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**Post-bureaucracy vs. bureaucracy  
in late modernity. A quest for “new  
rules” of organizational analysis**

Louise Briand

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Cahiers du Centre de recherche sur les innovations sociales (CRISES)

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Directeur

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## ABSTRACT

*This article discusses the ongoing debate about organizational transformations, which is centered on the following questions: are the organizational transformations of the last few decades a sign that bureaucracy is declining or gaining momentum? Can we conclude that a post-bureaucratic model is emerging, and if so, is post-bureaucracy spawning an emancipatory management style or a totalitarian regime for workers? Consistent with Alvesson and Thompson (2005), we posit that bureaucracy is alive and well in late modernity, and, like Taylorism (Duval, 1996), is increasingly presenting itself under new guises. While recognizing the contradictions raised by organizational transformations (Alvesson and Thompson, 2005; Casey, 2004; Courpasson and Reed, 2004; Kärreman and Alvesson, 2004; Hodgson, 2004; Clegg and Courpasson, 2004; Maravelias, 2003; Farrell and Morris, 2003; Child and McGrath, 2001), we nevertheless assert that the protraction of the debate is due to a faulty conceptualization of bureaucracy and theoretical and analytical gaps rather than genuine paradoxes. We therefore propose that bureaucracy be viewed as a form of administrative power—an institutional dimension of modernity (Giddens, 1984)—and that its production and reproduction be understood through a study of its structuration. Thus, we argue that the organization is first and foremost a social system in which reflexivity is guided and that its structure and agency be viewed as a duality. We moreover suggest that organizational analysis should acknowledge and accept ambiguity (Alvesson, 1993b; 2004) and be guided by concepts that transcend the disciplines of management sciences and take into account the core nature of the organization, which is to be “a meaningful social world as constituted by lay actors” (Giddens, 1993a). Accordingly, we develop a definition and an analytical framework for the purpose of understanding the organization and its transformation.*

**Keywords.** *Bureaucracy, post-bureaucracy, administrative power, late modernity, structuration theory, organizational analysis, surveillance, Anthony Giddens*

*Louise Briand*



## INTRODUCTION

*Nothing is as practical as a good theory*  
Kurt Lewin

This article discusses the ongoing debate about organizational transformations, which is centered on the following questions: are the organizational transformations of the last few decades a sign that bureaucracy is declining<sup>1</sup> or gaining momentum? Can we conclude that a *post*-bureaucratic model is emerging, and if so, is post-bureaucracy spawning an emancipatory management style or a totalitarian regime for workers?

Consistent with Alvesson and Thompson (2005), we posit that bureaucracy is alive and well in late modernity, and, like taylorism (Duval, 1996), is increasingly presenting itself under new guises. And while recognizing the contradictions raised by organizational transformations (Alvesson and Thompson, 2005; Casey, 2004; Courpasson and Reed, 2004; Kärreman and Alvesson, 2004; Hodgson, 2004; Clegg and Courpasson, 2004; Maravelias, 2003; Farrell and Morris, 2003; Child and McGrath, 2001), we nevertheless assert that the protraction of the debate is due to a faulty conceptualization of bureaucracy and theoretical and analytical gaps rather than genuine paradoxes. We therefore propose that bureaucracy be viewed as a form of administrative power—an institutional dimension of modernity (Giddens, 1984)—and that its production and reproduction be understood through a study of its structuration, in the hope of relativizing the “bureaucracy vs. post-bureaucracy” debate, which, in our opinion, has deflected the attention of critical interpretive researchers from pressing issues.

Giddens (1984) identifies four institutional dimensions of modernity: capitalism, industrialism, administrative power, and control of means of violence. And although the author uses the terms administrative power and surveillance interchangeably to denote the third dimension of modernity, we prefer administrative power to surveillance because we believe that administrative power includes surveillance, but is not limited to it. At any rate, it is from this perspective that we interpret Giddens’ statement in the preface of the French edition of *The Constitution of Society*, published in 1987: “[Translation] The third dimension of modernity is the generation of a growing administrative power that emanates from the control of information and the implementation of specific modes of organizing human activity in space-time [...] (p. 18)”. Moreover, surveillance is closely linked to the work of Foucault, whose conclusions admittedly are useful for theorizing about administrative power (Giddens, 1984), but limited in terms of analyzing organizations. In particular, Foucault makes little room for the reflexivity of actors (Cowton and Dopson, 2002), and his Panopticon control thesis “drastically overestimates the extent to which micro-level developments in control practices can, in and by themselves, seriously undermine the over-reaching structures of power and domination within which they are institutionally embedded” (Reed, 1999: 42). From this statement we deduct that surveillance can support, but is not synonymous with, power and domination.

---

<sup>1</sup> The term bureaucracy refers to the Weberian concept, although bureaucracy existed well before Weber, as Höpfl (2006) explains.

Another important point is that Giddens (1984) does not view surveillance, power (transformational capacity of power) and domination (relational dimension of power) as intrinsically unhealthy or dangerous. Surveillance characterizes all social relations, particularly relations in organizations (Jenkins, 1993). It evinces coordination problems, to be sure (Giddens, 1993a), but can be conceived as a manifestation of the efforts expended to coordinate human activities in organizations<sup>2</sup>. Surveillance therefore provides opportunities for collective action in the organization, but is a source of conflict if its asymmetry supports non-legitimate power or domination of an actor or group of actors over others (Tixier, 1988; Giddens, 1993b).

This article is structured as follows: we analyze the context for the emergence of bureaucracy in modernity and its evolution in late modernity (1). We then explain the details of our general proposal (2) and briefly comment on the themes of flexibility and trust (3). We also develop a structurationist definition of the organization and establish a basic analytical framework that can explore the production and reproduction of bureaucracy and circumscribe its significance and scope (4). In conclusion, we discuss the issues of structurationist analysis and propose possible future research topics.

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<sup>2</sup> “Co-ordination problems, as problems for **actors** [...] arise only [...] when people are trying either to guess or to outguess what others are going to do, having at their disposal the information that others are also trying to do the same with regard to their own likely actions. But in most circumstances in social life, actors do not (consciously) have to do this, in large part precisely **because** of the existence of conventions of terms of which ‘appropriate’ modes of response are taken for granted: this applies to norms as a whole, but with particular force to meaning conventions. When a person says something to another person, his aim is not that of co-ordinating his action to those of others, but of communicating with them in some way, by the use of conventional symbols.” (Giddens, 1993a: 98)

## 1. THE EMERGENCE OF BUREAUCRACY IN MODERNITY AND ITS EVOLUTION IN LATE MODERNITY

### 1.1. From tradition to modernity or the rebuilding of trust

For Giddens (1990), modernity began with a break with tradition and, more particularly, the rejection of destiny and religious cosmology: "...a world structured mainly by humanly created risks has little place for divine influences, or indeed for the magical propitiation of cosmic forces or spirits" (Giddens, 1990: 111). Modernity has thus given agents the sense that the future has become open.

Moreover, modernity is characterized by the "separation of time and space" and the "disembedding of social systems", two conditions of modernity that in turn have led to the metamorphosis of reflexivity. Reflexivity, the third condition of modernity, refers to a body of knowledge that helps provide direction for the future and organize social relations. It is a concept that implies that integration practices henceforth will be re-examined continuously and reformed in light of new knowledge about them that constitutively alters their character.

In modern social systems, the aim of integration practices is to connect "absence and presence" as relations become increasingly suppressed in conditions of co-presence. Some phenomena emerge in this context: the "other" becomes invisible and his process, impenetrable, because activities depend on connections outside conditions of co-presence; social trust therefore becomes difficult, if not impossible, to achieve. However, because trust is the innate vector of ontological security, the increased suppression of relations of co-presence spurs efforts to rebuild trust, which in the circumstances implies to create *systemic trust*. Systemic trust is based on abstract systems (symbolic tokens and expert systems) and results in a displacement of trust (from people to abstract systems).

In this sense, organizations, a fundamental characteristic of modernity (Weber, 1991; Perrow, 1991), become social systems that make up, and are made up of, integration practices (social<sup>3</sup> and system<sup>4</sup>) that enable time-space coordination as part of the trust-building effort. Thus, because modernity makes it possible to establish particular forms of organization of human activity, it generates and integrates institutional dimensions, i.e., capitalism, industrialism, administrative power, and control of the means of violence.

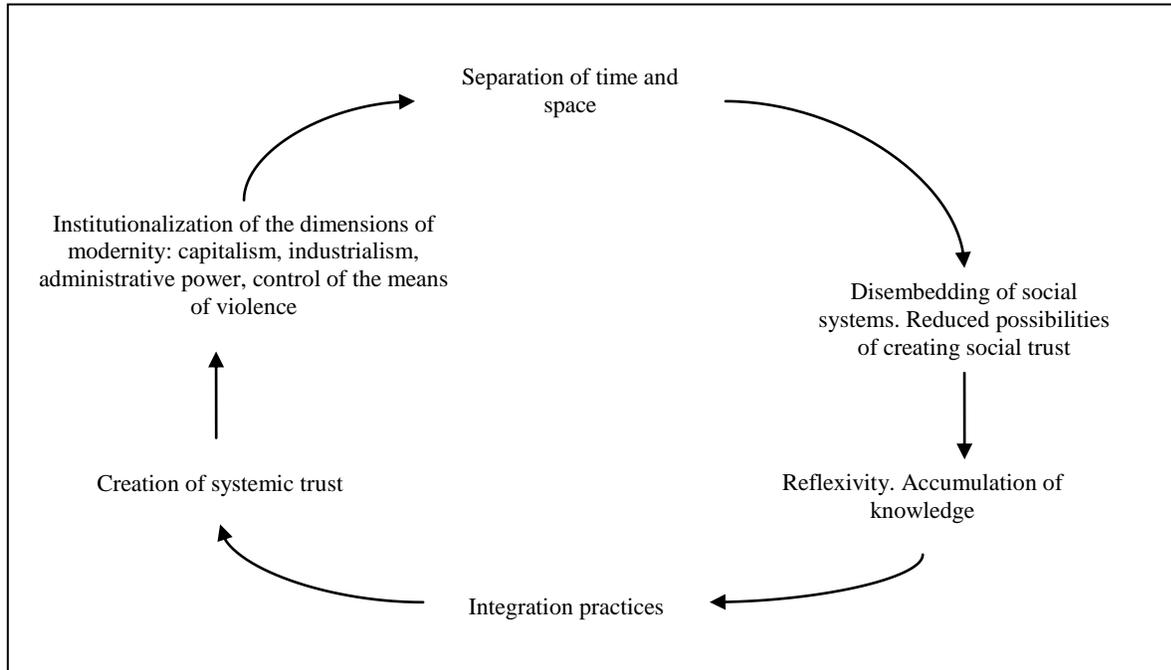
Modernity can therefore be described as a loop consisting of the elements "Separation of time and space – Disembedding of social relations – Reflexivity – Integration practices – Trust – Institutionalization of the dimensions of modernity" (Figure 1). Its circular nature illustrates reflexivity and highlights the fact that integration practices can always be revised.

