Chapter 1
Theories of Power

A Survey Towards the Development of a Theory of Power

Before beginning the discussion of empowerment and the development of a theory connected with it, I want to deal with a concept that is prior to empowerment—power. Power is a key concept for an understanding of processes of empowerment. The theory of empowerment that will be developed further on will draw its inspiration from an integration of two domains: from an understanding of theories of power and the use of insights drawn from these for the purposes of developing a theory of empowerment, and from an analysis of processes of empowerment. Hence, this deeper study of it will also make possible a better understanding of states of powerlessness, practices of disempowerment, and processes by which people and communities struggle for control over their lives and environments.

A Brief History of Theories of Power

This chapter makes no pretension to survey all the existing literature in the field of the theories of power. It begins with a historical survey of thought about power in the social sciences, relating only to the most prominent theories. Further on, a number of theories that contain elements suitable to the development of a theory of empowerment are presented in more detail.

Modern thinking about power begins in the writings of Nicollò Machiavelli (*The Prince*, early 16th century) and Thomas Hobbes (*Leviathan*, mid-17th century). Their books are considered classics of political writing, and the

contrast between them represents the two main routes along which thought about power has continued to this day (Clegg, 1989). Machiavelli represents the strategic and decentralized thinking about power and organization. He sees power as a means, not a resource, and seeks strategic advantages, such as military ones, between his prince and others. Hobbes represents the causal thinking about power as a hegemony. Power, in Hobbes, is centralized and focused on sovereignty.

According to Hobbes' basic premise, there exists a total political community, the embodiment of which is the state, or the community, or the society. This is a single unit, ordered according to a uniform principle, possessing a continuity of time and place, from which the power stems. According to Machiavelli, total power is a desirable final end, which is achieved only rarely.

In the mid-twentieth century it appeared that Hobbes' view was triumphant.[1] His language and his images, written more than a century after the publication of *The Prince*, were more appropriate to the modern scientific approach than Machiavelli's military images. The central tradition of research in the social sciences sought precision and logic (and is still seeking them today), and it asks how one can observe, measure, and quantify power. Power was presented as a *position* of will, as a supreme factor to which the wills of others are subject. In the seventies, Machiavelli's strategic and contingent approach attained to a renewed appreciation in France, with the crystallization of approaches that rediscovered

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1 Interest in power exists in a variety of fields of thought: Karl Marx influenced the conceptualization of power in all the social sciences; Alfred Adler, following Marx, opened a discussion on power in psychology; Friedrich Nietzsche influenced thought about power in philosophy. The present chapter, however, focuses on contemporary theorists for whom power is the central concept in their thinking.

the unpredictable character of the power game, and its profound dependence on context (Clegg, 1989).[2]

After the Second World War, the social sciences began taking an understandable interest in power. At that time, the work of Max Weber (1947) served as a point of departure for thought about power because it continued the rational Hobbesian line and developed organizational thinking. Weber's approach to power connected with his interest in bureaucracy, and linked power with concepts of authority and rule. He defined power as the probability that an actor within a social relationship would be in a position to carry out his will despite resistance to it. The activation of power is dependent on a person's will, even in opposition to someone else's.

Weber was interested in power as a factor of domination, based on economic or authoritarian interests. He historically researched the sources of the formal authority that activates legitimate power, and identified three sources of legitimation, or accordance of social permission, for the activation of power: the charismatic, the traditional, and the rational-legal.

Theories of power after Weber developed in the direction of investigation of illegitimate power, as this grows within the formal and legitimate frameworks of hierarchic and bureaucratic power, and in the direction of the critique of Weber's bureaucratic model (Merton, 1957). The critique of Weber stemmed, unjustly, from an understanding of his theory as an idealization of the bureaucratic organization. The truth is that Weber saw the organizational power of the bureaucracy as the source of the mechanization and routinization of human life, and as a threat to the freedom of the human spirit. He also predicted that this organizational form, as a power instrument, would sabotage the appearance

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2 Stuart Clegg's book Frameworks of Power (1989) has been of great assistance in helping me to understand the history of sociological writing about power, and he is one of the sources for my writing of the present chapter.

of more democratic forms of organization (Morgan, 1986, 1997).

