



**Constructing power; powering construction**

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### **Abstract**

While power is unavoidable in organizational life it does not have to be a negative experience. Two approaches to power, familiar from the social and political science literature, are contrasted. These are a view of power as positive and negative, respectively. Following this presentation, two empirical encounters with construction will be elaborated. The first of these is taken to instantiate normal experiences of power in construction; here the power is overwhelmingly negative ‘power over’ experienced as a phenomenon that is both conflictual and a zero sum game. The second of these is characterized by power relations that are positive and not zero sum. Whether or not construction projects – or other forms of organization – are marked by more negative or positive power is a matter of social construction, organizational, and institutional design. We can design situations so that power is positive but, to do so, we have to make our organizations more inclusive and our institutions less instinctively adversarial. Organizational inclusivity is achieved through practices that encourage open discursive polyphony, and reward people for it, while institutional reform entails designing organizations that have less recourse to extra-organizational and institutionally distinct spheres such as the law for resolving issues that can be dealt with discursively in a more open organizational society.

## **Introduction**

I have argued elsewhere that there are at least two major theoretical auspices for consideration of power in social and organization theory (Clegg et al 2006). One deploys the idea that power is facilitative, that it is 'power to'. The other conception of power stresses that power operates largely negatively as 'power over', which is to see power less as a capability that is facilitative than one that is prohibitive.<sup>1</sup> We shall return to the latter presently; immediately we shall address the former.

Of course, it is rare that instances of power will fit unambiguously just one or the other of these two categorical ways of thinking about power, in part because the conception of power that one has is dependent on the point of view taken. One person's 'power to' may involve asserting 'power over' many other people; the capabilities of an organization to have the power to do something will invariably mean that its delegated agents have to assert power over others and have it asserted over them.

The relevant point is that the effects of power as productive or negative are strictly contingent, so for some people the effect may be positive while for others it will be negative. Power itself isn't 'over' or 'to' in a transcendent way; it is 'over' or 'to' depending on the specific situation and the contingent position of the agents involved in the relation. You have the power to access certain areas on the corporate web site that are closed to the public while your employer has power over your life chances. Offend or upset the employer and you can be retrenched, or if the employer fails to develop successful strategies, their capital and that which they access, as well as your labour, will be wasted. Power will

always exist in a complex contingent tension between a capacity to extend the freedom of some to achieve something or other and an ability to restrict the freedoms of others in doing something or other.

The *power over* conception builds on a primitive notion of power first articulated clearly in models of classical mechanics. The facilitative conception starts from a complex conception of power playing a specific role as a positive system property in social systems, while the mechanical view starts with a more reductionist conception of power being exercised when people and things are either made to do something that they would not otherwise do or their preferences, dispositions or nature to do some thing is arrested or stopped in some way.

### **Positive power**

The facilitative *power to* conception builds from the work of Talcott Parsons, who represented power as a system property of the political system, analogous to money in the economy. It is a view of power that sees it in overwhelmingly positive terms. Power conceived this way is creative, it accomplishes acts, and it changes the nature of things and relations.

Parsons sought to show how order was possible on the basis of uncoerced action. He conceived of all forms of social action being organized in terms of four sub-systems, two of which were specialized on political and economic rationalization, with the attendant risks of change and conflict, but there were also distinct spheres of integrative and normative processes whose task was to deal with those conflicts that arise. The four processes were referred to as

subsystems of adaptive, goal-oriented, integrative and normative processes. The latter two sub systems provided a plurality of moral orders that countervail economic and organizational adaptation. Think of religious ethics holding up scientific research on human gene technology, for instance. There is always a gap between the expectations raised by some moral categories and the possibilities created by economic and political rationalities. Power is the medium whereby this gap is narrowed, in either direction, such that, despite moral and other differences, effective goal orientation is facilitated and efficient organization produced, using sanctions if necessary. These sanctions should be authoritative; for instance, shooting abortionists dead might be a sanction of the extreme right-to-life community, but it is not authoritative. What would be authoritative would be to use the law courts to challenge existing rulings and thus change the legislative framework within which abortion is practiced. Challenging and changing existing rulings would indicate the sanctioned exercise of power. Thus, power is facilitative in Parsons' schema because it helps create binding obligations. And, if these are not obeyed, then authoritative sanctions can be enacted. Thus binding obligations, the central value systems that sustain them, and the actions that they produce are the key focus.

Power is similar to money, says Parsons (1964), because both are circulatory media. Just as money functions as a generalized mechanism or means for securing satisfaction of desires within the economy—without money you may want things but one cannot buy them because one lacks 'effective demand'—so does power in political systems. Both power and money are anchored in popular confidence in their currency; it is this which provides them

with their legitimacy. Given this legitimacy, power can be deployed in the expectation that others will respect and it, and follow its injunctions, because the obligations that it places on those over whom its remit will run, will regard them as binding because of the perception of legitimacy. Symbolic legitimacy is the orderly background within which Parsons' view of power is embedded. Indeed, he theorizes power as the medium of order for social systems, including organizations.

Power is defined as a generalized capacity to influence the allocation of resources for attaining collective goals. Members share institutionalized obligations by virtue of being members and within the context of membership certain sanctions as are legitimized through those obligations and institutionalized roles involved in the power system. Power is the legitimate mechanism regulating commitments. Authority, on the other hand, comprises the general rules that govern the making of specific binding decisions.

Parsons' view of power diverges from Weber's (1978) formulation of it as occurring within a context of domination. Instead, individuals are conceived as moral agents acting within a normative context; they are effectively socialized to be so. Where they are not, then socialization must be amiss. Thus, actors routinely use power not as a form of resistance to domination but as a way of ensuring the reproduction of authority, as a positive force, as a capacity to produce an effect. 'Power is exercised within the context of norms', as Clegg (1989: 132) suggests. Thus, when power is exercised organizationally it is always within the context of binding obligations shared both by the power yielder and the power subject, and the sanctions that are threatened for non-

compliance are always normatively constrained. One may not agree to consent but one does so in the knowledge of what one can expect the authorities to do in consequence. Deviance and resistance to power, because it calls forth the appropriate sanctions, actually strengthens the organizational order.