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<sup>3</sup> "Reciprocity of practices between actors in circumstances of co-presence, understood as continuities in and disjunctions of encounters" (Giddens, 1984: 376).

<sup>4</sup> "Reciprocity between actors or collectivities across extended time-space, outside conditions of co-presence" (Giddens, 1984: 377).

**FIGURE 1**  
**Course of Modernity**

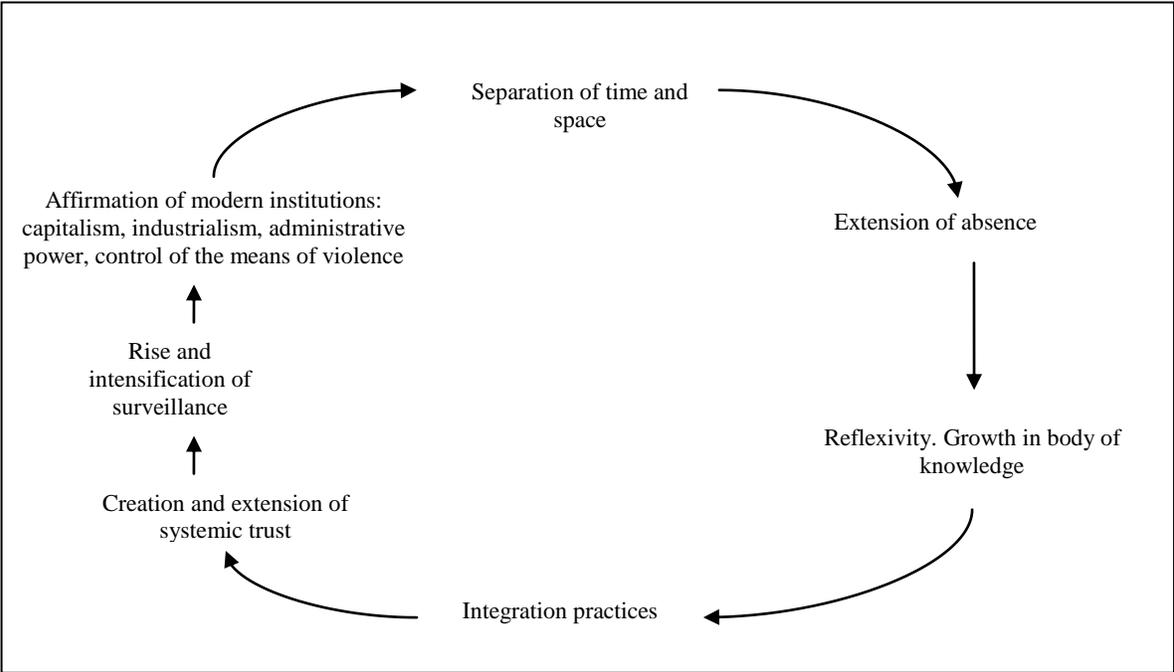


## 1.2. From modernity to late modernity, or the rise of surveillance

Late modernity (from the mid-twentieth century onwards, Audet, 1993) is characterized by increased production of knowledge, and it is spawning the radicalization of modern social organization practices, a state that Giddens (1990; 1998) attributes to: (1) reflexivity and competence of agents; (2) the impossibility of obtaining systematic knowledge about social organizations; (3) the organizational strength of abstract systems, and the autonomy this strength confers; (4) the globalization of risks and threats in societies; and (5) the “major problem” of societies—overall control instead of risk management.

By implication, as the body of knowledge *grows* and systemic trust *extends* in late modernity, integration practices *increase* the separation of time and space, *strengthen* institutions of modernity and *extend* absence. But, because integration practices are a component of power relationships and systemic integration practices do not provide mutual trust experiences (Giddens, 1990), systemic trust gives rise to and intensifies surveillance (Dandeker, 1990) (Figure 2).

**FIGURE 2**  
**Course of Late Modernity**





## 2. BUREAUCRACY IN LATE MODERNITY: A DYNAMIC ADMINISTRATIVE POWER TO EXPLORE

### 2.1. Bureaucracy: a form of administrative power

Within the framework of the institutionalized dimensions of modernity, the previous diagram (Figure 2) suggests that administrative power supports knowledge and the structuration of integration practices, and is supported by these factors in turn.

Thus, bureaucracy, a type of administrative power (Giddens, 1984), 1) develops with the accumulation of knowledge and social activity, 2) relies on and supports the conditions of modernity and 3) has the means of stabilizing trust in time-space in a context characterized by the disembedding of social relations. Bureaucracy is therefore both the process and outcome of integration practices (rules and hierarchical organization, for example) that have sustained and constrained its constitution in an effort to rebuild trust:

[Translation] To the somewhat "blind" trust [social trust] of a "community," "society" can add or substitute another type of trust that can be called a "rational" or "legal" trust, consonant with Weber's legal domination typology. "Rational" trust, constitutive of "society," ensures the existence of a framework within which can be expressed most social relations typical of a partnership. (Lazuech, 2002: 16)

Bureaucracy therefore originates from a project of economic and social *order* founded on domination (Weber, 1971; Chandler, 1977; Wren, 1994), but because order is more of a pattern in social systems (Giddens, 1993a) than a formal organizational method, bureaucracy is reproduced and transformed according to changes in human activity and the intended or unintended consequences of activities in modernity and late modernity.

We therefore hypothesize that the content of bureaucracy hinges on its ability to ensure integration and sustain trust, and it is specifically this ability—or lack of it—that explains its reproduction and transmutation. From this perspective, so-called "post-bureaucratic" models are no more than an evolutionary form of bureaucracy. Successive management practices are therefore conceived as "theories-in-use" ("discursively formulated beliefs...that actors hold", Giddens, 1984) that define the various historical periods of bureaucracy.

The expression "management practices" denotes organizational forms (hierarchical, project-based, network, etc.) as well as management tools (rules, project management technology, contingent work, outsourcing, re-engineering, ERP, etc.). Management practices that endure in time and space become the keys to the reproduction of bureaucracy; conversely, when they evolve in time and space they are viewed as key to the transmutation of bureaucracy.

In this view, whether bureaucracy is at the origin of instrumental relations matters little. Bureaucracy both constitutes and is constituted by structural properties, integration practices and social relations. It relies on structural traits (the capitalist work contract, most prominently), and refers to other social systems (legal or scientific frameworks). Hence, bureaucracy cannot be reduced to a list of components, a problematic identification exercise most notably because when Weber's descriptions are compared, "[T]here are substantial discrepancies and variations between the different accounts, even regarding what is 'essential', or definitive of the ideal typical bureaucracy." (Höplf, 2006: 11).

## **2.2. Bureaucracy: a dynamic administrative power**

Based on the preceding information, bureaucracy enables (Giddens, 1990) and is enabled by the rise of the society of organizations (Weber, 1991; Perrow, 1991) as a component of the trust rebuilding effort. Bureaucracy as an administrative power is a system of domination based on "the control of information as well as the implementation of specific modes of organizing human activity in space-time control" (Giddens, 1984). (According to Giddens, the theme of the transformation of time and space exists in Weber's works, but only implicitly.)

At a micro level, bureaucracy can be understood as a "political dynamic", "[Translation] a project that those in power must constantly work at, solidify and justify" (Courpasson, 2000a). It is at once a source of power and of power struggles because managers in late modernity are not alone in their quest for control (Child, 2005; Deetz, 1992), any governed individual can view himself as a competent actor (Audet, 1986), there is a strong observed tendency to organizational fragmentation (Reed, 1989; Reed 1996), and legitimacies with federating claims are proliferating (Kochan, Batt and Dyer, 1992; Chandler and Daems, 1979). Bureaucracy in late modernity must therefore be analyzed as a *dynamic* administrative power in light of a theory that lets us understand its constitution.

In short, we cannot conclude that bureaucracy is declining or that a post-bureaucratic organizational model is emerging. Rather, we should revisit the perspective from which bureaucracy and its transformations are analyzed and seek new explanations. We believe that these may be obtained through the structuration theory.

### 3. STATUS OF ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSFORMATIONS RESEARCH

Bureaucracy is usually defined by its content, an exercise that invokes more difficulties than it solves, as we have seen. Furthermore, orthodox researchers exclude political issues or dynamic properties from their analysis of organizational forms. This is particularly the case with Mintzberg (1979)<sup>5</sup> and Heckscher and Donnellon (1994). Analyses based on an uncertain ideal-type (Höpfl, 2006), coupled with a tendency to dichotomize (mechanic vs. organic, centralization vs. decentralization, Alvesson and Thompson, 2005) in allegedly a-political contexts (Courpasson, 2000b), do not lead to comprehension of the meaning and impact of the transformations of bureaucracy.

Critical interpretive researchers are ambivalent about the evolution of bureaucracy and/or the post-bureaucracy phenomenon. A good number of empirical studies (see Alvesson and Thompson, 2005 for survey) indeed demonstrate that hierarchical structures are more or less "loose", while control is more or less technical or social, information technologies are more or less present, rules are more or less internalized, and social relations, more or less direct, etc. Bureaucracy then becomes "soft" (Courpasson, 2000b; Robertson and Swan, 2004), "lite" (Hales, 2002), a "legacy" (Hodgson, 2004), migratory (MacKenzie, 2002), even ghostly ("the return of the machine bureaucracy" Kärreman, Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2002), making it difficult to attribute meaning to the evolution of organizational forms and practices.

Nevertheless, we glean from Alvesson and Thompson (2005) that bureaucracy still exists ("bureaucratic forms [are not] confined to a few residual institutional niches such as the public sector"; "...falls in the size of individual units and decentering organizations may change the forms of bureaucracy but they do not necessarily diminish its impact;" "[bureaucracy] is a living, changing, and diverse set of practices") and, in particular, that we must refine our analysis of organizational transformations and practices in order to assess their impacts.

To really understand the presence and significance of bureaucracy requires in-depth exploration of organizational practices in different sectors and sections of organizations, thus escaping traditional analytical dichotomies such as mechanistic-organic and centralization-decentralization. Forms of control and coordination do not only interact, overlap with, or weaken one another; managers may comply with, reinforce, or circumscribe bureaucracy. [...] Caution is therefore required before ticking off bureaucratic or post-bureaucratic control forms without checking their meaning and impact carefully and in practice. (p. 501).