Robert Dahl (1961) continues Weber's approach, both in the definition of power and in the attribution of it to a concrete human factor. Whereas Weber discussed power in the context of the organization and its structures, Dahl located the discussion of power within the boundaries of an actual community. However, the major importance of Dahl is in the development of the interest in understanding ruling élites, which came to the fore after the Second World War (Mills, 1956; Hunter, 1953). According to his *theory of community power*, power is exercised in a community by a particular concrete individual, while other individuals, also actual, are prevented from doing what they prefer to do. Power is exercised in order to cause those who are subject to it to follow the private preferences of those who possess the power. Power is the production of obedience to the preferences of others, including an expansion of the preferences of those subject to it so as to include those preferences. To this day, most writers dealing with organizational behavior make do with Dahl's definition of power—power as the ability to make somebody do something that otherwise he or she would not have done.

Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz (1962) developed a model as a response to Dahl—*the two faces of power*. This model is also a critique of Dahl's basic premises. Dahl assumed a pluralistic society, in which all the community interests are represented by means of open processes. Bachrach and Baratz also have a doubt as to whether the decision-making process is really democratic and open as Dahl assumed. They dealt mainly with the connection between the overt face of power – the way decisions are made – and the other, covert face of power, which is the ability to prevent decision making. They pointed to the strategy of mobilizing bias to prevent discussion on certain issues and thus to determine what is *important* and *unimportant*. They referred to this organizing of what stays *in* and what is *out* as the *non-decision-making process* where

power conflicts do not rise above the public face of power which is confined to certain values, rituals or beliefs that tend to favor the vested interests of one (or more) group/s relative to others (Clegg, 1989).

In the seventies, Steven Lukes (1974) developed Bachrach and Baratz's approach further. It was he who shifted the discussion from *community power* to a focus on power as such, by introducing a three-dimensional model into the discussion of the subject. The third dimension that Lukes added to the discussion of power, which theoretically already recognized two dimensions – the overt and the covert dimensions – was the latent dimension of power. While the overt dimension of power deals with declared political preferences, as they reveal themselves in open political play, and the covert dimension deals with political preferences that reveal themselves through complaints about political non-issues, the third dimension deals with the relations between political preferences and *real interests*. Power, according to Lukes, is measured also by the ability to implant in people's minds interests that are contrary to their own good. The third, latent dimension is the hardest of all to identify, because it is hard for people who are themselves influenced by this dimension to discover its existence. The analysis of power, according to Lukes, must henceforth relate – in addition to the open decisions (of Dahl's overt face) and the non-decisions (of Bachrach and Baratz's covert face) – also to the entire political agenda, in order to examine its adequacy to the true interests of various groups. (A more detailed explanation of the three dimensions of power, and their development, appears in the section on Gaventa's theory of power.)

The writings of Michel Foucault (Foucault, 1979, 1980, 1996) extended the discussion of the concept of power from sociology to all the fields of the social sciences and the humanities. Through Foucault's influence, the empirical activity of identifying those who possess power and of locating power loses its importance. His approach systematically rejects the belief in the existence of an ordered and regulating

rational agency. In Foucault's world there is no source from which actions stem, only an infinite series of practices. Decentralization of the position of power is one of the great innovations of his thinking, which will be discussed more extensively further on.

Anthony Giddens (Giddens, 1982, 1984) developed his approach as a continuation – and also as a critique – of Foucault and his predecessors. He constructed an inclusive social theory which he called *structuration* or *duality of structure*. On his view, power is an important, if not exclusive, component of the social structure. Power is exercised by human agents and is also created by them, influences them, and limits them. In other words, power is not a quality or a resource of people, or a position in the social structure, but a social factor which influences both these components of human society and is also created by them—this is the duality that we will discuss once more when we turn our attention to Giddens.

This condensed survey describes in general lines how the discussion of power burst through the boundaries of organization and location and penetrated into all the domains of the social discourse. The roots of the concept are grounded in political theory and political philosophy. In the period after the Second World War, *power* was a central concept only in the political sciences. The work of Lukes and Giddens contributed to the establishing of the importance of the concept of power in the contemporary sociological discourse. Thanks to Foucault, the discussion of power became a widespread intellectual preoccupation. Foucault investigated the concept in new fields: medicine, psychiatry, penology, and human sexuality. Others continued his work in the criticism of literature, art and film, in semiotics, in feminist analysis, in social history, and in theories of planning.

We will go on in this chapter to discuss a selection of contemporary theories of power, and then to present the approach to power that will serve as a basis for this book.

Likewise, we will deal with several issues that are also relevant to the subject of empowerment, like, for example, the human and social damage involved in powerlessness (Gaventa, 1980); the organizational roots of powerlessness (Mann, 1986); the need for a combined approach to action and structure in the social domain (Giddens, 1984); and an understanding of power as concomitant to social relationships (Foucault, 1980).