### **Negative power**

Parsons saw himself as explicitly addressing Hobbes' (1651) problem of order—how society is possible. Hobbes' tools were fashioned from the dominant intellectual resources of his day, the emergent ideas of classical mechanics and a conception of the mechanical world as composed of wheels, springs, counter-balances in a causally harmonious clockwork. At the centre of this conception was a basic idea that power was equivalent to a cause, holding things balanced, in restraint, it produced order and made things happen.<sup>ii</sup>

Thomas Hobbes was the first really great English-language theorist of power and he constituted a modern understanding of the concept that has been remarkably pervasive in debates down to the present day. It is a minimalist definition of power in which it is equivalent to cause (Hobbes 1651). Power and cause are identical terms, he maintains. If an individual can make something happen, something spring into motion where previously it was at rest and there was no action, then that individual has power (see Hindess 1996). It is a mechanistic conception of power, premised very much on Galileo's physics of inertia, where changes in state are a result of forces acting on each other. Certain corollaries flow from this primitive, or initial, conception of power. Things have to be visibly related for us to say that they are causally connected. Hobbes

thought of clockwork as the appropriate analogy, where small flywheels might drive other wheels to effect motion, with a complex system of weights and springs connecting and holding everything in tension.

Indeed, the idea that power and causality are identical has been remarkably durable. The atomistic, mechanistic and causal representation of the world of power became a decisive image. It was picked up by later theorists of political philosophy such as John Locke (1976) and David Hume (1902), who traded the movement of clockwork for the slightly more fluid movement of balls responding to the force of the cue, either directly or intermediately, on the billiard table. With Hume the underlying idea of causality was clarified. If one phenomenon was to be the cause of some other phenomenon they must be entirely discrete or separate from one another in space and time but must share a contingent or contiguous relationship. Effects must be logically, conceptually and substantively separate from presumed causes. In social phenomena the universe of causal relations will occur between separate, distinct and discrete subjects. The subject is identified by their possession of a unique body, occupying a unique space. Different subjects have different interests and will shape their preferences accordingly; thus, their actions are not merely mechanical but also purposive. These notions of power as a causal relation do not seem amiss when modern conceptions of political power, constructed in the twentieth century, are considered.

Galileo's argued that bodies will remain at rest unless outside forces act on them. The distance that they traverse is an operational measure of the force exerted. Power is thus equivalent to the force exercised. Even Foucault



(1988a: 50), the man who pronounced the death of sovereign power, respects the microphysics of power. Foucault recreated a conception of power that returned analysis to the core of Hobbes's concerns, where the body politic is not considered simply as a metaphor but also as a materiality that was not only physical and biological but also anthroposocial. Isaac (1987: 27) suggests that the mechanical causal view of power has almost become a second nature for contemporary theorists, who tend to think of causality purely in terms of contiguous phenomena acting on one another in the same time-space continua. Causality retains its mechanical push and shove imagery, rather than attending to genetic or structural conceptions of causality.

When the American political scientist Robert Dahl (1957) defined the concept of power, cause was as central to his conception as it had been to classical forebears of the Scottish Enlightenment, such as Hume. Power, he says, occurs as a relation between actors, where the category of actor may refer to individuals or too collective entities. Underlying these relations is differential access to resources that finds expression through different instruments of power, whose efficacy is limited to specific arenas (Dahl 1957: 207). Within these arenas there will be a variable range of key issues over which power is exercised. Empirically, argues Dahl (1961), the fact of different issues confronting people with different preferences will tend to bear out the fact that the distribution of power (at least in political communities) will be pluralistic.

Such consistency of definition around the bare essentials might suggest that there is great consistency and certainty surrounding the nature of the phenomenon under discussion; power indubitably is a matter of proximate things

related by clashing causal forces; instead, what we may deduce is that a set of representational terms has become well entrenched as devices for thinking about power. They have become so because they tap into powerful discourse—the rhetoric of classical mechanics—extended from the world to which it initially referred—a world of object relations—to a world of subject relations.

### **Power at work in organizations**

Power is something that only came into sharp focus for much organization theory in the post-Second World War, when a hypothesis, that control over uncertainty bestowed power in otherwise rationalized systems, was widely elaborated.

Organization science developed this way of addressing power in the nineteen fifties; organization power seemed barely to exist in *theory* prior to this address. The new theoretical representation of power as related to uncertainty relied on a whole machinery of truth production. The machinery in question was the integration of the formal organization and the informal organization in the model of the open system. Until the system model had been produced, power, as it was to be represented, seemed invisible to most commentators.

Power became seen as the source of irrationality in an otherwise rational system, and invariably came from disenfranchised lower order employee objections. Parsons, whom we have already met, was the grand theorist of functionalist theory. Functionalism honored normalcy, and socialization into it, and saw deviance from the norm as a case for reform. The condition of normalcy was to be found in routine and certainty, in that which was predictable.

Functionalist post-war organization theory sought to construct uncertainty as the

central ontology of its analysis. Uncertainty played a metaphysical role, linking theory to practice. Organizations sought for certainty but did so in an uncertain world. Some organizations, those least able to standardize, centralize, routinize and formalize their actions, were most hostage to the misfortunes of an uncertain world. Mostly, the sources of these uncertainties were to be found outside organizations, in their environments, or in the technologies they used, but sometimes there were sources of uncertainty to be found in the organization system itself. It was these sources of uncertainty that became the locus of deviance—which is where power was to be located—as that which was antithetical to the perfect rationalization of the system. Thus, organization theory did not seek power in the normal. Authority defined the normal; indeed, it was coterminous with it. Hence, it was in the abnormal, the uncertain, and non-routine that it sought to find power as a deviation from authority.

One strange consequence of the identification of functionalist power with deviance was that power only became addressed in the margins of organization life rather than being seen as its centerpiece. While modern management was in fact a practice of an increasingly more sophisticated power, it was practiced in a form of analytic silence, without explicit recognition discursively. It was a knowledge that dare not speak its name other than as authority and its deviations.

The normalization of power as a deviant part of an otherwise rational system was an interpretation prepared by the strategies of translation followed by Parsons in respect of Weber's work. A strange alchemy occurs whereby power is ever more discussed but the discussion serves to cover it in confusion rather than to clarify it. That is to say, the form of its discussion, as deviant, as other to

authority, occludes any deep-seated understanding. It is a conception of power without ownership and control; it is a conception of power without bodies, it is a conception of power confined to system irregularity. It is a conception of power that is so relatively powerless that understanding it could threaten few authorities and resistance to it would achieve little. It is a conception of power as resource-based, in which lists of critical resources are endlessly rehearsed, despite the futility of constructing prescriptive lists of what these resources might be, in the face of the indeterminacy of contexts and events<sup>iii</sup>. The examples are legion; most contemporary organization theory accounts fit this frame, most notably those of Pfeffer and Salancik (1974) and Hickson et al (1971), but the granddaddy of them all is Michel Crozier.

