, in turn, depended on one's ability to persuade people to work with him or her, as if one would attempt to coerce others, it is likely that in most cases they would simply refuse to co-operate. She saw the idea of power 'over' people, as well as ideas of 'ultimate control' and 'supreme control', to be outdated and understood power as developing power 'with' people. In this respect, she thought that business practice had gone ahead of business theory (Follett 1949: xii, 1). She stated that 'legitimate authority flows from co-ordination, not co-ordination from authority' (1949: 5; see also Follett 1941: 23), and talked of cumulative control and authority as opposed to supreme control (ibid: 7). Instead of domination or compromise as a way of getting things done, she proposed *integration* as a third way, a way that enabled the persons involved to find a way which included what both of them wanted, without sac-

rifice. Integration thus brings about the emergence of something new, something which is *beyond either or*. (Follett 1949: 66–67). She sees control as becoming more and more fact-control rather than person control, and central control more as the co-relation of many controls as opposed to a super-imposed control – both of which are within a situation. According to Follett, each *situation* should generate its own control (1949: 77–78).

Modern governmentality pursues consent by working for the betterment of its subjects. This betterment is constantly evaluated and assessed by developing particular strategies and techniques of governance: rationalities and knowledge-based reasons imposed on subjects and the world around us leading to particular truth production techniques and practices (Rose 1999b: 6–7). The subject is not ruled over by law or the iron cage, but rather he or she is given a personal future and a range of opportunities for personal betterment. As Foucault claimed: 'The finality of government resides in the things it manages and in the pursuit of perfection and intensification of the processes it directs' (2000: 211). This process of personal perfection and betterment is organized in a way that will lead to the fulfillment and greater perfection of both systems and the subject.

What does all this mean in terms of organizational control? How, precisely, does organizational control change depending on the view of power that we hold? We propose that control, when it has the modern forms of power in its premises, operates directly through subjectivity and not merely indirectly through a system. Thus, in Foucauldian terms, organizational control can take place via the techniques of power through examination, normalizing judgement, and hierarchical observation (the characteristic of disciplinary power); techniques of confession and self-examination (the characteristic of pastoral power); or through personal perfection and betterment organized alongside the general aims of the organization (governmentality). Thus the techniques of control and the power functioning in the premises of these techniques can change or

operate simultaneously at different levels, and hence constitute a regime of practices of control.

ORGANIZATIONAL CONTROL AS REGIMES OF PRACTICES

Governmentality offers an interesting concept for the understanding of organizational management systems as regimes of practices involving various forms of power and techniques of control as well as various processes of subject formations. Foucault introduced the concept in lectures he gave towards the end of his career at Collège de France in 1978 (Foucault 2004a) and 1979 (Foucault 2004b). Governmentality is thus also a concept that in a sense wraps up the Foucault's writings on power, as he used it to refer to the totality of the modern systems of governance: both organizational structures and subject formation.

Governmentality has been used, in particular, in studies on political governance and public administration, where it has created a distinct 'governmentality school', particularly in the UK and Australia. Governmentality has been used to analyze aspects such as the governance of the public sector, civil society, and poverty (Burchell, Gordon & Miller 1991), as well as education, sexual harassment, the unemployed, AIDS, gay communities, and the situation of indigenous people (Dean & Hindess 1998).

In the context of organizational control, it is important to note that Foucault developed the notion of governmentality when analyzing the generalization of the enterprise and cost-benefit models in society (Foucault 2004b: 246–251). Consequently, an appreciable proportion of governmentality studies has dealt with the impact of enterprise and business management on the public sector (Longstreth 1990; Burchell 1993; Rose 1992, 1993, 1996, 1999a,b, 2000; Miller & Rose 1990, 1995; Hindess 1996a; Barnett 2002).

Thus, while Foucault originally developed the concept of governmentality to describe the control systems of the modern state, it can be claimed that he used it to analyze management modeled after the systems of business management. And indeed,

in addition to the control systems of the state, governmentality has been used to analyze the modern systems of management in private sector organizations and has been applied, for instance, to the government of a firm (Miller & O'Leary 1987), project management (Clegg, Pitsis, Rura-Polley & Marosszeky 2002), team management (Knights & McGabe 2003), and accounting (Carter, McKinlay & Rowlinson 2002; Neu 2006).