Gaventa's Theory of Power

John Gaventa (Gaventa, 1980) researched the phenomenon of quiescence – the silent agreement in conditions of *glaring inequality* (p. 3) – and tried to understand why, in difficult conditions of oppression and discrimination, no resistance arises against the rule of a social elite. He found that the social elite makes use of its power principally to prevent the rise of conflicts in its domain, and to attain social quiescence. In other words, a situation of apparent lack of conflicts is identified as both a sign and a consequence of deliberate use of power mechanisms.

The purpose of power is to prevent groups from participating in the decision-making processes and also to obtain the passive agreement of these groups to this situation. A silent agreement, then, is not an expression of a desire not to participate, but evidence of a mute compliance with the situation. Hence, a violation of this quiescence is a rebellion, whether it be an explicit demand to participate in decision-making, or a more minor response, such as non-acceptance. Gaventa bases his model for the understanding of quiescence and rebellion in conditions of glaring inequality on Lukes' three dimensions of power (Lukes, 1974) which were mentioned earlier in the chapter. This will be an opportunity to gain a deeper acquaintance of these dimensions, and to understand how each of them relates to power and to powerlessness.

1st. The One-Dimensional Approach to Power

In the overt arena of power relations, A's power over B is manifested to the extent that A can make B do something which B would not have done had it not been for A. The overt dimension of power may be investigated by means of observation of behavior: who participates, who profits, who loses, and who expresses himself in the decision-making process.

The one-dimensional approach is based on assumptions that were sharply criticized by those who continued it. For example, that people always recognize grievances and act to right them; that participation in power relations occurs overtly in decision-making arenas; that these political arenas are open to any organized group; that the leaders are not an elite with interests of its own, but represent or speak for the entire public. All these assumptions lead to a conclusion which is characteristic of the one-dimensional approach: because people who have identified a problem act within an open system in order to solve it, and they do this by themselves or through their leaders, then non-participation, or inaction, is not a social problem, but a decision made by those who have decided not to participate.

On the basis of this conclusion, the one-dimensional approach provides explanations for the inactivity of deprived groups: indifference is a general quality of the human species, and people are divided into various kinds—the active political person, and the passive civic person. The constant connection between a low socio-economic status and minimal participation is explained as indifference, political incapacity, cynicism or alienation. At any rate, the causes of the non-participants' quiescence are sought in the circumstances of their life or in their culture, and not in the context of power relations. As a consequence of this approach of *blaming the victim* for his non-involvement, the recommendations too are generally for a change of the victim's non-participatory norms of

behavior—principally through education and social integration (Pateman 1970).

Even within its own basic premises, the one-dimensional approach will have difficulties explaining what there is in low income, low status, and low education, or in traditional or rural culture, that can explain people's quiescence. And how are we to understand vast differences between one place and another in the political behavior of people with these same characteristics?

2nd. The Two-Dimensional Approach to Power

Power is activated on the second, covert dimension, not only in order to triumph over the other participants in the decision-making process, but also to prevent decision-making, to exclude certain subjects or participants from the process (Bachrach & Baratz 1962). A study of power in the covert dimension needs to observe who decides what, when and how, who remains outside, how this happens, and how these two processes interconnect. One of the important aspects of power, beside victory in a struggle, is to determine the agenda of the struggle in advance. That is, to determine whether certain questions will even be negotiated. The understanding of the second facet of power changed the explanation of the quiescence of deprived groups. From now on , non-participation in decision-making would be explained as a manifestation of fear and weakness, and not necessarily as a manifestation of indifference.

Since the two-dimensional approach, like the one-dimensional, assumed that the powerless are fully conscious of their condition, it cannot easily explain the whole diversity of means that power exercises in order to obtain advantages in the arena. For example, how is the raising of issues for discussion prevented? This approach also did not recognize the possibility that powerless people are likely to have a distorted consciousness that originates in the existing power relations, and thus live within a false and manipulated consensus that

they have internalized. The two-dimensional approach related to open conflicts and to the ability to maneuver their extent and their contents, while one of the most effective mechanisms of power is the ability to ensure quiescence in the decision-making arena—to prevent the outbreak of conflict.

3rd. The Three-dimensional Approach to Power

The third, latent dimension, that of the *true interests* (Lukes 1974), explains that B does things that he would not have done had it not been for A because A influences, determines and shapes B's will. Yet another innovation in this dimension is that this phenomenon can occur without overt conflict. A conflict of interests between the activators of power and the true interests of those who are excluded from the arena creates a potential for conflict—a latent conflict.