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<sup>5</sup> The French version of *The structuring of organizations: A synthesis of the research* is entitled [translation] *The dynamic structure of organizations*. But despite Mintzberg's explicit reference to the dynamic aspect of organizational structures, we believe his configurations to be dynamic in name only.

Above all it is our belief that analysis poses a greater challenge than that of organizational transformations issues or the bureaucracy vs. post-bureaucracy debate. Defining and analyzing the *organization* is the challenge to be tackled, and it lies on the recognition that an organization, whether private, public, merchant, or of the social economy, is first and foremost a *social system*. Specifically, this is the challenge and task for the analytical framework presented in the fourth section.

## 4. UPDATE ON FLEXIBILITY AND TRUST

At this point we will briefly comment on flexibility and trust, concepts frequently associated with the evolution of organizational forms and management tools.

Some authors assert that the quest for flexibility is crucial (Peters, 1992) and genuine (Heckscher and Donnellon, 1994), and is heightened in the knowledge economy. Enabled by new information and communication technologies (Castells, 2001), it is spawning the emergence of the "network", an alternative mode of governance to market and hierarchy (Powell, 1990) and stimulating the search for new coordination mechanisms (De Fillipi, 2002). Thus some researchers have come to study trust<sup>6</sup>. Adler (2001) for example, distinguishes three ideal typical forms of organizations and corresponding mechanisms: market/price, hierarchy/authority, community/trust. He suggests that as knowledge becomes increasingly important, we should expect the community form and trust to proliferate.

We recognize the relevance of flexibility and trust as theories-in-use that should be studied. However, they pose definition problems when their analysis lacks contextuality<sup>7</sup>.

### 4.1. Flexibility, an underdeveloped research topic

First of all, we glean from Giddens that bureaucracy is not characterized by rigidity (as Alvesson and Thompson, 2005; Kallinikos 2004 and 2003; Adler and Borys, 2001, also affirm).

Weber's characterization of bureaucracy is inadequate. Rather than tending inevitably towards rigidity, organisations produce areas of autonomy and spontaneity—which are actually often less easy to achieve in smaller groups. We owe this counterinsight to Durkheim, as well as to subsequent empirical study of organizations. The closed climate of opinion within some small groups and the modes of direct sanction available to its members fix the horizons of action much more narrowly and firmly than in larger organizational settings. (Giddens, 1990: 138)

From the structurationist perspective, any given circumstance presents constraints and opportunities alike, and bureaucracy is no exception. Therefore, the quest for flexibility does not necessarily imply a break with bureaucracy.

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<sup>6</sup> Trust has garnered the attention of many researchers since Zucker (1986) because of its potential to improve the general operations (Dirks and Ferrin, 2001) and social climate of organizations (Messmer, 2001, Prusak and Cohen, 2001) and reduce complexity and uncertainty (Hummels and Rosendaal, 2001)

<sup>7</sup> Giddens (1984) defines contextuality as "the situated character of interaction in time-space, involving the setting of interaction, actors co-present and communication between them." (p. 373)

We especially believe that flexibility should be characterized before its impact is measured, namely by analyzing it in light of administrative power. To support our statement we refer to Tarondeau's (1999) typology of flexibility forms and his observations of the implementation of flexibility. We also refer to the results of a case study (Briand and Bellemare, 2006b).

According to Tarondeau (1999), flexibility can take many forms (strategic, operational, internal or external) and is implemented in a variety of ways (flexible products, technologies and organizations, or changes in the number of employees or in qualification levels or levels of autonomy). The author points out that a organization's overall flexibility depends on an ingenious dosage of forms and sources, but that public opinion supports only a limited acceptance of flexibility, with a preference for quantitative flexibility in work and employment matters. Thus, in order to really understand flexibility and to assess its impacts, it is required to characterize and contextualize it.

The results of a case study involving an international development agency that radically overhauled its management practices demonstrate the need to qualify flexibility and analyze it in light of administrative power. The management reform 1) supported the displacement of surveillance and its intensification, 2) brought about a new "order" that relied on a centralized governance model and flexible, contingent co-ordination, and 3) contributed to the production of a new domination structure. An analysis of the reform showed in fact that the organization's senior managers ended up 1) introducing institutional programming, and 2) instituting temporary contract hiring to ensure the organization had a "contingency work force". In doing so, senior managers reduced the organization's strategic flexibility while weakening the professional power of nonetheless highly qualified workers. After the reform was complete, the organization's flexibility was more evident in worker issues than in strategies because workforce flexibility took the place of "product" flexibility. Furthermore, the reform enabled senior managers to gain control over the setting of orientations, a zone historically occupied by workers. Lastly, as a recruitment method that allows top managers to influence workers' lifestyle choices, contract work became a source of domination for the former as it gave them a new zone of control over the latter.

From the preceding information we observe that flexibility can lead to renewed concepts of autonomy, control and "contested terrain" issues (Edwards, 1979) that could become fragmented into zones that evolve in tandem with changes in the dynamics of administrative power. This observation contrasts with the view of autonomy and control as binary variables and "terrain" as a monolithic block. As long as we also carefully examine the underpinnings of its implementation, the study of flexibility could uncover other major issues (e.g., availability of lifestyles for actors) and related questions (e.g., how is it that knowledge workers become subject to extreme work conditions? Why won't they resist? Kärreman and Alvesson, 2005). Therefore we conclude that flexibility as a research topic must be developed further and its analysis contextualized in order to assign meaning to the organizational forms and management tools it gives rise to.

## 4.2. Is trust an alternative coordination mechanism?

Contrary to Adler's suggestion (2001), we contend, for several reasons, that trust is not *a priori* a coordination mechanism for corporate networks.

One reason has to do with the thesis about the trust rebuilding effort that characterizes modernity and late modernity (Giddens, 1990; Giddens, 2004). Trust is not a distinctive feature of a particular organizational form but an element in the "[Translation] lengthy rationalization process that has been operative in Western society for the past two centuries" (Lazuech, 2002: 15).

A second reason concerns the need to conceptualize trust, i.e., to consider it a continuous process that changes according to actors' movements, issues, power struggles, technical developments, and the emergence of rationalities and legitimacies (Bellemare and Briand, 1999). From this perspective, we see zones of trust with regard to certain organizational practices, issues and expected outcomes. It therefore becomes important to explore the somewhat untapped issue of who/which group trusts in whom/which other group, and with regard to what issue(s)?

Third, while recognizing that integration practices serve to create trust in organizations, we argue that they also are a necessary component of power relations (Jenkins, 1993), likely to be founded on abstract systems that do not provide a mutual trust experience. Thus created, trust becomes surveillance (Briand, 2001; Briand and Bellemare, 2005b)<sup>8</sup>. In an interorganization network, there is no reason to believe that partners interact as equals, given the various forms that strategic alliances (contractual agreement, co-enterprise, virtual enterprise, or spinoffs, Tarondeau and Huttin, 2001) and outsourcing (suppliers, subcontracting, co-contracting, commissions, franchises, licences, or concessions, Poitevin, 1999) can take. It is therefore possible to generate more surveillance than trust depending on the type of connections and the integration processes implemented to coordinate the organizations involved.

Lastly, strategic alliances in their various forms, and outsourcing solutions in particular, can be viewed as outcomes of an economic arbitration exercise whose parameters are "Cost of Developing Expertise", "Value Added", "Transaction Costs", and "Risk" (Williamson, 1975). But they can also be viewed as work distribution processes that are adopted provided that "[Translation] the uncertainty surrounding the execution of the work remains tolerable" (Roy and Audet, 2003) for the dominant actors. Considered from this angle the new forms are adopted despite the *lack of trust* they likely generate. Consistent with Sydow and Windeler (1998), we conclude that it is not appropriate to make assumptions concerning the qualifications of interorganization network relations or the processes that may characterize them.

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<sup>8</sup> For example, a budget can be conceptualized as an integration practice. It is the monetary expression of the organization's strategic directions but also a tool that helps coordinate the activities of several actors and allows control of expected results. As a result, a budget is a management practice through which reciprocal relations can be established. Defined as an integration practice, a budget creates trust in organizations, but trust is not necessarily shared if, for example, senior managers are the only stakeholders able to monitor the budget.

### 4.3. Flexibility and trust : How, why and for whom ?

While acknowledging the value of flexibility and trust as research topics, we still believe in the need to understand *how, why and for whom* flexibility and trust are actualized. In answer to this question, we feel there is a need to understand the nature of organizational transformations and locate them in their specific contexts. Overall, there is a need to “broaden the frame of reference” (Procter, 2005<sup>9</sup>), or else risk developing theoretical definitions of management practices, structures and social relations.

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<sup>9</sup> Procter (2005) argues that the development of formal knowledge of organization can be understood as a double movement, from a narrow focus on work to a broad concern with productive systems and, at the same time, from concern about control to concern about flexibility and adaptivity, which may come from less direct control.

## 5. "NEW RULES" OF ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS

Most sociologists, including even many working within frameworks of interpretative sociology, have failed to recognize that social theory, no matter how "macro" its concerns, demands a sophisticated understanding of agency and the agent just as much as it does an account of the complexities of society. It is precisely such an understanding that *New Rules* seeks to develop. (Giddens, 1993: 5)

We borrowed the "New Rules expression" from Anthony Giddens, as well as the idea that new rules should inspire organizational analysis, as Giddens himself did with the publication of *New Rules of Sociological Method* (1993a, first published in 1976). More than a play on words, the borrowed expression reflects Giddens's thinking in that the proposed rules for organizational study are not 'rules' in the strict sense but more of "a skeleton statement<sup>10</sup>" of some of the themes to study in and around the organization. Specifically, new rules of organizational analysis imply that structurationist analysis is not conducted simply in strictly methodological terms but is a genuine option for viewing and understanding the organization and its actors.

We believe that the framework developed in this section is faithful to Giddens' new rules statement and is moreover likely to contribute to it because it integrates the "complexities of society" to enhance understanding of "the agency and the agent".

### 5.1. Structurationist analysis of the organization

We hypothesize that the organization is first and foremost a *social system*. Social system refers to:

[T]he patterning of social relations across time-space understood as reproduced practices. Social systems should be regarded as widely variable in terms of the degree of 'systemness' they display and rarely have the sort of internal unity which may be found in physical and biological systems. (Giddens, 1984: 377)

An organization has a structure (rules and resources) and actors who, in our view, are themselves as being in a state of *duality*, given that "the rules and resources drawn upon in the production and reproduction of social action are at the same time the means of system reproduction" (Giddens, 1984: 19). Accordingly, explanation of its transformation may be obtained through the structuration theory.

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<sup>10</sup> Giddens (1993a) posits that his statement is only part of a sociological programme research. Giddens breaks down his statement into 4 sub-classifications: 1) subject-matter of sociology, production and reproduction of society, 2) the boundaries of agency, and the modes in which processes of production and reproduction may be examined, 3) the modes in which social life is 'observed' and characterizations of social activity established, 4) the formulation of concepts within the meaning-frames of social sciences as metalanguages.