It was with these latter organization theory resources at hand that I first researched power in organizations. As a result of an accident of history – having worked as a joiners' laborer on a construction site prior to commencing my Doctoral research – my first empirical work on power was conducted in the construction industry. It was one industry that I knew at a grassroots level. Trying to reconcile the organization theory of power – the trajectory from Thompson's (1956) analysis of a USAF bomber wing through Thompson's (1956) relation of power and uncertainty and on to Hickson et al's (1971) strategic contingency theory – with the reality of the construction site – entailed building an analytical bridge too far.

The alternate bridge proved to be indirect. At the time that I was doing this work I had recently completed an undergraduate degree in Behavioral Sciences in which I had spent the last eighteen months or so exploring ideas of

Wittgensteinian philosophy, ethnomethodology and phenomenological analysis. I read Garfinkel (1967) on ethnomethodology, and I read Wittgenstein (1972a) on language games.

Wittgenstein fascinated me. I had first met him in an undergraduate philosophy subject in my Behavioral Science degree. I had read about the builders who made an appearance early on in the *Blue and Brown Books* (1972b). They were quite impoverished, linguistically, seeming to respond best to gestures and short, sharp imperative commands. I knew that Wittgenstein – an engineer by training – had built a family home in his native Vienna for his sister and could only conclude that his extremely wealthy background meant that he took only a very patrician interest in how it was built. Certainly, the language games that I had been involved with on site were much richer, much more multi-faceted, and much more tangential to the task of construction.

Still, together with my interest in ethnomethodology, this interest in Wittgensteinian language games shaped a research method in my mind. I would go back on site; I would lurk in the corners and shadows, I would blend in, and I would capture the naturally occurring conversations I chanced upon. I would do so using some new technology – that of a portable cassette player that I persuaded my parents to buy for me. But there were some problems, Construction sites are very noisy; conversation is shouted and snatched by the wind, covered by the sound of machinery, and fragmented by motion around the site. Thus, I retreated to the project office, where at least it was warm, where I had a table in the corner, strewn with technical drawings that I could hide behind, read philosophy, and where conversation could be captured. Each day I might

capture anything up to six hours taped material. So much talk, heated arguments, conspiratorial planning and plotting, multiple issues and agendas, different points of view, irreconcilable interests, sexual flirtation, everyday dramas: all human life was there. And I had much of it on my cassette tapes. I sat up till late at night transcribing it, slept a few hours, and then was back on the site to collect more. I did this for three months – not every day but about three or four days a week on average. From the point of view of the builders I was studying how managers actually managed – hence the tape recordings. And, in a way, I was, because my ways of making sense of these materials was increasingly being steered by my ways of making sense of Wittgenstein. My earlier thoughts of using conversational analysis methods that had developed out of Garfinkel's (1967) ethnomethodology increasingly seemed inadequate to my research question of how power is accomplished in organizations. To answer it I turned to ideas that I had encountered in undergraduate philosophy tutorials, where I had first begun to explore the linguistic turn. I went back to Wittgenstein.

### **Language games and 'power over' in construction**

Wittgenstein's analysis of language games was thinly distributed in his scattered texts, to be found most notably the *Philosophical Investigations* (1972a). Central key concepts for thinking about language were introduced, including the notions of 'form of life' and 'language game', but were analytically underdeveloped. That this should be the case was hardly surprising given that the texts come from notes that his students took in his lectures, and were only constituted as books subsequent to his death in 1951. It was part of what made them so useful – that

they were underdeveloped provided ample room for subsequent theorists to be creative (see, for instance, Pitkin 1972).

Taking a cue from ethnomethodology but not using its conversation analysis approach, I was probably one of the earliest researchers to realize that the world of organizations is a world that is essentially rich in discourse; whatever else managers may do a large part of their work consists of the interpretation of key texts and the articulation and rationalization of different accounts of these (Clegg 1975).

Power came into the analysis in a way that blended Wittgenstein (1972a) with Garfinkel (1967). One of the key concepts of the latter was the notion of 'indexicality', a term that originated from linguistics, where an indexical term would be defined as one that could only be understood in context. Classically indexical terms would be 'it' and 'this'. Without a context being provided the meaning of the terms is utterly inscrutable. I live in a house with several rooms on one level. Often I hear a member of my family ask me something from another room. Having tinnitus in one ear, and thus, not hearing them clearly, I ask where they are. "Here" comes the answer. Highly indexical and utterly useless: if I knew where "here" was I wouldn't be asking. Indexicality by itself might be fascinating, and frustrating, especially for those such as myself with mild tinnitus. What relates indexicality to power is context. If the fact of experiencing indexicality is an inability to formulate where one is at in relation some absent marker, this can become a highly powerful resource.

In the context of construction sites the contract and its associated documents are the central framework shaping managerial discourse. Typically,

contracts in the construction industry have in the past been hard money contracts – where the construction being undertaken was bid for on the basis of the specifications in the contract, for a definite price, and where the most competitive tender wins the contract. What this does is to set up a constitutive framework in which the *meaning* of the contract plays an essential role. Despite recommendations in the procedural handbooks of the industry, contracts are never unindexical: that is, they cannot be read simply as a precise and unequivocal set of instructions for building a building. There are at least two reasons for this, I argue (Clegg 1975). Both are questions of context – one immanently material to the conditions in which the specific contract is enacted and the other transcendently constitutive of all contracts.

The immanent reasons are simple. Contractual specifications, typically, are large and complex bodies of documentation: Not only are there the documents on which the work is bid but there is also an associated ‘bill of works’ – comprising detailed consultants reports and associated documents. In an ideal world these would exist in an absolute and seamless correspondence of all detail from one document to another such that no document ever contradicted another or was in conflict with it. Given the vast amount of paper – comprising detailed specifications, reports, and projections – associated with relatively complex construction projects, that there actually is such correspondence is a large assumption to make. Many hands, at many times, using many distinct skills, produce the papers. More often than not there will be points of ambiguity or even disagreement between them. The precise meaning of them is not stipulated in the documents themselves – in Wittgenstein’s (1972a) terms there is no meta-rule



that provides the rules for how the meaning embedded in the documents should be interpreted. It is this that provides the immanent grounds for indexicality and substantial opportunity for extensive language games to be conducted between project managers and other significant actors on construction sites, in which the precise meaning of what is often imprecise documentation, is translated into contested action.

One distinction is central to Wittgenstein's thought – that between the 'surface' and the 'deep' structure. The classic case of the difference between surface and deep structure is one that Wittgenstein uses on several occasions and it involves the relation between any given instances of speech and the idea of grammar. Speech is on the surface – it is what one hears or reads in a written form. Underlying it, however, are the rules of grammar.