Many of these studies, however, still perceive organizational management as systems that subjugate workers with their given systemic identities. We agree with Clegg, Courpasson and Phillips (2006: 236), who are surprised that governmentality has not been used to address organization issues explicitly. Like them, we think that governmentality offers a promising conceptualization of power, which understands the facilitative mechanisms of power. They also point to the fact that the Foucauldian notion of power is a central element in the larger shift in organization theory. In the past, it was customary to think of organization as uncontested authority structures characterized by legitimacy. The Foucauldian theory has 'opened up' the problematic determinism in these theories. As Clegg (1989: 273–274) contended in his *Frameworks of Power*, in the 'post-modern' condition dominated by the market one needs to rethink power. Power is no longer seen as a predetermined and stable authority; instead, the Foucauldian theory has made it possible to understand unexpected outcomes and developments as well as the polyphony within organizations (Clegg, Courpasson & Phillips 2006: 400–401). We follow this line of thinking and contend that organizational control, in particular, could also be re-conceptualized by using Foucauldian theory and the notion of governmentality.

With regard to organizational control, governmentality could be seen as local *regimes of practices* with their own particular mentalities, processes of subject formation as well as rationalities, strategies, and techniques. As Dean (1999: 21) has pointed out, within any given society, there is a large number of regimes of practices, or

routinized ways of doing things, pertaining to certain places and certain times. We can, for instance, talk of a 'criminal justice system', a 'health system', or a 'social welfare system'. These regimes have their own particular characteristics and never correspond directly to a particular institution or even a system. They borrow from each other, co-operate, overlap, and contest or even colonize or subjugate one another.

These regimes are characteristically based on specific problematizations and rationalities as well as techniques of truth production. They have their own particular ways of seeing and perceiving as well as their own expertise, know-how, and ways of forming subjects. The exercise of power does not constitute a zero-sum game but rather an assemblage of changing governmental techniques, practices, and rationalities which link systems and their subjects and which model the spaces of government, thus making them governable. The purpose of the analysis is not to ask what happened and why, but rather to focus on the ways truth and subjects are produced and the aims that link the systems and their subjects. (Dean 1999: 22–29; see also Rose 1999b: 20–60.)

The analytics of governmentality have focused particularly on the techniques of governance. The core of modern governmentality lies in the problematizations and rationalizations that render populations, activities, institutions, or organizations governable. For instance, theories of national economy opened up a new space of governance characterized by the particular rationality and problems of a national economy as well as its aims. Specific techniques and statistics of assessment were developed in order to assess the state of the national economy, and these techniques were utilized when defining the acts of governance. Moreover, these techniques helped to link the targets of the economic system to the individuals within the system by calling for the new subjectivities of the economic man. (Foucault 1991: 100–101; Rose 1999b: 24–40.)

Studies of governmentality look for the problematizations, rationalities, strategies, and tactics

of a particular regime and the techniques for assessing them. How, then, are the techniques employed to create and sustain links between the problems and aims of the system, and the individual problems and aims of the subjects? For this purpose, Dean (1999: 23; see also Kantola 2002: 30) presents a fourfold research task for the analytics of a particular regime, where he suggests identifying the following elements:

- i) characteristic ways of seeing and perceiving reality;
- ii) characteristic ways of posing questions based on particular vocabularies and ways of producing knowledge;
- iii) characteristic ways of rational and normal conduct; and
- iv) characteristic ways of constructing subjects and actors.