However, the goal of structuration theory being the explanation of the constitution of society, a structurationist analysis of the organization requires that a) the organization be defined under the same terms, and b) the analysis is adapted. Consequently, in this section we present the fundamental elements of structuration theory (1), develop a structurationist definition of the organization (2), and conclude by illustrating our concept of an organization's operations (3) and how it should be analyzed (4).

### **5.1.1. Fundamental elements of structuration**

Structuration theory explains the constitution of social systems, their conditions and criteria of change or continuity (production and reproduction). This theory is based on agents and their social practices within structures situated in time and space.

In structuration theory, the classic structure-action dualism is replaced by the concept of “duality of structure”. According to this concept, the rules and resources of a social system are both the conditions and results of the activities accomplished by the agents who are part of this system (Giddens, 1984).

The reconceptualization of the structure/action dualism, which is central to structuration theory, leads to the rejection of the structural or functional explanation and requires that the agent and his action also be reconceptualized. Thus, in structuration theory, competence no longer relies on reasons, expertise or roles, but on the possibility that an agent can (1) monitor the material and social elements of the system in which he acts and (2) influence the conditions of the other person's action. In addition, because agents can never know or recognize all the conditions of which their actions are a part, these actions generate intended and unintended consequences, thus resulting in reflexivity. The theory therefore explains the directed, but not determined, behaviour of the agent in social systems situated in time and space.

### **5.1.2. Structurationist definition of the organization**

In this sub-section we offer three variations of a structurationist definition of the organization—a progressive construction through which we justify the use of structurationist theory for studying the “organization”.

#### *1. Definition: first state*

Based on Giddens (1984), we deduct that society is a social system 1) associated with a territory, 2) whose structural principles help produce and reproduce a group of institutions, and 3) in which normative elements constitute the legitimate occupation of territory and also their own production or transmutation, 4) while giving system members the impression of sharing a common identity. How this feeling is manifested or expressed is of little importance for the author.

Starting with the hypothesis that the organization is a social system, its definition must clarify its 1) positioning 2) role in society, 3) structural principles, and 4) impact on the identity of the actors who belong to it.

Therefore, from a structurationist perspective, an organization is a social system that:

- 1) Is positioned in time and space;
- 2) Helps produce and reproduce the institutional dimensions of society in modernity and late modernity (capitalism, industrialism, administrative power, control of the means of violence);
- 3) Consists in a set of structural properties<sup>11</sup> that:
  - a. constitute the system's legitimate occupation;
  - b. constitute the framework for day-to-day social activity;
  - c. are both the conditions and results of the activities of agents who belong to it;
  - d. include the conditions of their reproduction;
- 4) Gives agents the feeling of sharing an identity, regardless of how this feeling is manifested or expressed<sup>12</sup>.

This definition allows us to relativize the functional character of the combination of human, material, financial, informational, and energy resources and identify the core nature of the organization, which is first and foremost a social system. Also, as structuration theory is confined to neither time nor space, it leads to a definition that can apply to all organizations (manufacturing, service or knowledge), which are then understood as action settings that contribute to the reproduction and transformation of administrative power, capitalism and industrialism.

## 2. *Definition: second state*

Since the organization is, from the outset, a social construct with goals (social and economic), its establishment is guided by objectives influenced by domination and value judgments. These two factors influence the establishment of the organization's structural properties, which in turn

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<sup>11</sup> We use the expression "structural properties", as Giddens (1984) reserves the expression "structural principles" for the principles of the social organization of societal totalities.

<sup>12</sup> On this topic, see Alvesson (1993a; 2002; 2004) and Alvesson and Robertson (2006).

control<sup>13</sup> “what must be”. Thus the organization centres the agent’s attention and constrains him to increase its capacity (Simon, 1945 and 1992) in order to guarantee that a given state becomes an “ideal state” (Simon, 1974).

The organization is thus a tool, but not in a reductive sense because it is constituted by goals to be attained as well as by science and technology. Thus it is a coordination system that can create a “universe of events” (Giddens, 1993) while remaining subject to reflexivity and unintended consequences. Reflexivity in an organization is nevertheless a *guided* phenomenon because action cannot be dissociated from the organizations’s objectives without the agent experiencing sanctions. Recall that in society, reflexivity is a factor that acts upon society itself; for example, Giddens (1990) explains that divorce statistics can influence an individual’s decision about whether or not to marry, but do not govern that decision. However, since the organization is a hierarchical system in which social relations are strongly influenced by power and domination (Jenkins, 1993), its definition should be revised (changes are in italics).

The organization is a social system that:

- 1) Is positioned in time and space;
- 2) Helps produce and reproduce the institutional dimensions of society in modernity and late modernity (capitalism, industrialism, administrative power, control of the means of violence);
- 3) *Has one or more constitutive objectives to guide agents’ reflexivity, a character of human behaviour that reproduces or transforms them;*
- 4) Consists in a set of structural properties that:
  - a. constitute the system’s legitimate occupation;
  - b. constitute the framework for day-to-day social activity;
  - c. are both the conditions and results of the activities of the agents who belong to it;
  - d. include the condition of their reproduction;
- 5) Gives agents the feeling of sharing an identity, regardless of how this feeling is manifested or expressed.

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<sup>13</sup> “In the broad sense control has the purpose of conforming behaviour of some person or thing to a desired state of affairs.” (Anthony, 1988: 17)

This amended definition runs counter to and draws together other concepts<sup>14</sup> of the organization, thus overcomes the difficulties surrounding reliability and generalizability of concepts that lack empirical foundations in time and/or space.

Furthermore, the amendment integrates the "reflexive competence" inherent in human activity *as well as* the weight of structural properties in the organization. This is a significant amendment because it demonstrates that when structuration theory is adapted adequately to organizational analysis, it does not "collapse structure into agency" (Reed, 2003). There is therefore no need to reify structure, as proponents of the "relationist/realist" perspective appear to suggest (see Reed, 2003, on this topic<sup>15</sup>).

### 3. *Definition of the final state*

In the preceding states, the organization helps produce and reproduce the institutional dimensions of society. Since the agents in the organization cannot coalesce without taking into account the institutional dimensions of the organization in which they operate (Giddens, 1984; Eraly, 1988), the organization is also the result of prior and concurrent forces, and therefore, the condition and result of other social processes (for example, the legislative process, Dupuy, 1992). Thus it is founded on<sup>16</sup> a set of standards constructed in modernity (Giddens, 1984 and 1990, Dandeker, 1990) - intensified in post-modernity (Giddens, 1990) - that constitute administrative power and facilitate and constrain<sup>17</sup> the governance, coordination and control of the system (Dandeker, 1990).

Additional changes are therefore necessary to make a "structurationist" analysis of the organization possible. This is accomplished by defining structural properties through the rules and resources that constitute them.

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<sup>14</sup> The modern organization is a mechanism that improves the coordination and distribution of resources (Chandler, 1977) and regulates exchanges to offset the spontaneous vagaries of the market (Coase, 1937). The organization is further a mechanism that resolves complex situations by assembling a delegation of experts to find solutions to multidimensional problems, and is also a response to individual boundaries (Arrow, 1976). It is a group of people working on one or more goals (Anthony, 1965) as well as a system with goals implemented by a network (of varying size or length) of influence on decision making and execution, that requires coordination, i.e., that centres agents' attention and gives a leader the responsibility of reinforcing conformity to established norms and constraining individual decisions and actions in order to guarantee collective efficiency (Simon, 1945). The organization is an everyday place of activity and therefore a space of socialization that cannot be pre-defined (Francfort, Osty, Sainsaulieu and Uhalde, 1995). It is an unstable system that changes in accordance with the action of stakeholders, thereby providing the ongoing possibility of establishing a new order or new legitimation to shake the rules of authority and decision that previously had been self-maintained (Reynaud, 1989; Thévenot, 1993).

<sup>15</sup> "For relationists/realists, 'organization' is that mechanism which generates and sustains collective or 'corporate agency' as a relatively permanent feature of social reality. It transforms individual action into corporate agency by providing the collective resources and mechanisms that the latter requires to be sustained over time as a viable and effective social entity. As a transformative mechanism or resource, organization possesses certain causal powers and competencies that may or may not be selectively activated in specific social situations." (Reed, 2003: 303).

<sup>16</sup> For example, the *Canadian Business Corporations Act* contains sections setting out the powers and responsibilities of directors and officers (Part X) and the rights of shareholders (Part XII). Overall, the *Act* is a set of rules that provide the foundation for the domination of directors and officers and the production of policies, guidelines, and so forth. "[Translation] Social relations are part of a political process framework in which the State has a role, and are codified by various institutional tools—collective agreements, the labour code, environmental standards, laws and regulations concerning shareholders, etc. The rules of this game constitute a space in which individuals can interact without endless contention." (Bélanger and Lévesque, 1992: 22-23)

<sup>17</sup> According to Dandeker (1990), economic rights hinge on relationships between the capital and labour centered on the organization, but must be established within the legislative framework of the nation-state, which normally guarantees a degree of social rights.

Giddens (1984) supports the thesis that there are two types of rules: 1) intensive rules, which are tacit, informal, and weakly sanctioned (for example, language), and 2) shallow rules, which are discursive, formalized, and strongly sanctioned (such as laws, policies and guidelines). Shallow rules refer to domination and the use of signification and legitimation in procuring resources to would-be dominators of the organization (Giddens, 1984).

The existence of two types of rules implies that agents have a differentiated relationship with the conditions of activity and its results. In the organization, some agents establish more of the conditions (shallow rules), and others, the results. Differentiation is nevertheless influenced by the porousness of organization boundaries and the dialectic of control, because the production and reproduction of rules is associated with the resources available to the dominant actors rather than with the actors' roles (Dandeker, 1990). The theory supports the idea that a social system, even one that is normalized, cannot be viewed strictly in terms of a structure-agency or agent-agent dualisms, but rather as a whole in duality.

Giddens (1984) identifies two types of resources: allocative resources, which control material features, and authoritative resources, which control agents (Table 1). This distinction is vital to the study of social system reproduction, given the author's assertion (Giddens, 1984) that the control of material resources does not ensure that social and systemic integration will be strongly influenced. What is more, Giddens asserts that the reproduction of domination and the production of a new order require the use of authoritative resources.