Wittgenstein thought of the deep structure in terms of grammar. I argued that the texts that I recovered through audio-taping from the construction site had a social grammar underlying them – one that was embedded in their 'form of life', another Wittgensteinian concept. Quite what Wittgenstein meant by form of life is not entirely clear. On some occasions of use it seems to mean no more than a mode of life; on other occasions the meaning is more inscrutable, possibly even genetically constitutive. The form of life, I argued, was transcendentally constitutive and with this move brought together the surface structure and the deep structure. On the surface was what people said; underlying this was a deep structure of rules in the use of which players were more or less skilled game-players, using a social grammar as a generative device for making sense of what it was that was being said and what it was that could – and should – be said. Skill

is the crucial issue in this regard – and the skills were basically a mastery of rhetoric, of being able to make something out of the opportunities presented by the contractual documents. Deeper still was a transcendental frame, the form of life, which made what was constituted by the grammar, the deep structure, sensible and rational, by stipulating the need for the organization to be as profitable an enterprise as it could be.

On the construction site that I first researched action played out in specific arenas. Project meetings were the main arenas. These meetings were held to discuss issues. Sometimes they had fairly formal agendas, other times they were impromptu. Many of these were taped over a three-month period of intensive fieldwork. The issues invariably related some actions, or absence of actions, to the contractual documents contained in the bill of works. Thus, much of what was said in these meetings was said in relation to some putative but contested state of affairs in terms of the alignment of that state of affairs with the state that should have pertained in terms of the contractual specifications. The gap between these states was the matter at issue. Hence, the discourses involved attributions of responsibility for variance. What got to be said was spoken from different positions of material interest in the contract; for the head contractor the main issue was to find indexical particulars in the contract that could be exploited in order to win some contribution to the profitability of the site through processing variation orders for which additional payments could be demanded. The architect and client team sought to see that what they thought they had designed and were paying for was actually constructed for the price contracted. That is the point of hard money contracts – they are supposed to provide for a ‘what you

contracted for is what you get at the price agreed' outcome – at least in theory. In practice industry people know that skilled and shrewd project managers will find ways of creating significant – and costly – variance.

It can be seen that the rules underlying the surface production of text were quite clear – the Project Manager and his team sought systematically to exploit any indexicality in the contract in order to maximize profitability while the Architect and the client team sought to resist this at every turn. In turn, that these were the rules of the game only made sense in terms of a form of life of capitalism – one in which the creation of profit was the fundamental aim.

To make it more concrete, the matter under discussion in a project meeting might be something apparently simple such as the meaning of clay. But while the meaning of clay may appear simple it soon becomes apparent that, from a perspective that sees the talk as exhibiting a surface structure, deep structure, and form of life, that in fact the meaning is, precisely, a matter of power. The actually recorded material – what people said in situated action – provides the surface structure of the text. The contested matter was the depth of clay that should have been excavated to prepare the site for foundation pillars that were to be constructed out of poured concrete. The issue was simple. The Consultant Engineers' drawings instructed excavation to a minimum of 600 mm. into 'sandy, stony clay'. They did not specify the depth at which such clay could be found. Accompanying the drawings were a series of reports from drilled test bore holes done as a site survey of the ground that had to be built on. These recommended excavation to a depth of two meters into clay. The Project Manager argued that there were different qualities of clay across the site, running

at variable depths. There was ‘puddle clay’ and ‘sandy, stony clay’. He defined ‘normal clay’ as ‘sandy, stony clay’. The resulting depth of the excavations done became the subject of an acrimonious letter from the Clients’ Architect to the Construction Company. The points at issue resulted from investigation of the claimed excavation levels, which, as the letter put it, revealed little or no consistency. The counter claim from the Project Manager was that the normal clay sub-strata varied in level across the site – hence the need for additional – and unauthorized – excavation. It was a complicated dispute (Clegg 1975, Appendix 2 and 4).

The analytical importance of the case is that it demonstrates that in everyday organizational life language games can be inherently political. First, the contestation that occurs – the discourse of the site meetings – is not random. Second, contestation is patterned by the skillful use of the underlying rules for constituting issues – searching for indexicality in the meaning of the documents – by the participants in the arena. These comprise a mode of rationality – a way of acting that is, within the situated action context, rational. Third, this patterning only makes sense where the ultimate aim is the maximization of profit. The analysis can be represented in the following terms:

<b>Concept</b>	<b>Level of analysis</b>	<b>Structural level</b>	<b>Ethnographic questions</b>	<b>Primacy of analytic focus</b>	<b>Focus</b>
Power	Situated actions as empirical	Surface structure	Who wins?	Episodic action	Immanent relations

	texts				
Rules	Constitutive rules	Deep structure	What are the rules?	Enacted mediation	Rhetorical skills
Domination	The aim of the game	Form of life	Why these rules?	Structurational framing	Transcendent taken-for-grantedness

Table 1: Power, Rule and Domination: Three dimensions of power

Through this long detour via Wittgenstein and ethnomethodology the terminus was evidently a conception of power over; power was exercised in the construction site by securing one interpretation of indexicality with regard to the sense made of the contractual documents over that of another competing claim. And if sense could not be made there was ample recourse to legal mechanisms and institutions for arbitrating on the merits of competing claims.

**Constructing different language games using ‘power to’ rather than ‘power over’**

Power is, above all a relational effect, not a property that can be held by someone or something. Thus, metaphors of its seizure—as if power were a tiller waiting to be grasped so that the crew might set a different course—or its destruction—as if power could be blown up—are profoundly unhelpful because they lack a basis in primarily embodied metaphors of power (Lakoff and Johnson 1988). We do not experience power as a thing but as a relation. And we are quite capable of understanding the relation and accepting it nonetheless, because for practical

reasons, most of our social knowledge has to be based in those relations with which we are involved and this tends to reproduce these relations. We cannot easily deny those relations we experience everyday, if only for the ontological reason that most actors would become chronically insecure if they were, to any great extent, confront critically the knowledge that they hold in their practical consciousness. The relational quality of power is a potentially great source of systemic stability.

It is for this reason that most radical theories of power that derive from Marxian auspices are inadequate; they equate the everyday conditions of lived experience with alienation, isolation, estrangement, falseness, inauthenticity and repression. Few people can live the necessities of their lives in so dystopian a state, irreconciled to the dream of belonging in the future promised land, the utopia of release and liberation. Of course, these everyday conditions may be unremittingly bleak and miserable, and barely endurable, but endured they must be if no better alternative presents itself. Normally, of course, we live in hope of the future, that the next job, the next promotion, the next love, the next purchase, that something or other will come into being that transforms present day mundane reality. We dream of escapes, and these escape attempts are sometimes fuelled by fantasy, sometimes by resentment, sometimes both blended together. But normally we endure, stoically or not, finding more or less joy in the small and intimate things close at hand.