When thinking of the links between the system and the subject, one may conclude that governmentality operates through the expectations posed by a system for its subjects. The dynamic link between a system and subjects is built by setting expectations for right and valuable conduct, for instance through information and management systems and through evaluation and performance schemes. From the workers' viewpoint, these expectations can be perceived, for example, as clear and obtainable, contradictory or unclear, positive or negative, meaningful or meaningless. A particular regime may have practices that, for instance, are coercive or punitive, or that allow for freedom and creativity. Regimes can be experienced as inspiring or depressing, punitive or encouraging. They can alienate the subjects of power or make them committed or, alternatively, they can make work appear meaningless or meaningful. Studies of organizational control should thus aim to understand both the systems of control, and their consequences and outcomes at the subjective level. A research process pertaining to the workings of the control system could open up the processes of management control and could also shed light on the reasons behind their success or failure.

For instance, Thrift has applied governmentality especially in innovation driven management systems and claims that the organizational need for innovation has necessitated the creation of 'fast' subjects. Thrift looks at the various techniques of creating the 'fast' subjects of the new managerial governmentality (Thrift 2006: 130–152). He claims that management training aiming at performativeness and charisma is an essential part of the fast economy as it strives to activate and intensify emotions and 'create passion' in the subjects. Managerial style is linked with the establishment of innovative groups using intense techniques, such as brainstorming, role play, shock experiences, visits to new environments, and developing empathy through detailed observation. Techniques drawn from the performing arts use 'strategic stories', platform theatre, street theatre, improvisational theatre, and drama to intensify emotions and commitment. Performative techniques based on conversations, questions and answers, promise, and assessment are used to encourage the subject's formation towards self-assessment and evaluation. These systems are associated, for instance, with the organization of office spaces in ways that increase face-to-face interaction and provide spaces for intensified communication. Thus Thrift contends that 'a new great map of personkind is coming into existence' (2006: 151), a map based upon potential for innovation and creativity, a *Homo Siliconvalleys* thriving in open office spaces, major airports, and high-level educational systems, not linked to a particular location but ready to cross any border.

A similar analysis could be introduced on the level of a single organization exploring, for instance, how the contemporary techniques of 'fast management' function as a form of organizational control. More particular focal points might include the functionality of the link between the structural aims of the organization and the techniques and practices of subject formation as well as the possible consequences of this functionality to the organization, its aims, and to the subjects themselves. Furthermore, the arrangement of

space as an element of organizational control could be analyzed by using Foucauldian insights into the spatial ordering of institutions (e.g. Foucault 1977; Hetherington 1997).

With regard to the contemporary techniques of control, one particularly interesting element is the increasing emphasis on intense identity management, not only in connection with work identities but also relating to the emotive and inner self of employees in the so-called post-bureaucratic organizations or in soft bureaucracy (Courpasson 2000; Heckscher & Donnellon 1994). Foucault himself pointed to the particular program of enterprise management, which strives to replace and compensate the cold, calculative, rational, and mechanic systems of control with 'hot' market-oriented competitive systems (Foucault 2004: 247–248). This shift from 'cold' to 'hot' systems of management can be seen in contemporary discussions on post-bureaucratic control emphasis networking, the low hierarchies, and flexibility. Some theorists of 'post-bureaucratic' organizations consider that organizational control is exercised increasingly through 'identity regulation' and 'identity work' (Alvesson & Willmott 2002). Work is not only a matter of material rewards and disciplinary control; work identity is increasingly interwoven with the more private identity of one's 'true self'. The contemporary systems of management address their subjects on the level of emotions and demand what Hochschild (1983) has termed 'emotional labour', labor pertaining to the subject's own emotions and feelings so that they are made to 'match' the feelings required by his or her work. Thus managerial control leans increasingly on techniques that pertain to workers inner self: emotions and passions. Having as their goal the detection of the many managerial techniques that are applied to link the subject with the overall aims of the organization, these techniques seem to fit particularly well with the notion of governmentality.

At the same time, it must be noted that empirical studies do not always confirm that there has been a clear shift from bureaucratic to post-bureaucratic control (Robertson & Swan

2004; Kärreman & Alvesson 2004; Hodgson 2004: 84). For instance, Collinson (2003) talks about conformist, dramaturgical, and resistant selves as possible reactions to post-bureaucratic management systems. From a Foucauldian stance, although workers are tied to the current system of control, there are also escapes and spaces of freedom from encroaching domination.