The augmenting of material resources is fundamental to the expansion of power, but allocative resources cannot be developed without the transmutation of authoritative resources, and the latter are undoubtedly at least as important in providing "levers" of social change as the former. (Giddens, 1984: 260)

**TABLE 1**  
**Allocative and authoritative resources**

| <i>Allocative resources</i>  | <i>Authoritative resources</i>  |
|--|---|
| 1 Material features of the environment<br>(raw materials, material power sources)          | 1 Organization of social time-space<br>(temporal-spatial constitution of paths<br>and regions)                |
| 2 Means of material production/<br>reproduction (instruments of production,<br>technology) | 2 Production/reproduction of the body<br>(organization and relation of human<br>beings in mutual association) |
| 3 Produced goods (artefacts created by<br>the interaction of 1 and 2)                      | 3 Organization of life chances (constitution<br>of chances of self-development and self-<br>expression)       |

Source: Giddens, 1984, p. 258

Giddens' (1984) clarification of rules and resources leads to a revised definition highlighting the organization's normalizing and normalized character (changes in italics).

The organization is a social system that:

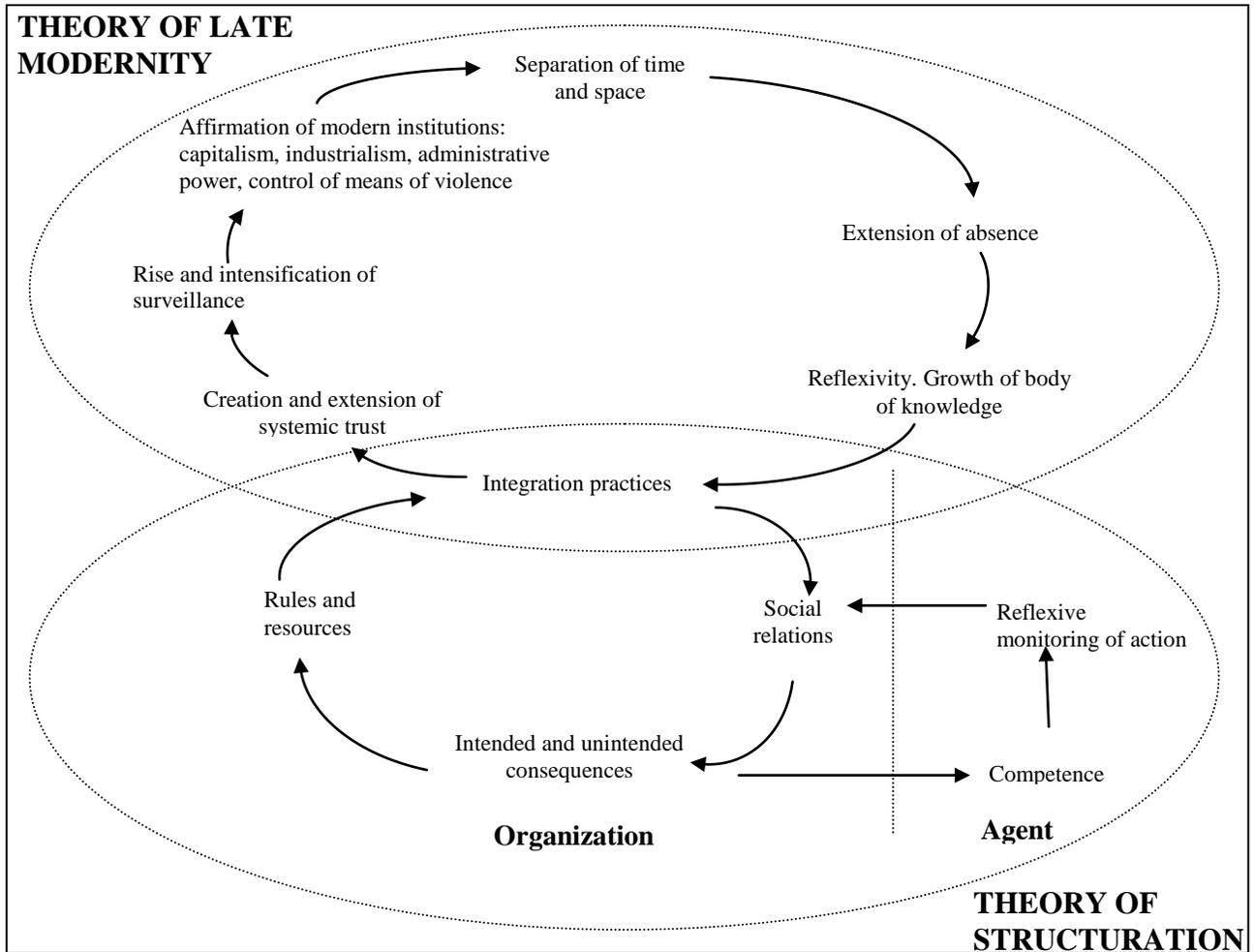
- 1) Is positioned in time and space;
- 2) Helps produce and reproduce the *intensive and shallow rules* and institutional dimensions of society in modernity and late modernity (capitalism, industrialism, administrative power, control of the means of violence);
- 3) Has one or more constitutive objectives that guide agents' reflexivity, a character of human behaviour that reproduces or transforms them;
- 4) *Is constituted by the institutional dimensions and intensive and shallow rules of society;*
- 5) Consists in a set of *intensive and shallow rules and allocative and authoritative resources that:*
  - a. constitute the system's legitimate occupation;
  - b. constitute the framework for day-to-day social activity;

- c. *govern the definition and promotion of codes of signification in order to mobilize legitimation;*
  - d. *enable and constrain the structuration of management practices that guide the reflexive control of agents;*
  - e. are both the conditions and results of the activities of the agents who belong to it;
  - f. include the conditions of their reproduction;
- 6) Gives agents the feeling of sharing an identity, regardless of how this feeling is manifested or expressed.

### **5.1.3. Operation of the organization from the structurationist perspective**

In light of the theory's fundamental concepts and the proposed definition, an organization can be likened to a circular flowchart consisting of rules and resources, integration practices, and social relations, in which agents are able to intentionally and unintentionally "make a difference" (Figure 3, bottom portion). The circularity occurs within a society constituted by and constitutive of institutions that the organization helps produce or transform (Figure 3, top portion). As a whole, Figure 3 combines structurationist and late modernity theories, placing the organization and its practices in late modernity, thus expressing structural duality at a second level, that of society-organization.

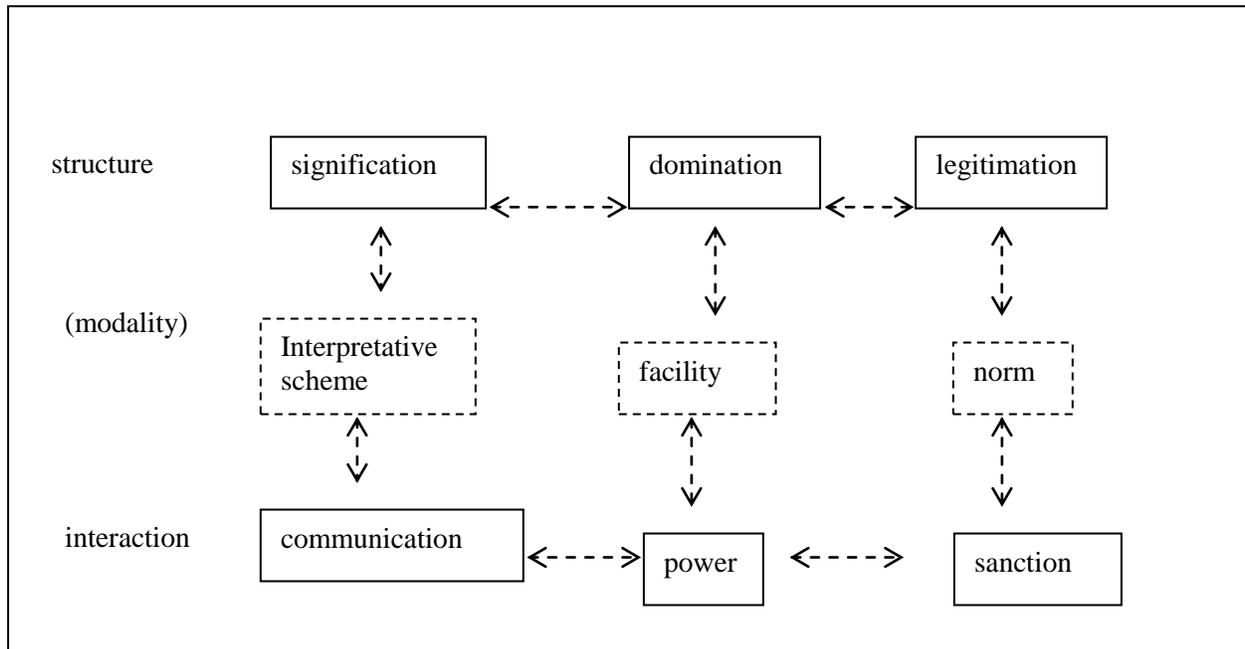
**FIGURE 3**  
**Operation of the organization from the structurationist perspective**



5.1.4. Structurationist analysis of the organization

A structurationist analysis implies that structural properties (rules and resources) are conceptualized separately from social relationships to highlight the integration practices that ground them. Grounding does not mean that cohesion exists, because the continuity/transformation of social systems is as much a part of conflict as it is of harmony. Understanding a social system thus starts with the study of the dimensions of duality of structure and their components (Figure 4).

**FIGURE 4**  
**Dimensions of duality of structure**



Source: Giddens 1984, p. 29

Figure 4 illustrates that in the absence of interaction there is a set of structural properties (structure) that can be examined in light of the “signification”, “domination” and “legitimation” components; that social relations (interaction) can be examined through ‘communication’, ‘power’ and ‘sanction’. Lastly, and most importantly, for Giddens the structural properties are actualized by activity and so their functioning<sup>18</sup> cannot be studied without drawing on history. Figure 4 thus illustrates the need to study and contextualize the grounding of structure and interaction. This study is possible through an analysis of social and systemic integration practices (modality), which constitute the foundation for the coordination of structure and agency.

The study of day-to-day life is integral to analysis of the reproduction of institutionalized practices. [...] However, day-to-day life should not be treated as the “foundation” upon which the more ramified connections of social life are built. Rather, these more far-flung connections should be understood in terms of an interpretation of social and system integration. (Giddens, 1984: 282)

The analysis of integration practices begins through exploration, i.e., describing and interpreting empirical data about mutual knowledge in a social system. Mutual knowledge is knowledge of know-how in the life forms that agents of a given social system have in common. It is an amalgam of conventions derived from common sense and specialized understandings introduced through the activities of experts (Giddens, 1993a). Their activity brings specialized knowledge into the general

<sup>18</sup> “A structure can be described “out of time” but its functioning cannot.” (Giddens, 1993a: 127)

culture of a system. The distinction between the conventions derived from common sense and these specialized understandings is purely analytical because the agents of a social system integrate specialized knowledge in a reflexive manner, even when they do not have the expertise from which the knowledge emanated or are unable to express that knowledge discursively.