From the perspective of Parsons' account of power and authority, we should accept the instrumentality of power as positive, seen against a benign backdrop of legitimately imbued and kindly regarded authority relations.

However, instruments allow us to use them to exert our will; whether that will is repaid by sweet music or merely discord is a separate matter. The harmony of the accompaniment cannot be taken for granted; that it was so regarded in Parsons is, of course, the major weakness of his and all other functionalist theory. To exercise power over an instrument to unlock its capabilities to produce great music requires considerable skill, discipline and practice. It is not enough to have a Stradivarius; one must be able to unleash what a Stradivarius is capable of being and doing. Often, this will require the concerted actions of many others—the orchestration of power—where it is less the power over some entity held by its possession that matters so much as the concertative power that surrounds and embeds this potential power over resources (see Bourdieu 1977: 72 on orchestration).

Orchestration implies a great deal. First, it implies a sign system that those who are being orchestrated can read and understand in common. Second, the sign system should be infinitely translatable from any one place to another. It should be capable of travel. Third, its instantiation requires a high degree of concertation across space and time. Orchestras are often found in theatres and the theatre metaphor is one of those terms that have been stretched far from its original usage; one talks, for instance, of a theatre of war, where opposing forces seek to orchestrate their sway over a physical space defined as territory. With this metaphorical switch we shift from the orchestration of effective governance with a limited and spatially confined theatre—the orchestra pit—to one that is far more diffuse but still territorially defined. We can make the territoriality aspect clearer with an example. Iraq, one of the venues for the ‘war

on terror' is a definite physical space even if it is one in which the remit of sovereignty is highly contested and authoritative power extremely limited by the pervasive use of violence on all sides.<sup>iv</sup> Power does not exist apart from its constitution; it is, as Allen (2003: 9) puts it 'coextensive with its field of operation. Power is practiced before it is possessed and it is this that gives rise to the roundaboutness of power, not some facile notion that it is a shadowy force lurking in the murky recesses.'

Few organizations are designed by reflexive social theorists or reflective practitioners; perhaps just as well, the more pragmatic among you might say. However, I am familiar with one such, which, by coincidence, was once again a construction project. In May 1997, a program known as the NSW Government Waterways Project was developed by the New South Wales State (NSW) Government that was designed to clean up its rivers, beaches and waterways. A decision was made to undertake a specific major project as a part of this program in the run up to the Sydney 2000 Olympics. Cleaning up the waters of Sydney Harbour was seen as a priority for the Olympics in 2000 given that the 'eyes' of the world would be on the city in just over 3 years<sup>v</sup>. The proposal sought to capture sewerage overflows that occurred during Sydney's sub-tropical storms, when stormwater backs up the sewage system, and overflows into the harbour, bringing in not only raw sewage but also street detritus such as litter, syringes, and dog faeces. The main detail of the project was to build approximately 20km of tunnel in the sandstone situated under the very affluent areas north of Sydney Harbour.



At the time of commencement, relatively little was known about the ground conditions and the tunnel had not been designed. Given the tight time frame the availability of Tunnel Boring Machines (TBMs) was critical, as these had to be sourced on sub-contract from elsewhere in the world. The first stage of the project, of about 18 months, involved a detailed exploration and design phase. Without this, the contractual risks arising from latent conditions would have been unacceptable to any Government client. That made completion in an extraordinarily short period of time vital, obviating against a conventional strategic planning process; instead, a constant process of thinking through the future perfect was implemented. The process comprised imagining a future and then seeking to realize it, subject to constant revision, an approach that seemed inductively to fit what I knew as Schütz's (1967) conception of the future perfect. Schütz (1967: 61) defined the future perfect as the cognitive process by which an 'actor projects his actions as if it were already over and done with and lying in the past... Strangely enough, therefore, because it is pictured as completed, *the planned act bears the temporal character of pastness* ... The fact that it is thus pictured as if it were simultaneously past and future can be taken care of by saying that it is thought of in the future perfect tense'.<sup>vi</sup>

The degrees of ambiguity and uncertainty inherent in the project were high because of the deadline, the lack of engineering information, the lack of information about the characteristics of major pieces of technology (the TBMs), which had yet to be sourced, and also the characteristics of the communities affected by the project. Because of the more than usual degree of uncertainty the project was to be managed in a unique way. Instead of a tender process, where

the entire project has to be specified in advance and those specifications made public for community comment, Sydney Water invited expressions of interest from companies willing to enter a collaborative alliance to deliver the project. The specifications were only 28 pages in length (unheard of in conventional construction where the bill of works and associated contractual documents can run into many thousands of sheets). As the project would involve concurrent engineering much of the design was unspecified. Specified in detail were the agreed principles that the partners were to commit to as the means for resolving issues within the alliance. These differed markedly from traditional detailed construction contracts with the prospect of arbitration when agreement broke down. A typical approach to selecting partners for the alliance was followed (cf. Stiles & Oliver, 1998), choosing the partners on the basis of their commitment to the process envisaged. The project had a unique and inflexible timing. It had to do in 2 years what would normally take five to seven years to complete.

Having thought of the usual way of doing things, with the usual problems that this might entail, with worst and best case parameters, they then set about trying to think of extraordinary ways of creating the desired outcome. The outcome was easily encapsulated colloquially: 'a lot less shit and rubbish in the harbour' and sparkling blue water for the TV cameras covering Olympic sailing and swimming events, as well as, in the long terms, less pollution generally for residents and tourists.

The project was unique in a number of ways, first because of the deadline; the lack of engineering information and lack of information about the characteristics of major pieces of technology (the TBMs), as well as the

characteristics of the communities affected by the project. It was also unique in terms of its symbolic and social impact as a major piece of Sydney Olympics infrastructure, a significant Public relations opportunity for Sydney Water, as well as an innovative prefiguring of an increasing use of public/private partnerships. Moreover, its mode of delivery, without any prior specification of methods, machinery, and environmental conditions through detailed prior planning, was rare. Finally, both the simple risk/reward scheme governing the contract and the conditions attached to them were highly innovative. Specified in detail were agreed non-litigious and non-adversarial principles that the partners were to commit to as the means for resolving issues within the alliance. Recourse to third party legal mechanisms was barred as a way of resolving disputes.