   An approach which assumes latent processes requires a special research methodology. It is no longer possible to make do with behavioral analysis and with observations of individuals as the only means of understanding power relations. Since systems prevent the appearance of claims and frustrate their transformation into political issues, what is required is a study of social and historical factors that will explain how human expectations are shaped and how people's consciousness of problems is formed.

Mechanisms of Power

After defining the three relevant dimensions, it is important to identify various mechanisms by means of which power operates in each dimension in order to attain its goals.

1st. Mechanisms of the First, Overt Dimension: Open Conflict in the Decision-Making Arena

In the first dimension, relatively straightforward mechanisms are activated. The actors invest resources and talents in order

to obtain an advantage in bargaining on key issues. Resources may be votes in the ballot box, or influence that the actors cab bring to the bargaining game. Possible talents are personal efficacy, political experience and organizational strength, which the participants use in order to win an advantage.

2nd. Mechanisms of the Second, Covert Dimension: Mobilization of Bias; Non-Decision-Making

In addition to the resources of the first dimension, the people with power mobilize game rules which work in their favor, at others' expense. Decision-making may be prevented by the exertion of force, the threat of sanctions, or the mobilization of bias which creates a negative approach to the subject. Mobilization of bias means the reinforcing and emphasizing of values, beliefs, ceremonies and institutional procedures which present a very particular and limited definition of problems. By mobilizing bias it is possible to establish new barriers and new symbols which are aimed to thwart efforts to widen the scope of conflict.

Several mechanisms of non-decision-making are harder to discover than others: like institutional inactivity resulting in *decisionless decisions*. The sum total of accumulating outcomes of a series of decisions or non-decisions, and non-events which, because they are such, cannot be observed and thus one may mistakenly think that they have not occurred.

3rd. Mechanisms of the Third, Latent Dimension: Influence on Consciousness and Perception

These mechanisms are less developed theoretically, so they are less clear. This dimension involves identification of the way in which meanings and patterns of action which cause B to believe and act in a way that is useful to A and harmful to himself are formed.

Since in situations of latent conflict it is especially difficult to learn how the perception of needs, expectations and strategies

is shaped, a number of domains must be investigated. For example, what use is made of social myths, language and symbols, in order to obtain an advantage in power relations. We need to investigate processes of communication and information transfer in order to understand what is communicated and what is not, and how this is done; how social legitimations develop around the dominant groups, and how they are imbued into people's consciousness in the form of beliefs or roles. The indirect mechanisms of this dimension, it would seem, have a significant influence on the shaping of people's political perceptions, especially of those belonging to powerless and highly dependent groups.

A Model of Power and Powerlessness

Gaventa's model of power is an attempt to integrate the three dimensions of power in order to explain processes of power and powerlessness in situations of social equality. Gaventa examines the concentrated influence of mechanisms from the three dimensions on responses in such situations. He claims that a challenge, or a rebellion, can occur only if there is a shift in the power relations: a loss of power by A or a gain of power by B. Together with this, before an open conflict can take place, B has to take some steps in order to overcome his powerlessness. B has to overcome both the direct and the indirect effects of the third dimension: he has to go through a process of issue and action formulation, and he has to carry out the process of mobilizing action upon issues. By means of these processes B will develop his own resources – both real and symbolic – to engage in manifest conflict. In other words, B can actually participate in a conflict in the first, overt dimension, only after he has successfully overcome the obstacles of the second and third dimensions. Actual participation means the presentation of well-defined claims and grievances which are brought to discussion in the decision-making arena by B together with others who are in an identical situation.

A has a series of means with which to overcome the outcomes of the overt or covert conflict that B initiates: first of all, A can simply patronize B and remain aloof, thus preventing the very admission of the existence of the conflict. But A can also interfere with each one of B's steps: he can interfere with his obtaining of resources and his development of his own abilities; he can incite against the opening up of issues, and he can sabotage activities. It should be recalled that all the barriers to effective challenge that B has to face are options for the maintenance of the status quo that are available to A.

As the ability of powerless people (B) to act increases, the options of the activators of power (A) diminish; hence, too the process of A's becoming weaker. Each triumph reinforces itself and builds further consciousness and activity among the powerless, towards further change. The meaning of the process is social change—an emergence from quiescence to political participation and, as this happens, a strengthening of the weak. From the point of view of the powerful, expectations of such outcomes are a reason for adopting many means in order to preserve B's quiescence.