In light of Giddens' statements (1993a), management practices can be likened to integration practices. In the organization, management practices represent the knowledge agents have in common, and make the pursuit of day-to-day activities possible. They are an amalgam of conventions derived from common sense and specialized knowledge (accounting, project management technology, for example), brought into the general culture of an organization by its agents. Through management practices, actors know what, how and with whom they can do what is required (Briand, 2004).

The structurationist analysis of the organization can therefore be viewed as a classification of empirical data<sup>19</sup> into each of the dimensions of the duality of structure and their components (see Figure 4), resulting in an analytical grid that can pinpoint structural properties and social relationships and identify the management practices that govern their structuration.

## **5.2. Structurationist analysis of administrative power**

In this section we break from the stepwise method of the preceding section to adopt an overall perspective, and then provide explanatory comments. We begin by presenting a general framework for the structurationist analysis of administrative power, then explain its theoretical foundations and conclude with the analytical points of the framework.

### **5.2.1. *Administrative power, a combination of three configurations***

The analytical grid obtained by classifying empirical data into each dimension of the duality of structure is vital to the description of an organization, but somewhat unsuited to the exploration and understanding of administrative power, its dynamic, and its attendant continuities and transformations.

Indeed, the analytical grid cannot be used to understand the production and reproduction of intensive and shallow rules, allocative and authoritative resources, and integration forms, which are parameters essential to an understanding of the domination of the organization. We therefore suggest that the administrative power that characterizes an organization at a given time in its

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<sup>19</sup> Note that for Giddens, the empirical fact does not exist. Structurationist analysis can be represented by the intersection of two frames of meaning (one being "the meaningful social world as constituted by lay actors" and the other being structuration theory). But it depends first and foremost on a description of the mutual knowledge of the social system in question and assumes a continual coming and going between the data collected and the theory's analytical dimensions. See Appendix.

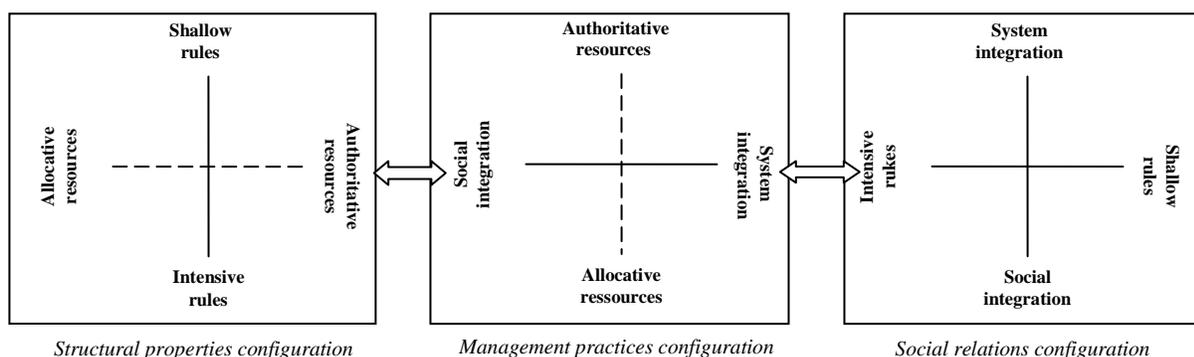
existence must be represented by three configurations that integrate rules, resources and integration forms and are consistent with the main idea of structuration.

The following configurations are proposed: “structural properties configuration”, “management practices configuration” and “social relations configuration”. Each configuration refers to a dimension of the duality of structure (structure, modality, interaction) and results from combining the following analytical dimensions: rules (shallow and intensive), resources (allocative and authoritative), and integration (social and system). The “structural properties configuration” is formed by the rules and resources analytical dimensions; the “management practices configuration” is formed by the resources and integration analytical dimensions; and the “social relations configuration” is organized around the integration and rules analytical dimensions (Figure 5).

In addition to referring to the dimensions of the duality of structure—and therefore in deference to the spirit of the theory’s central concept—the configurations integrate the components of the dimensions of duality of structure (see Figure 4): the resources analytical dimension integrates the ‘domination / facility / power’ components because it refers to mechanisms of control over material resources and actors; the rules analytical dimension integrates ‘signification / interpretative scheme / communication’ and ‘legitimation / norm / sanction’, “since rules relate on the one hand to the constitution of *meaning*, and on the other hand to the *sanctioning* of modes of social conduct” (Giddens, 1984: 18). The ‘signification / interpretative scheme / communication’ components are also represented by the integration analytical dimension if we accept that management practices constitute the common knowledge of a social system. The proposed configurations are therefore faithful in all points to structuration theory.

Although administrative power is presented in fragments in Figure 5, i.e., configuration by configuration, configurations must be reconstituted as a duality in order to explain administrative power as well as provide an overall picture of the structuration of the organization.

**FIGURE 5**  
**The configurations of administrative power**



The theoretical foundations for the proposed configurations are as follows:

- 1) For the structural properties configuration, we are indebted mainly to Giddens (1984) and Chazel (2005), who maintain that the configuration adopted specifically by rules and resources determines the structural properties of social systems (note that many authors refer to structure in terms of rules and resources).

Rules cannot be conceptualized apart from resources, which refer to the modes whereby transformative relations are actually incorporated into the production and reproduction of social practices. Structural properties thus express forms of *domination* and *power*. (Giddens, 1984: 18)

- 2) For the management practices configuration, we refer primarily to Giddens' (1984) statement that "integration of a social system across time and space involves a combination of the two types of resources." We also adopt a structurationist analysis of management control showing that control practices, and management practices in a larger sense, can be understood when the integration forms they lead to and their resources content are taken into account (Briand, 2001). In short, this analysis shows that a management practice a) is always "social" to a certain extent, and more or less "systemic", b) may operate more through "authoritative resources" (i.e. through actors via authority over their work or control over their chances for self-development, for example) than "allocative resources" (e.g. raw materials, financial resources, means of production). The analysis also shows that management practices not only coexist but also interact, and some practices are more "independent" than others (Briand, 2001). Finally, we conclude that management practices are sources of power and/or domination and as such are a component of actor relations. Consequently their effects cannot be understood without taking into account the context in which they occur;
- 3) Lastly, the social relations configuration is based on the idea that "rules imply 'methodical procedures' of interaction" (Giddens, 1984); thus "rules *intersect* [our emphasis] with practices in the contextuality of situated encounters" (Giddens, 1984: 18).

### **5.2.2. The dynamic of administrative power: a recombination of configurations**

We suggested that administrative power could be represented as a combination of three configurations. However, given that structuration theory aims to understand the production and reproduction of a social system, conducting a structurationist analysis means studying the dimensions of the duality of structure over the long term (Whittington, 1992). It is therefore crucial to establish successive configurations and identify the transformations they underlie in order to expose the administrative power characteristic of each episode in the life of the organization and identify the conditions for its continuity and transmutation. We therefore suggest viewing the dynamic of administrative power as a recombination of temporally successive configurations and explaining it by analyzing movements on each of the analytical dimensions.

We shall therefore emphasize in this subsection the explanatory content of the analytical dimensions that make up our proposed configurations.

### *1. Rules analytical dimension*

The rules analytical dimension is a segment with two poles (intensive rules and shallow rules). The poles must not be understood as dichotomies because there is reason to believe that rules are never entirely intensive nor entirely shallow.

The rules analytical dimension is used to uncover the foundations of the legitimation of administration power, because “rules relate to the sanctioning of modes of social conduct.” However, to the extent that rules also refer to the constitution of meaning, this analytical dimension offers a basis for rejecting the theses of the disappearance of bureaucratic rule and of the vanishing control (Walton, 1985), and introducing the hypothesis that *intensive* and *shallow* rules co-exist and co-construct one another.

We in fact believe that there may be no basis for the disappearance of bureaucratic rule because the mechanisms for building trust, even “rational” trust, are not always based on written rules, as Lazuech (2002) claims.

[Translation] Specifically, **this type of trust [rational] is not always based on written rules but also on social conventions** [emphasis added], i.e., expected behaviours. [...] Therefore, “rational” trust can be considered not only as existing visibly in legislative, regulatory or contract writing but also as being individually embodied in the form of sustainable inclinations to be with others or with social organizations or institutions at large. (p. 17)

Also, we recognize innovations in control matters (Nixon and Burns, 2005) and observe their migration to the realm of values, beliefs and identities (Alvesson, 1993a; Casey, 1999; Roberts, 2005; Alvesson and Robertson, 2006). What comes to mind in particular are Simons’ (1995) “beliefs systems”, “boundary systems” and “interactive control systems” that compensate for the insufficiencies of diagnosis control systems in reconciling workers’ need for autonomy and the control requirements of the dominant actors. We can also think of the introduction of corporate codes as the preferred mode for managing “trust, loyalty and commitment”, “these intangible controls” (SCMAC, 1997). We consider that in a general sense, these innovations signal an effort to renew control, and that they depend on worker self-discipline without, however, breaking away from normative control<sup>20</sup>. In this regard, the example of corporate codes is quite eloquent.

There are three types of corporate codes: code of ethics, code of conduct, and code of practice (Clarkson and Deck, 1993). Each code expresses a specific approach to control of behaviours: the code of ethics clarifies the organization’s moral values and relies on self-control. The code of

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<sup>20</sup> Thereafter, [after 1950s] new ways of thinking about the topic [control] and new techniques for applying the basic ideas have been developed. These developments have not changed the basic structure, nor is it likely to change. However, there is much room for improvement, especially in taking advantage of the power of computers. (Anthony, 1989: 1).

conduct has a list of mandatory rules and prohibitions and is based on imposed control; the code of practice expresses the organization's values in generally accepted behaviours, and is based on a hybrid control formula distinguished by an "act and disclose" approach ("use your best judgement but let us know what you are doing") as well as by a "seek advice" approach ("seek approval before acting"). A study of the content of corporate codes reveals that organizations usually borrow from these three code forms (SCMAC, 1997).

Based on the foregoing, we posit that innovations in matters of control, at first sight, express the co-existence and co-construction of intensive and shallow rules, and that through the rules analytical dimension it is possible to 1) refute the idea, in agreement with Hodgson (2004) and Hales (2002), that a shift in the mode of control is really occurring, and 2) to "review the existence of pure and alternative forms of control and the assumption that technocratic and socio-ideological controls are mutually exclusive", as suggested by Alvesson and Kärreman (2004).