At the core of what these reflective practitioners did was to design a specific social contract for the project. Parsons was not their guide but they had arrived at similar conclusions to him. Much as Parsons did theoretically, they realized that the system goals – delivery of the infrastructure on time and on budget – could not be achieved without the creation of some overall binding legitimacy. As my experience of construction sites showed, such legitimacy could not be taken for granted. Parsons had perceived that power was not the exception that is somehow outside the system. He understood that for power to be effective it had to be a constituting and systemic property. Viewing it as a circulatory medium he prefigured the post-modern perception of power. Furthermore, while he was not mistaken in linking it to legitimacy and authority his crucial error was in the assumption that authority and legitimacy derive ‘naturally’ from system goals rather than that the consent behind legitimacy and

authority will always be constructed through complex means which have nothing to do with the realization of system goals and are very far from a Habermasian ideal speech situation. Legitimacy has to be socially constructed rather than taken for granted.

The bedrock of the project was its construction of legitimacy. Here the overarching pride in the achievement of the Olympics on the part of the city and their desire to deliver it successfully was clearly an important aspect. However, while pride may have been necessary it was not sufficient. Other cities had delivered the Olympics but had not done them on time or budget: Montreal, Atlanta and Athens being cases in point; maybe London also. No, the mechanisms were much more organizationally specific. An additional strategic purpose was that the prime partner, Sydney Water, had been under severe public criticism because of outbreaks of Giardia and Crypto-Sporidium in its water supply only a few years earlier. Thus, as a long-term service provider in Sydney, the client was committed to improve its relationship with the community.

The detailed design of the tunnel was commenced by the alliance once it was established in early 1998 through first defining a *Business As Usual (BAU)* case, using conventional scenario planning approaches: the outcome that would be most likely to occur with the project if they designed and constructed it through traditional planning methods, such as reverse scheduling. But the project partners wanted to do much better than this: they wanted breakthrough innovations. The alliance partners sought to imagine the project, in terms of outcomes that were so good that everyone benefited: the marine life in the harbour (who were a potent symbol in the project iconography); the residents

around the foreshore and under the tunnel route; the local communities with whom they would interact in the process; the Olympics organizers; public works contractors throughout the State of New South Wales, and the employees, contractors and client themselves – the members of the alliance. An innovative approach to organizational collaboration framed their thinking and action.

Management consultants experienced in large-scale construction projects helped design a project culture<sup>vii</sup>. The consultancy assumed that the alliance would only achieve its objectives if staff at all levels shared the same values, believed that the project was 'something special', and had only its ultimate success in mind – rather than sectional 'home' organization interests<sup>viii</sup>. They recommended that cohesiveness could be fostered through creating a project culture that was explicitly designed and crafted to encourage shared behaviours, decision-making and values. A list of value statements was produced by the PALT (Project Alliance Leadership Team), which comprised the formal statement of the culture: the two core values were striving to produce solutions that were 'best for project' and having a 'no blame' culture. The following were the principles of the culture:

1. Build and maintain a champion team, with champion leadership, which is integrated across all disciplines and organizations
2. Commit corporately and individually to openness, integrity, trust, cooperation, mutual support and respect, flexibility, honesty and loyalty to the project
3. Honour our commitments to one another
4. Commit to a no-blame culture

5. Use breakthroughs and the free flow of ideas to achieve exceptional results in all project objectives
6. Outstanding results provide outstanding rewards
7. Deal with and resolve all issues from within the alliance
8. Act in a way that is 'best for project'
9. Encourage challenging *BAU* behaviours
10. Spread the alliance culture to all stakeholders

Talking construction into being, constructing power, and powering construction, is not, as we can see, merely an academic but is also a practical concern. All staff would be expected to think creatively and laterally in order to come up with solutions considered best for this project rather than merely implement second-best solutions known already from previous projects. In this way they sought to instil future perfect thinking in the everyday life of the project. Intricately linked with this 'best-for-project' mentality was the 'no-blame' element: staff would be expected to find solutions to problems rather than to dispense blame. Additionally, every alliance partner committed to making the most appropriate, technically skilled and team-oriented staff available for the project, even if that meant withdrawing them from other projects. Induction workshops were held to ensure that everyone, including sub-contractors, understood.

The basis for the contractors and client benefit was a risk/reward calculation. A global indicative budget was determined for the project. Performance on the budget – and a number of other key performance indicators – was linked to returns to the parties involved in the project. If the budget was

saved the partners made money; if it was exceeded they lost money.

The project agreement provided for a risk/reward regime based on performance compared to project objectives defined in terms of 5 key performance indicators (KPIs) – conceived on the criteria of ‘who benefits?’ – these were, first and second, cost and schedule – no surprises there – but also, safety, *community and environment* – which are not usually part of construction KPIs.

There was one non-negotiable performance criterion, the completion of the project for use by the Olympic games. While the alliance had the responsibility of defining *BAU* objectives in terms of suitable criteria, there was no precedent for a construction project being assessed against such parameters. To ensure independence, external consultants were engaged to review the benchmarks for the non-cost/schedule criteria that had been developed by the alliance. For each area, performance levels, ranging from poor to outstanding, were defined – with the brief being simply to define outstanding through the future perfect – what would an absolutely spotless report card and review of the project require? The specialist consultants also assessed and reported performance against all criteria regularly throughout the project. Success against the non-cost/schedule criteria was critical for project success both in commercial and overall terms and, as such, this area presented the alliance team with significant risks.

There were positive and negative financial outcomes for performance on each of the objectives in the risk/reward process. Financial rewards were payable on a sliding scale for performance above *BAU* to *Outstanding*. All objectives,

except cost, had a maximum amount. Financial penalties accrued when performance was below *BAU* and, most importantly, *performance in any one area could not be traded-off against any other area that was represented by the KPIs. Only outstanding performance against all five KPIs would yield the maximum return*; less than this in any one area would diminish that return and adverse performance would put the reward at risk as penalty clauses began to bite. To make the future perfect concrete meant constructing something that could be imagined as already complete and subject to audit. Thus, in each area performance processes and outcomes were constructed on which the project would be assessed.

What was of most importance was that the processes were actually implemented in the spirit of the culture that had been designed. The research team that I headed referred to this implementation as the future perfect strategy because the way in which the project was delivered was, for us, best conceived in terms of Schütz's ideas. In practice, three specific means of managing through the future perfect strategy emerged. In terms of the model presented earlier these represented distinct language games, with their own grammars and modes of rationality. These means included the creative use of *strange conversations*; the rehearsal of *end games and the practice of workshopping*, and the *projecting of feelings, concerns and issues*.

### ***Strange conversations***

It was Karl Weick (1979: 200) who introduced the notion of strange conversations to the management literature, a topic that he took from ethnomethodology. Weick



defined strange conversations as ones where the agenda, process and outcomes were unclear. A great many community meetings were associated with the project: in each of these, the agenda was unclear, the process highly emergent, and the outcomes unknown. In these meetings community members were invited to surface anxieties and make suggestion in relation to the project (almost all of which took place beneath the surface, of which they had little knowledge). What they proposed was often a surprise that, in terms of the rationality of the engineers involved in the project, made little sense: for instance, they were concerned about the visual obtrusiveness of the above-ground works; the noise; mud on the roads; potential loss of access to walk their dogs or for children to play. These were all secondary considerations for the engineers, intent on building the project.