Gaventa's theory of power helps to expose the direct and indirect ways in which social powerlessness is created and maintained. It draws attention to the great influence of indirect mechanisms in the creation of powerlessness—a phenomenon which we will have more to say about. Gaventa's theory of power will serve, further on, as a basis for a discussion of powerlessness, not as a personal problem of the powerless, but as a social situation that has its roots in conditions of social inequality and in disempowering social solutions. The various mechanisms of the three dimensions of power will be used for developing strategies of empowering activity.

Mann's Organizational Outflanking

Mann's concept of *organizational outflanking* (Mann 1986) makes clear the extent to which organizational resources and tools to activate these resources are necessary for efficient resistance against power. The advantage in power relations is on the side of those who possess an organizational advantage. Hence, those who possess the organizational advantage will always succeed in overcoming those who lack organizational resources, by means of a principal strategy which Mann calls organizational outflanking. Organizational outflanking finds expression in the ability to eliminate resistances with relative ease, to prevent them in advance by means of organizational priority, as well as to impose the order desirable to those doing the outflanking. All these goals can be achieved by those who possess the preferred organizational means. A historical social analysis proves that the advantage of the networks and alliances of power leans on the preferred organization that was available to them. The act of collective organization alone is inadequate to overcome an organization of power. In order to produce an effective resistance, people have to acquire the ability to activate a collective organization.

Organizational outflanking creates an advantage in the power relations for the outflankers as opposed to the outflanked. Powerlessness in a situation of organizational outflanking may be attributed to a lack of knowledge among the outflanked; however, there exist situations in which the knowledge exists and is available to the outflanked. In other words, not in every situation is knowledge useful to extricate oneself from a situation of organizational outflanking. It is important to understand that there are situations in which the outflanked know and are conscious of their situation, but nevertheless cannot, or are not ready to, extricate themselves from it.

Surrendering to Organizational Outflanking as a Result of a Lack of Knowledge. In situations where the surrender to organizational outflanking stems from a lack in knowledge resources, we must distinguish among various kinds of lack of knowledge:

A. The most common explanation is ignorance. There is ignorance which expresses itself in the fact that people do not know the rules of the game: they lack knowledge about developing a strategy and assessing the opponent's resources. They do not know the rules of behavior, the agenda, and the meaning of informal behavior. However, there can also be a more profound ignorance, when people do not identify the game itself. Especially extreme instances of the second kind occur when a group which possesses a great technological advantage encounters its absolute contrary (colonialism of the traditional kind, which obtained advantages of power by means of colored beads and mirrors; experts in community development and international merchants who exploit local poverty and innocence in order to amass profits in undeveloped countries).

B. Isolation is a more complex kind of lack of knowledge. It expresses itself in lack of information about others who share the same fate, with whom it is possible to create an alliance in order to resist power. Organizational outflanking succeeds because isolated resistance is an event which is easy to overcome. This is true even in cases where protest breaks out in different places at the same time, as long as the protesters themselves do not know about one another and do not form a coalition.

C. Division. Separation is an active step, a part of the strategy of organizational outflanking, and its goal is to create conditions of isolation even when people know about one another and could perhaps form an organized alliance. It is common for organizational outflanking to make use of time and space in order to divide groups from one another. An example of this is the division, on the face of it functional, carried out among workers in a single organization by means

of organizational culture, complex divisions of labor, and extreme competition (for example, in the name of maintaining secrecy, workers are prohibited from telling one another how much they earn; in the name of efficiency, workers are forbidden to organize and co-operate with one another.

Surrendering to Organizational Outflanking, on the Basis of Knowledge. It is less customary to think that a surrender to organizational outflanking can be based on the outflanked people's knowledge about their situation, but there are situations in which surrender to organizational outflanking is based on knowledge. In these cases the outflanked are conscious not only of their situation, but also of the price of resistance to the outflanking. Sometimes people estimate that the price they will have to pay for their resistance may be higher than their chance of obtaining a positive outcome, or than the benefit they may gain. When this is the evaluation of the situation, the knowledge ceases to have practical value in the existing conditions. Another kind of knowledge that is available to the outflanked is the knowledge about the oppression which the organizational outflanking creates in their lives, and about the fact that time that passes in the situation of organizational outflanking operates against them and strengthens the organizational ability of the outflankers, which continually becomes more sophisticated (Clegg 1989).