## 2. *The resources analytical dimension*

The resources analytical dimension should be read as a "graduated" segment consisting of six "levels", which refer to the resources typology developed by Giddens (1984). Recall that Giddens identifies two types of resources (allocative and authoritative) and three control mechanisms for each type (see Table 1). In the context of the organization, allocative resource mechanisms become: (1) financial and human resources, (2) expertise and knowledge, as well as production and administrative processes needed to carry out an activity, (3) the ability to define the good or service to be produced and the identification of the "client". On the other hand, authoritative resources mechanisms are equivalent to (1) control that may be exercised by the actors in the different areas of the organization (units, divisions, offices, etc.) and that gives them their distinctive nature, (2) ability of an actor or group of actors to organize the action of actors outside his/their formal interaction group, and (3) ability of an actor or group of actors to influence his/their opportunities for development or expression, and those of other actors. The six levels perhaps reflect the "graded intensity" (Kallinikos, 2004) of administrative power.

Given that the resources analytical dimension integrates actors' allocative resources *and* authoritative resources, 1) management practices can be analyzed as mechanisms of control over material resources *as well as* actors, and 2) the whys and wherefores of the co-existence of control mechanisms and their interaction can be understood (Briand, 2001; Briand and Bellemare, 2006a). This analytical dimension forms the basis for the proposal that administrative power is marked less by discontinuity than by its displacement in a context of evolving organizational forms (regardless of the direction of this evolution). The analytical dimension opens up the possibility of "rethinking established managerial control ideas and categorizations" (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2004) and solving the paradoxes surrounding control in a context of evolving organizational forms (Delbridge and Ezzamel, 2005; Maravelias, 2003; Boltanski and Chiapello, 1999). Above all, it allows us to view and analyze control and autonomy as zones that change according to the dynamic of administrative power, in contrast to the perception that they are binary variables.

It should be mentioned that allocative resources do not guarantee influence over the actors and that integration of a social system are largely dependent on the presence of authoritative resources; it is

also important to stress that resources form the “media of the expandable character of power in different societies” (Giddens, 1984, p. 258), and that authoritative resources are important sources of power and domination, and hence “levers” of social change. The resources analytical dimension thus allows further contextualization and understanding of administrative power and organizational transformations.

### *3. Integration analytical dimension*

The integration analytical dimension is also represented as a segment with two poles (social integration and system integration). Recall that integration can be social or systemic (Giddens, 1984); the former means face-to-face interaction, and the latter refers to connections between actors across extended time-space. As with the rules analytical dimension, the poles must not be understood as dichotomies. Integration practices are indeed predominantly social or systemic, and mechanisms are distinct, but system integration presupposes the mechanisms of social integration (Giddens, 1984). Information and communication technology for example, can be understood as a set of pure system integration devices, yet it requires human agency to convert its potential into practices (Orlikowski, 2002; Boudreau and Robey, 2005).

Despite the fact that human agency is required to convert system integration mechanisms into effective integration practices, the integration analytical dimension provides an opportunity to describe the strength of management practices and the robustness of relations since according to Giddens (1990), system integration mechanisms 1) are less dependent than social integration practices on the collaboration of the actors, and 2) can turn into “juggernauts”. Thus, the nature of integration makes it possible to explore the intensity of administrative power or surveillance (Briand and Bellemare, 2006a).

Finally, integration analytical dimension helps explore the general culture of an organization if we accept, once again, that management practices constitute its common knowledge. Thus, it offers the possibility to reveal the nature of integration *and* to discover the common sense conventions and specialized knowledge - disciplinary knowledge -, of an organization.

### 5.3. Advantages and challenges of the proposed analytical framework

#### 5.3.1. Advantages

We believe that our proposed analytical framework, despite its embryonic form, is potentially useful for analyzing organizational forms and management practices<sup>21</sup> and may lead to a superseding of the use of images (Morgan, 1997) that veil the fundamentally social nature of the organization. Furthermore, it allows us to envision organizational transformations in *continuity* rather than in ruptures and dichotomies that offer little or no enlightenment.

Since our framework provides the option of analyzing actors' control and autonomy *zones*, it allows us to resolve the paradoxes associated with organizational forms (e.g., control of professional work, Freidson, 1988; emancipation and totalitarian regime, Maravelias, 2003), provided, however, that contextualization is somewhat incorporated. In this regard, recall that management practices are sources of power and domination that are components of the relations among actors who are de-localized but nonetheless embedded into a structure that predates them. Therefore, the effects of management practices cannot be discovered if the structural properties and the social relations of which they are a part are disregarded.

We also posit that our proposed framework expands the study of organizational transformations by using analytical dimensions that, rather than being specific to one discipline, can integrate knowledge from several disciplines, given that structuration theory is more metatheoretical than "domain-specific" (Yates, 1997). Thus constructed, the framework can help 1) re-interpret current knowledge in the various disciplines, and 2) stimulate research on new knowledge likely to enhance the exploration and understanding of the proposed analytical dimensions and configurations. In this sense it supports "neo-disciplinarity" (Burrell, Reed, Calás, Smircich, Alvesson, 1994), while preserving the "strength of difference" contributed by debates and perspectives in opposition within specific fields (for example, in control, Delbridge and Ezzamel, 2005).

Finally, we submit that the proposed analytical framework offers potential for analyzing inter-organizational relations. Indeed, structuration theory is not static in time or space thus helps overcome the problem of organization boundaries and corporate exchanges (Araujo, Dubois and Lars-Erik, 2003; Marchington and Vincent, 2004; Klein, Palmer and Conn, 2000) posed by the rise of outsourcing and networking. Structurationist analysis implies representing the network as an "additional" social system whose rules and resources constitute the rules and resources, management practices and social relations of the organizations in the network. The prevalent organizational forms, rules and resources, and social relations of an organization reflexively contribute to the reproduction of the network's rules and resources (Briand and Bellemare, 2005a).

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<sup>21</sup> The proposed analytical framework is also very promising for institutional analysis. Since an organization can neither escape from the institutions in which it is embedded nor help contribute to them, the framework can highlight the role of integration practices as conditions for the reproduction of structural principles and as levers of social change. It also supports the hypothesis that the management practices implemented by *dominant actors* in their organizations are a main key to analyzing the institutional dimensions of society.

For example, the organizational forms and practices of a sub-contracting organization, which is subject to rules of external flexibility and adaptability (network precepts, Castells, 2001), and the resources affecting its chances of survival will presumably be strongly influenced by the network's rules and resources. Concretely speaking, an organization must be analyzed from the standpoint of its autonomy within the network in which it is embedded before its organizational forms can be analyzed. (By extension this also holds true for analyzing an organization's subsystem.)

### 5.3.2. Challenges

The foregoing statement illustrates that structuration theory can allow the 'stacking' of analytical levels. However, because of its potential for analysing inter-organizational relations, we consider that the theory generates new questions: questions of how to define the incomplete nature of an organization that subcontracts the manufacture of its products, outsources its call centre, works with a supplier to develop a product, or assigns management finance tasks to an accounting firm; and why the organization should have to be viewed as being part of a network.

In light of these questions, structurationist analysis of organizational forms presents two challenges: first, to define the boundaries of the social system for organizational analysis, and second, to transcend the functional concept of the organization inherited from Fayol (1917)<sup>22</sup>.

We could argue that it is the researcher's province to define the social system targeted by the research and proceed cautiously on methodology, but we believe that the answer is even more complex.

Choosing the degree of the researcher's involvement and the unit to be analyzed no doubt involves methodology issues but also, in our opinion, the question of epistemological order. We propose that the evolution of management practices (organizational forms and management tools) should necessarily be examined in light of the dynamic of administrative power, and that it is relevant to consider that organizational forms that deviate from traditional organizational hierarchy (network, project-based, virtual, down-sized) are a control issue (as we noted in the discussion on flexibility) in a context of organizational fragmentation (Reed, 1989; 1996) and of power struggles (Child, 2005; Deetz, 1992). Thus, adopting a structurationist analytical framework can mean using specific analytical dimensions but also adopting an epistemological viewpoint of the production and reproduction of social systems, which is conceptually strong on power and domination and leads to new questions, such as *why*, *how* and *for whom?*, and therefore to new explanations.

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<sup>22</sup> There is at least one other reason for questioning the organization's organizational structure and its derivatives (hierarchical line, matrix structure, line and staff, in particular). We believe that these management artefacts can mask the reality of the social system. If we take, for example, the case of an organization whose accounting staff is dispersed within operational departments but hierarchically attached to an administrative department, it is appropriate to wonder if the administrative department's social system includes the dispersed employees and whether the staff members are well integrated or even culturally immersed in their environments (Briand, 2001). This does not mean, however, that we subscribe to the post-modern theory of the organization's immateriality (see Chia, 2003 on Organization theory as postmodern science). It is important to note that structurationist analysis can both solve and exacerbate the problem of analyzing the boundaries of social systems.

#### 5.4. Structurationist analysis and ambiguity

It is important to note that structuration theory does not offer a functional framework but rather analytical dimensions that operate as "sensitizing devices" (Giddens, 1993). This characteristic is what makes the theory "notoriously difficult" (Yates, 1997), but also gives it its power: structurationist analysis never forces empirical data into a foreign analytical framework. In other words, it liberates empirical materials from established concepts and/or disciplinary benchmarks that, in our opinion, run the risk of distorting the analysis and mitigating the dynamic of domination. Here are three examples to illustrate:

- In the contemporary definition of management, the client or service recipient may be viewed as a symbolic element of culture (Abrahamson, 1996). From the outset the client can be considered as an "interpretative scheme" constitutive of management practices in an organization. However, in a structurationist analysis of the evolution of control in a public transit corporation (Briand and Bellemare, 1999), the service recipient, for a time, is a representation manipulated by logistics specialists that later becomes part of the legitimation mastered by a rising coalition of marketing specialists and top managers. The service recipient finally becomes a full-fledged actor through his ability to monitor the bus drivers and even ends up "infiltrating" the organization's industrial relations system (Bellemare, 2000);
- In another case study involving an international development agency, the service recipient becomes part of the legitimation base for a period of time but then "disappears" from the discourse of the dominant actors and even from the analysis (Briand, 2001);
- Lastly, language, which Giddens (1984) classifies as an intensive rule (tacit, informal and weakly sanctioned), can become a power issue constitutive of social relations, depending on the geopolitical context of the organization. For example, francophones and anglophones work side by side in many organizations in Québec (the only predominantly French-speaking society in North America). The government passed legislation forcing companies to adopt French as their main working language, giving workers the assurance that they can use French at work (in case of violations, the company could face sanctions). One can argue that differential power and changes in the job market, among other factors, could influence French-speaking agents to resign themselves to working in English and not report breaches of the language law; in such circumstances, language is a shallow rule and a source of power struggle.

These examples illustrate that empirical data is not inherently a factor of structure or practices or relations, much less a representation of legitimation or its power source or foundation. Depending on the organization, its circumstances, the state and meaning of knowledge<sup>23</sup>, or level of analysis, data may be part of one of the nine parameters of social structuration (see Figure 4), or else totally excluded from the analysis.