In their study of management control in knowledge-management firms, Kärreman and Alvesson (2004) concluded that organizational control could not be understood either in terms of bureaucratic control or by network-based flexibility. Rather, organizational control in knowledge-intensive firms involved both of these aspects, which build upon and feed off each other. The iron cage remains, but it also contains softer elements. (Kärreman & Alvesson 2004: 164). Accordingly, Courpasson (2006: 327) points out that the new *hybrid organizations* retain 'both the iron fist of strong and centralised control mechanisms, wrapped up in the velvet glove of consent'.

These observations on the mixed elements of the contemporary control systems point to the fact that a notion of regime may be useful, as it can be used to analyze both the substantive/structural/material system as well as soft and flexible identity management. Above all, attention should be paid particularly to the interplay between the system of control and subjects: how linkages are constructed between these two elements; and how organizational control consists of multiple tactics and strategies and receives various responses when addressing workers.

Knights and McCabe (2003) analyze teamwork in the frame of governmentality as a technology that aims to transform individuals into subjects who derive the meaningfulness of work through working in a team. They describe a range of ways in which various individuals respond to this technology and also struggle with it, resist it, and baulk in the face of it. When applying the notion of governmentality in studies of organizational control, it would be necessary to take one step further in the analysis by linking the processes with

the overall functioning of the organization and its control system: to link the technologies of the self with the workings and goals of the control system in the organization. What would be, for instance, in the particular case presented by Knights and McCabe (2003), the actual consequences of resistance for the organization, and what is the place and role of resistance in the organizational system of control? How are organizational goals, structures and practices affected by the resistance? And how can the effects of resistance, or lack thereof, be explained by the workings of control? How, when, and why is the management able, or unable, to downplay resistance? In other words, how does the control system 'deal with' resistance?

The notion of governmentality could also be of particular importance when trying to understand what Abel (2005) calls the 'dark side' of organizational control. Mainstream organization theory often strives for generalizations and overlooks the 'dark side' of organizations. It tends to assume that the structure and effectiveness of organizations may be explained by material elements (Abel 2005: 500–513) and thus ignores the things in organizational life that stifle the individual and frustrate the attainment of their needs and desires. The governmentality approach attempts to tackle this 'dark side' by analyzing the regimes of governance in organizations, the reasons behind them, and their consequences. Organization is not studied as a stable and formal system of power, but rather the focus is on how governing is structured in the particular situation; on small-scale changes and developments. As Rose (1999b: 11) has pointed out, attention is paid to 'the humble, the mundane, the little shifts in our ways of thinking and understanding, the small and contingent struggles, tensions and negotiations that give rise to something new and unexpected'. Governmentality is also a useful concept in analyzing connections between power and ethics, as ethics for Foucault was a conscious practice of freedom (Ibarra-Colado et al. 2006: 47–48). Ethics is a practice that is intertwined in 'an individual's

freedom to make choices about what to do and who to be, and the organizational context in which those choices are situated, framed and governed' (Ibarra-Colado et al. 2006: 45).

Thus we would like to suggest that the notion of governmentality could be used to understand the workings of organizational control by making an integrating analysis of the dynamics between the systems of control as well as the subjective identity formation entailed in the process of governance. The point of analysis should not be to operate on a preconditioned concept of control perceiving organizational power either in terms of negative/coercive control or positive/productive subjectivity. Instead, we try to include in the analyses both the systems and techniques of governance and the governed subjects, focusing on the links between them: how are the links between the system and subjects produced, and with what consequences. In particular, we like the idea of a regime, which grasps both the structural and personal elements in organizational control. Personhood is not produced in isolation, but is constructed within and conditioned by organizational structures, and we feel that by analyzing the regimes of control, one may perhaps be able to grasp the intermediating dynamics between organizational structures and the people working in them. Thus the analysis would reveal how the surrounding structures condition, subjugate, or enable the subject.