The conversations were initially strange because the premises from which each of the two sides came were so different: initially some tensions occurred in some meetings. But these strange conversations helped to produce creative solutions to many local community relevancies, such as the diagnosis of the aesthetics of the works. One site was diagnosed as 'ugly' in conversations between the project and the community. That the community liaison officers would be addressing aesthetics was not an outcome that had been envisaged prior to these conversations. Often, in the initial meetings, it was unclear what it was that was being discussed, as talk ranged so widely, in terms of the community member's emotional and aesthetic response to the engineering works. In fact, it was often the case that the eventual outcome informed what it was that the conversations had been about: for instance, once the proposal for the concealment and beautification of one of the sites had emerged, and then it

crystallized as what had been wanted all along, even though, at the outset, this was not clear at all. Later in the project community liaison officers found themselves organizing BBQs between community and project members, where more such intriguing conversations occurred.

#### **0.1.1.1**

##### **0.1.1.2 End games and the practice of workshopping**

End games helped concentrate minds on the future perfect strategy in the project.

End games occurred frequently, as project completion was enacted in the future perfect. Here is an example that occurred at the January 2000 meeting, when a project leader reminded everybody of the objectives. He said:

We know where we want to be, where we want to go, and where we want to finish up. We need to plan the end and work out each step to get there so everything is synchronised. We need ownership over the deliverables at the end of the project. The ultimate project is the built product.

As we have made clear earlier in the paper, it was the absence of the usual project pre-scoping and its incorporation in a complex bill of works that made the project unique. It was designed as the process unfolded – an unfolding that did not always develop according to expectations. For instance, in March 1999, one Project Leader exclaimed, 'It comes down to we have lost ten weeks but we have only been on the job for 26 weeks!' This particular project leader then complained that suggestions being made on how to deal with the slippage were reactive. The project leaders needed to be more proactive in orientation. He seemed to suggest updating their future perfect planned strategies. Implicitly, he said that they should still project the infrastructure as something that would be

built by July 31, 2000. At the same time he suggested that they should plan backwards for the 78 weeks that were left for this particular phase and take into account that they had only accomplished the amount of work budgeted for 16 weeks in the previous 26 weeks. So, while the original planning had been based on 104 weeks, they would now have to plan as if they had never had more than 94 weeks (of which only 78 were now left)<sup>ix</sup>.

At the August 1999 PALT meeting, where slippage on the completion date was at issue, one of the project leaders used the end game technique to challenge his colleagues to think in future perfect terms:

Look, I'd like not to have a stretched target. Where will we really be in 2 or 4 weeks? Think hard about what you want to be judged on. What are those numbers you want to be associated with? You know that this will come back to you. We will ask you, have these forecasts been met? What will you say?

The answer, which was simply 'We can meet it', was clearly not what he had hoped for:

Don't set a stretched target and miss it. If you cannot meet it, change it now. I mean we are going to have a very serious discussion with government. We will say to them, we need to increase time, increase costs, because you stuffed us up. They will say ok, but cross-examine us first.

He wanted them to project themselves into a future where – as the end game – government agencies would question them and then think backwards towards the present. How would they cope? How would they feel? He knew that the project would be judged by the outcome and wanted them to think backwards from the outcome. A representative of an indirectly linked organization, who

only attended that one particular PALT meeting, stated this bluntly:

Well, I can guarantee you PALT members one thing! The Minister will ask what day you will finish, if you are not finishing on the day you said you were going to finish. You will have etched this into stone, on a report and you will be judged on this date!

He was told that there were contingency plans and that working with machinery was, at best, like a lottery. Another project leader also insisted on future perfect thinking at this meeting by asking, 'If we were meeting the Minister tomorrow, what would we say the finishing date would be?' The project leaders responded by agreeing 'OK, by such and such a date we will have had a risk analysis on schedule done.'

The significance of end games was that they worked as aids for visualization of the future perfect and enabled the PALT to focus on the future perfect they were seeking to construct. One of the key techniques used to maintain future perfect focus on the end game was workshopping. When it looked as if the project might run over-schedule, the PALT agreed to have a workshop to address the alignment of the five key objectives between headquarters and construction sites (PALT meeting, June 1999). They agreed that by the time of the workshop, one of the project leaders would have met with the program managers responsible for the key objectives. He would have discussed the alignment of the overall objectives with those of the particular construction sites. Additionally, he would have codified the learning breakthroughs at each construction site, so that they could identify how they had reached their outstanding achievements. Further, he would have discussed the workshop agenda with management consultants and would have arranged a

workshop venue. Once again, the PALT engaged in future perfect strategy.

### **0.1.1.3 Projecting feelings, concerns and issues**

Although the PALT team was almost all engineers, people with a technical background who were more professionally versed in technical than social construction, there was some explicit recognition of the importance of social construction in one aspect of the PALT meetings. The agenda for each meeting originally contained a section titled 'Projecting Feelings, Concerns and Issues'. We were rather surprised when we first saw this in action: we had not expected such empathetic and social maintenance work from highly professional engineers. Any member could raise anything under this recurring agenda item, with the issue remaining on the agenda until 'it was no longer important or was addressed to the satisfaction of the person who raised the issue in the first place.' The inclusion of this clause was supposed to ensure that future perfect thinking maintained a reality check: if an issue had been constructed in regard to any aspect of the project that was causing concern, then it was reiterated monthly, until it was no longer a matter for concern. While some of these feelings, concerns and issues were quite technical – about scheduling and such like, others concerned more complex community relations<sup>x</sup>.

The technique was significant – it ensured that the future perfect agenda was open and democratic in its projections among the top leadership team. It created a space in which emotional aspects of the project could be discussed (Fineman, 1996; Albrow, 1997). Increasingly, the routinized use of the item, which, after a while, became merely a matter for noting rather than action, and

was then later abandoned, signaled the limits of future perfect thinking when confronted by community matters that were outside of project control. Although there was considerable innovation, and the project did come in on time and budget, there were some unanticipated consequences of the approach used.

Both social and material reality changed in the Olympic project.

Materially, a major amenity and piece of infrastructure was developed, while, socially, a shared culture was built to deliver it, around a future perfect approach. Construction did not have to be conflictual and characterized by zero sum power games – it could deploy positive power. Although its designers did not know it they were putting Parsons to work, using his conceptions of ‘power to’ to overcome the usual expressions of ‘power over’ that I had found characterized earlier construction contracts.