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<sup>23</sup> "It is important to be open about what is defined as knowledge in specific social sites and during particular periods as well as about the consequences and effects of the use of knowledge." (Alvesson, 2004: 58)

Lastly, these examples reaffirm the urgency to discard the use of “ticking” exercises based on pre-established categories (Alvesson and Thompson, 2005) to analyze organizational forms and management tools. The organizational analysis should be guided by robust concepts that transcend the disciplines of management science and take into account the core nature of the organization, which is to be a “a meaningful social world as constituted by lay actors” (Giddens, 1993). In order to achieve this researchers must acknowledge and accept ambiguity as Alvesson (1993b; 2004) advocates:

“In most social science as well as social life there is an interest in, perhaps a bias towards, finding an emphasizing clarity and patterns. Disorder, messiness, confusion, and contradiction should be avoided. Researchers and practitioners want to establish the ‘correct’ meaning of a phenomenon and proceed from this insight. [...] I agree with Martin and Meyerson (1988), who say that it is vital to acknowledge rather than deny ambiguity. This lesson is particularly fruitful for students of KIFs [knowledge-intensive firms]. Ambiguity involves uncertainty that cannot be resolved or reconciled – absence of agreement on boundaries, clear principles, or solutions. Ambiguity means that a group of informed people are likely to hold multiple meanings or that several plausible interpretations can be made without more data or rigorous analysis making it possible to assess them. Ambiguity is different from uncertainty, since it cannot be clarified just by gathering more facts. Arguably, ambiguity is a crucial element in work and organization (Feldman 1991; Jackall 1988).” (Alvesson, 2004: 48)

## CONCLUSION

We began this article by asserting that bureaucracy still exists in late modernity and attributed the debates over its continuance to a conceptualization problem and theoretical and analytical inadequacies. We then proposed that 1) bureaucracy be likened to administrative power, one of the institutional dimensions of modernity, 2) its dynamic properties be recognized, and 3) it be re-conceptualized and a new perspective adopted for analyzing management practices (organizational forms and management tools).

We then hypothesized that the organization is first and foremost a *social system* in which reflexivity is guided and that its structure and agency must be viewed as a *duality* because the rules and resources of a social system are both the conditions and results of the activities accomplished by the agents who belong to it (Giddens, 1984). We moreover suggested that organizational analysis be guided by robust concepts that transcend the disciplines of management sciences and take into account the core nature of the organization, which is to be “a meaningful social world as constituted by lay actors” (Giddens, 1993a). Accordingly, we developed a definition and an analytical framework for the purpose of understanding the organization, its agents and integration practices.

Although other components of the framework are still unclear at present, its critical stance and fundamental premise are nevertheless well defined: the analysis of the organization and management practices must be largely based on the concepts of power and domination. This is why we suggest that the analysis must go in new directions, such as *how*, *why* and *for whom* management practices are evolving. These new questions are crucial to qualifying the meaning of the terms change and “flexibility”—that watchword of the 90s (Peters, 1992)—, to discover the contested terrain<sup>S</sup>, to see how the zones of autonomy and control develop. In today’s economy there is an urgency to pursue these new study avenues if we accept the idea that knowledge-economy is a concept that has “everything to do with politics” (Godin, 2006<sup>24</sup>), and about which there is “much fuss” (Alvesson, 2004<sup>25</sup>).

We believe that it is appropriate to thoroughly investigate organizational transformations given that 1) management gurus and some organizational theorists are arguing that in the ‘knowledge-economy’, democracy, empowerment and trust are emerging, 2) new management practices are creating the illusion that control is diffuse (Reed, 1999), and 3) new organizational forms are distracting organizational theorists from the issue of organizational control (Child, 2005), and/or the importance of its aspects (Delbridge and Ezzamel, 2005). The transformation of bureaucracy is real, and, depending on the context, less likely to be marked by a discontinuity than by its displacement and intensification (Briand and Bellemare, 2006a). What is more, renewed

<sup>24</sup> Godin (2006) suggests that the revival of the concept of knowledge economy in the 1990s has nothing to do about statistics and everything to do with politics. Thus it is a concept that serves to direct the attention of policy-makers to science and technology issues and helps generate buzzwords.

<sup>25</sup> Alvesson (2004) suggests replacing the expression “knowledge-intensive” with “knowledge-*claim*-intensive”, to clarify the concept better, being uncertain of whether knowledge actually exists in either the worker, the organization or society, despite the fact that “there is definitely much fuss about it” (p. 239).

management practices can “displace the responsibility for setting limits between professional and non-professional concerns from the organization to the individual (Maravelias, 2003).” This is of great importance since, as Giddens (1991) maintains, work strongly conditions “life chances”. Thus, when coupled with the “emergence of life politics” (Giddens, 1991), organizational transformations call for research dealing with choices and lifestyles because, in the arena of life politics, power is generative rather than hierarchical.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> The expression “generative power” is probably based on Chomsky’s concept of generative and transformational grammar, the initial goal of which was to erase the taxonomic concepts of linguistic structure and secede from empiricist speculation (Chomsky, 1975). Applied to power, the word “generative” implies the existence of a set of rules and resources that can lead to the generation of all domination structures; by extension, it also means that there are rules common to all structures.

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## APPENDIX

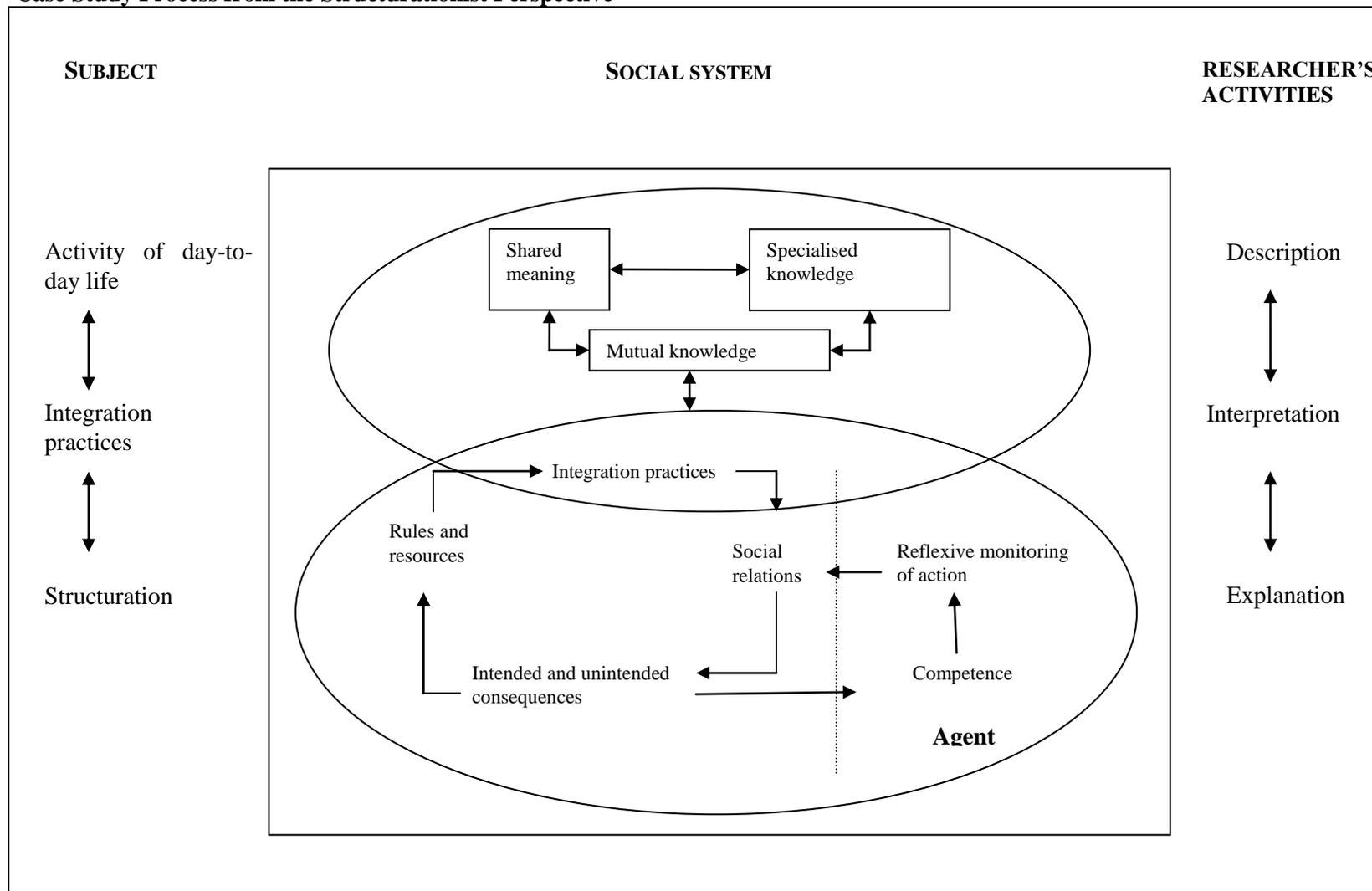
### Structurationist method

Structurationist analysis implies that a social system be conceptualised as a duality. Analytically, this duality of structure requires that rules, resources and social relationships be conceptualized separately, so as to bring out the integration practices that govern their linkages. Thus, structurationist analysis is based on the description and interpretation of empirical data about the 'mutual knowledge' of a social system, the knowledge of "how to go on" shared by lay actors and sociological observers of a given social system.

But structurationist analysis cannot be limited to the description and interpretation of integration practices (Giddens, 1976 and 1984): it must include a critical component that will lead to an understanding of the constitution of social systems. Because integration practices rely on and support rules, resources and social relationships, the second component of the analysis of integration practices involves the interpretation of the links between the dimensions of the duality of structure, in order to show how and why practices develop and are transformed.

To sum up, structurationist analysis means that integration practices must be examined through the description of "activities of day-to-day life," that they can be interpreted through the translation of "mutual knowledge," and explained through the conversion of empirical data gathered within the established conceptual framework. It should be underlined that structurationist analysis is not a linear process but is based on a continual to-and-fro motion between the data gathered and the analytical dimensions of the theory. The structurationist analysis of a social system may therefore be represented by the intersection of two frameworks of meaning (that of the "meaningful social world made up of lay actors," and that of the theory of structuration) (Figure). Thus, structurationist analysis allows us to document and theorise about a social system, while respecting the operating conventions specific to the system concerned as an integral part of the behaviour of the actors who are part of it. The analysis is therefore based on and is in line with the concept of the duality of structure.

**Case Study Process from the Structurationist Perspective**



Source : Briand, 2001, p. 91.