CONCLUSIONS: CONCEPTUAL GAP BETWEEN COERCIVE CONTROL AND PRODUCTIVE SUBJECT FORMATION

What, then, does the Foucauldian notion of power offer to the understanding of organizational control? We are thus seeking answers to the questions posed in the beginning of the paper: 1) What happens to the understanding of organizational control if we re-conceptualize the negative conceptualizations of power included in its premises; and 2) What are the implications for understanding organizational control if we choose to perceive power as potentially productive and enabling rather than viewing power as negative?

In our view, Foucauldian notions of power can without doubt be used to demonstrate the workings of power in negative terms; for instance, seeing organizations as 'surveillance-based organisations' (e.g. Collinson 2003; Deetz 1992). However, as one looks around, it becomes clear that surveillance and coercive power are not the only forms of organizational control, although they can form organization control in certain organizations or, alternatively, they can form part of a particular *regime of control*.

As we claimed earlier in this paper, control is often seen in negative terms, especially in critical studies of control (Deetz 1992, 1998). Perhaps the most problematic elements in the notion of coercive or negative control are, first, subject formation in power regimes and, second, the notion of resistance and struggle as a way of changing systems. First, subject formation in power regimes is a question highlighted in Foucault's writings through the observation that power is productive: modern regimes of control often have well-meaning aims and outcomes. It is also common sense to assume that some employees are satisfied with their work and committed to their organization. Thus subjects should not be seen only as subjugated, alienated, and dominated by rationality or domination. Instead, more attention should be paid to the multitude of ways in which subjects respond to control systems and try to link these responses with the control system while also analyzing the dynamic links between the system and subjects. Subjects can be subjugated, alienated, or dominated, but research into organizational control must also be prepared to examine and understand organizations where subjects feel enabled, empowered, motivated, and 'free'. We feel that this 'productive' side of organizational control is an element of relevance to the ways in which power relations work in contemporary organizations.

We feel that in order to understand control and power in organizations, it is important to describe control systems where workers, or some of them, feel good. In our view, it is also important to understand the reasons why workers are

happy, instead of only assuming them to be carriers of false consciousness or dismissing contentment as nonexistent (see also Huhtala 2004).

This does not imply, however, that the central concerns of critical theory are overlooked and that the critical edge of the analysis of power is blunted. On the contrary, organizational control *can be* and indeed often is restrictive, subjugating, and dominating for the persons involved. We feel that the Foucauldian approach suggested here can be helpful in grasping this restrictive side of control. The Foucauldian view, as suggested by Jermier, Knights and Nord (1994), makes it easier to understand the prevalent power/ knowledge regimes and techniques; this, in turn, enables one to recognize the current system, capitalism, as a historically specific mode of production (1994: 3–4; Knights & Willmott 1999). Foucauldian notions of power are often used to study subject formation or technologies of self (Knight & Willmott 1989, 1999), but personal projects of the subjects are seldom linked with the organizational aims, structures, and control systems in order to show the totality of the dynamics of the control system. Consequently, we suggest that the analysis of control should aim to understand *how* individuals, through their work-related knowledge, are tied to the current systems of rational and normative control, whilst acknowledging that the association between work and self-respect is also historically and culturally specific – something in which we are *taught* to believe (Knights & Willmott 1999: 40; Allen 1998: 164–199). As Knights and Willmott contend, the Foucauldian understanding of power enables us to analyze how work under capitalism is not naturally intrinsic to our self-esteem, but how discursive and disciplinary practices have been applied *to make us believe* (and to make ourselves believe) that this is the case (1999: 40). Moreover, the concept of governmentality suggests that this subjective identity work takes place within regimes of control.