### **Conclusion**

Parsons theorized abstractly about the nature of positive power; Garfinkel and Wittgenstein provided some tools with which to make sense of how people make everyday power work in and through subtle language games with which they advantage and disadvantage others; Schütz used some reflections on everyday life to make some complex analytical points about meaning; Weick built on these by introducing the idea of the future perfect into enactment. In construction, points illuminated by all these theorists can readily be found. Much of normal construction is a process marked by language games and indexicality with which players seek to advantage themselves. Often, these games lead to negative power relations and cost and completion blow-outs as the stakes are raised in vicious

cycles of contestation and gamesmanship. However, these games take place in an essentially Hobbesian world of unruly, antagonistic and undisciplined subjects. When we introduce Parsons' solution to the Hobbesian problem of order, that is a strongly normative central value system into which all members are socialized, as a veritable social contract, then a different set of outcomes occurs. In both situations the key politics take place around meaning, as Schütz and Weick would predict. However, the politics can be productive if the design is right. Thus, in this inaugural I have applied theoretical ideas drawn from social theory to illuminate the use of positive power and the future perfect as alternatives to the approaches to the construction of contract packaging.

Let's recapitulate the differences one more time. The client selected its suppliers on the basis of cultural fit and technical competence rather than price; it then defined its needs in performance terms and empowered the team to develop the best solutions possible. In contrast, in the traditional approach strategic planning is finalized with limited information in advance of the project team being selected and the solution is locked in early, limiting creativity during delivery. It represented a shift of strategic decision making to the people who can make the difference – a reasoning that underlies the transformation of construction prefigured in this project.

The project grew from just 28 pages, with no design and no clauses, other than an injunction to think in the future perfect and create a much cleaner Sydney Harbour, to a project that delivered what it set out to do: on time, only slightly over budget, and used positive rather than negative, zero-sum power to do so. It made Sydney Harbour sufficiently clean that in July 2002, in an ecologically

symbolic representation of the success of the project, three 80 ton whales came to frolic under the famous Sydney Harbour Bridge, with the equally famous Opera House behind them<sup>xi</sup>. In living memory whales had never been this far into the Harbour before: the Olympic dream appeared to have been spectacularly realized.

The roots of the theory and method with which I captured the construction of power powering construction had been nurtured in undergraduate philosophy tutorials, grown into adolescence in the dark, cold Northern Town of my youth, and had matured under the sun and besides the sea of Sydney Harbour. Much as Ibsen's (1973) *Master Builder*, in a way that I had never anticipated I have built a part of my career in sewers. Hopefully, I have not emerged covered in shit.

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<sup>i</sup> The distinction between having power over someone and the power to do something is one which is embedded in ordinary language usage. The latter approximates far more closely to the verb usage of *to power*, as one might refer to an engine powering a car, while the former lends itself to saying that someone *has power*, where power is a noun—as if it were a thing that could be possessed. In French the distinction between *puissance* and *pouvoir* reflects the distinction between the two ways of thinking about power. The English word power, in fact, stems from the French word *pouvoir*, meaning ‘to be able’. In English, power is thus often thought of as the exercise of an ability that, without such exercise, would lay fallow, as it were, awaiting enactment. It is this sense of being a capacity unexercised that is rendered by the French word

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*puissance* (Emmet 1953). *Puissance* is closer to the notion of power as ‘power to’; in English the concept of power, while retaining more of the sense of its French root in *pouvoir* as an ability exercised, also has to stand in for *puissance*, the capacity concept. We will find that these ordinary language auspices echo through the debates addressed in this chapter.

<sup>ii</sup> It was this aspect of the Hobbesian problematic that Parsons, as a member of the Pareto Circle, was to find useful. Other theorists were more impressed with the causal mechanics rather than the ensuing order. There is an excellent analysis of the sociological significance of the Pareto Circle by Barbara Heyl (2002/1968).

<sup>iii</sup> When a young journalist asked British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, whilst still in office, what can most easily steer a government off course, he answered ‘Events, dear boy. Events.’

<sup>iv</sup> These words were written on May 9 2005, three months after the Iraq democratic elections were held.

<sup>v</sup> The project client, Sydney Water completed team selection and concurrently undertook the environmental impact statement (EIS) in record time in the three months between September and December 1997. The government approval for the project was given in late December and the alliance contract was signed in January 1998, leaving the team 2 years and 9 months to complete the project. A five to seven year time-span would have been available under normal approaches to contracting. It was evident that normal contracting methodologies would not produce the Tunnel on time. While the time for completion was strictly stipulated at the outset, such that it was to be ready for the Sydney 2000 Olympics, along with an approximate budget of (AU) 380 million dollars, these were the only variables stipulated.

<sup>vi</sup> While many researchers and authors have adopted Schütz’s notion of the future perfect, (see Langlois, 1990; Langlois and Csontos 1993; Davis, 1987; Hogarth, 1987; Bandrowski, 1990; Leonard–Barton, 1992; Schilling, 1998; Rollier & Turner, 1994; Bavelas, 1973; Boland, 1984), it was Weick (1969; 1995; 2000) who did most to make Schütz known amongst management theorists. Weick’s conception of enactment, for instance, relies on the creation of meaning through action oriented to the future perfect (Schütz, 1967). In the future perfect, the forward-looking projection of ends is combined with a visualization of the means by which that projected future may be accomplished (Weick, 1979: 198).

<sup>vii</sup> I was at no stage a consultant to the project, it should be clear.

<sup>viii</sup> The detail of this “designer culture” is examined in more detail elsewhere (see Clegg et al, 2002

<sup>ix</sup> The project was eventually fully commissioned some months later than the pre-Olympic date. However, importantly, the project was certified as operationally available by the due date even though it was not completely finished. If the tunnel had been used at this stage, had the need transpired, it would have meant that some of the physical infrastructure that required de-commissioning would have had to be sacrificed by being left in vaults off the tunnel.

<sup>x</sup> Over time the list of issues and concerns on the agenda became longer and longer and it became clear that some issues were more noted than addressed, let alone resolved: they were mentioned as a concern at the outset, typically projected into the future, and then the next person’s concerns were raised. When the list of issues and concerns became overwhelming, the project leaders, with some limited opposition, decided to delete the recurring item from the agenda, even though many of the issues were still to be resolved – especially those that concerned community relations and the social construction that key players in the community were placing on the issue of the tunnel venting system as a potential source of pollution.

<sup>xi</sup> Cynics might also want to note that the winter had been very dry so little or no run-off would have occurred anyway.