Another problematic idea in theories of domination lies in the question of resistance and revolution, which in Marxist and critical terms is seen as the way to eliminate or change the existing power

system. With regard to a Foucauldian understanding of power, the question of eliminating power by resistance, struggle, and revolution is a rather problematic aim. Foucault (2003: 79) reminded his readers of Marx, who wrote to Engels in a letter in 1882: ‘You know very well where we found our idea of class struggle; we found it in the work of the French historians who talked about the race struggle.’ He notes that the revolutionary project was a modern project believing in a modern type of society, which transformed the race struggle into class struggle and, in a modern way, focused its historical consciousness on revolution and on its promises and prophecies on future emancipation (Foucault 2003: 79–80.) Thus, when organizational power is seen as domination from above, it also suggests that subjects can be liberated by struggle. This, however, might prove to be an overly simplified fallacy. This is not to say that the control systems could or should not be changed. It is important to note, however, that the twofold classification of dominance, which calls for resistance and its application to studies of modern organizations, may not always grasp the dynamics of organizational control (see also Jermier, Knights & Nord 1994).

In our understanding, the theory of organizational control should be developed and articulated in a way that conceptualizes control in a more open-ended way, leaving the question of the nature and forms of control to be investigated in the context of the each particular case. There may of course be regimes with coercive control over laborers’ will; at the same time, however, there may be regimes the have workers’ full consent and commitment. Rather than assuming them as constitutive theoretical models, one should at the outset strive for an analytical framework that allows both productive and coercive elements. The main question is to show how, and with what consequences, the systems of control work in a particular organization, and how the linkages between the organizational system and subject formation are built.

In our view, Foucauldian approaches to power offer analytical concepts and tools for understanding and studying the forms and workings of con-

trol in organizations. By using the notion of governmentality, it is possible to overcome the conceptual gap between *coercive control* and *productive subject formation*, which often seems to be the problem when studying the workings of organizational control. Governmentality opens up a space for investigating the various ways in which power works: mentalities, techniques, and subjectivities. With regard to organizational control, this means that organizational control should be understood as consisting of organizational systems of control *and* the ways in which they address and call subjects, as well as the various ways in which the subjects answer this call, utilize the technologies, and come to govern themselves (see also Rose 1999b: 43).

Moreover, Foucault claimed that while governmentality was developed with the modern state, disciplinary power and pastoral power remain in the modern systems of government (2000: 219–221). For instance, we should not see history in terms of the replacement of a disciplinary society by a society of government, but rather as ‘a triangle, sovereignty – discipline – government, which has as its primary target the population and as its essential mechanism the apparatuses of security’ (Foucault 2000: 219). Thus we should take care not to treat these forms of power as mutually exclusive; it is postulated that the forms of power – disciplinary and pastoral power, as well as governmentality – are likely to be simultaneously active in organizations.

These modern forms of control operate differently, and this difference is closely associated with premises based on a different presupposition of the subject at work. The operation of disciplinary power views the worker as a rather passive being, whereas the operation of pastoral power presumes that the worker is an active being. Thus, along with the operation of power, the position and presumption of the subject at work matters: the worker can be an object or can become a subject for himself or herself, subsequently shifting the *locus* of control from external towards internal. Therefore, the main channel through which control over the subject operates is through the subjectivity of the worker,

with the worker actively working on the self (rather than indirectly through external techniques, systems, and personnel imposition and coercion).

This perception also points to the fact that every organization has its own specific system of control with its particular institutions, knowledge systems, tactics, and strategies pertaining to specific techniques of assessment, evaluation, and subject formation. Thus, organizational control in a local setting can be understood as a *regime of practices* that has its particular outcomes and consequences both for the subjects and for the organization itself. The purpose of the analysis is to understand the dynamics between the system and its subjects. How are systems of information, evaluation, and control formulated when they function as a regime of practices posing expectations for the subject? And how do the subjects respond to the call – how do they experience and fulfill these expectations? What are the conditions for ‘success’ in a particular regime, what kind of conduct is favored, and how do the subjects themselves experience it? Is the particular regime, for example, more punitive or coercive, more depressing or encouraging?

This approach also enables one to examine the more invisible structures of power, as well as leaving scope for a newer type of understanding of subjectivity – one that allows elaboration of the sense of self (Knights & Willmott 1999). The nature of the power that Foucault (1977: 194) presupposes is not simply oppressive, based on domination, inequality, and exploitation; it is also enabling and productive.

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