Organizational outflanking does not describe a particular tactic or mechanism of power, but is a given of the social situation. It makes clear that a lack in organizational resources characterizes everyone who is outside the networks and alliances of power; it makes clear why disempowerment is a common social phenomenon; it enriches the explanation of the quiescence of the powerless (Gaventa 1980); the culture of silence expresses a surrender of the organizationally outflanked, stemming from a knowledge that they are incapable of preventing the outflanking. As opposed to a tendency to explain powerlessness in a one-dimensional manner as people's lack of consciousness and knowledge

about their situation, organizational outflanking explains why knowledge by itself is not always enough to change the situation.

True, the theory of organizational outflanking is not an inclusive or a central theory of power and powerlessness, but it does emphasize important aspects which have accompanied the discussion of power all along the way. Organizational outflanking emphasizes the importance of efficient resistance to power—the price paid for the resistance is dear, and therefore it is necessary to obtain results, and in the most efficient way possible. Organizational outflanking makes clear the necessity of active organizational development in order to gain significant achievements while resisting power.

Clegg's Circuits of Power

A tradition which began with Weber and continues to Foucault seeks to understand how social institutions create obedience. After the concepts of quiescence, rebellion (Gaventa, 1980) and organizational outflanking (Mann, 1986), we will discuss the meanings of obedience and resistance. Stewart Clegg (1989) sees power as a circular process that flows in three channels which he calls circuits of power. Each of these three circuits of power has a dynamic form of its own:

1. The overt circuit of power—this circuit may be observed concretely. For example, one may analyze what happens in the decision-making arena. This is a relatively simple circuit, in which a human agent exercises power according to the traditional explanation: A activates resources and means, and influences B in a way in which *B* would not have acted were it not for his relations with *A*.
2. The social circuit of power—this is an abstract circuit, which is called *the circuit of social integration*, in which the rules that order relations of meaning, membership and belonging are created.
3. The systemic-economic circuit of power—this too is an abstract circuit, in which both material and non-material

> resources are created. It is called *the circuit of system integration*.[3]

The circuits of power illuminate the importance of context in the theory of power; real acts of power appear in the first, simple circuit. However, the description of the field of power, with all the advantages and limitations that it creates, appears in the second and third circuits, which are complex and contextual. In these circuits, power relations are conducted in complex and diverse ways. On the face of it, power which does not need to struggle against rules and does not require special resources for any goal whatsoever is the most efficient power. However, power relations are actually characterized by a complexity which undermines their effectiveness and thus makes them unpredictable. Hence, a one-dimensional, episodic perception of power relations can teach us something about the character of the relations between *A* and *B*, but teaches us nothing about the context, the field of relations in which *A* and *B* operate, and about how this field influences their access to resources of power and their ability to use these. This field of relations is described in the social and the systemic-economic circuits of power.

In the social circuit of power, the central rules of social life are created. The metaphor of a chess game can illustrate their importance: the overt power of the queen, which is greater than that of the knight, brings it about that the queen

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3 Clegg (Clegg 1989, p. 236) makes use of the term *empowerment* to describe processes that occur in the economic circuit of power. However, although the idea that empowerment and disempowerment occur in the process of the dynamic production of power is correct, Clegg uses the concept of empowerment in the sense of creating or diminishing power. In my estimation, he found in the word *empowerment* a semantic solution for a description of a process in which a gain or loss of power occurs. The word is not used in this sense in the present book.

triumphs over the knight in the course of a certain event. This power is based on and stems from the rules of the game. It is social power that, by means of fixed laws, determines the ability of the queen and the knight to take the different steps they can take, However, dispositional power allows certain people not only a greater space of maneuvering for various moves, but also authority to reinterpret the meaning of the rules. Because of the power that the rules give them, they possess greater freedom to activate them according to their own interpretation than do those people who, like the queen and the knight, are permitted only a series of pre-defined moves. Implicit in this state of affairs are several possible strategies of resistance to power: for example, not to recognize the other's game rules; or to object to the meaning that the other attributes to them and to the steps that these entail.

The overt circuit of power is self-evident, but it is not independent, since it moves through the two circuits of power in which a social and systemic integration occurs. These determine rules and permit creation, and create the fields in which episodic power events take place. The *outcomes* of the resistance to power are not based on what happens in the overt circuit alone, but, among other things, on the creation of a "correct and logical *context*". What will be described as a "correct and logical *context*" is a good example of a norm that the social circuit of power supplies. Techniques of production are an example of power that is created in the systemic-economic circuit. They are enabling and innovative, and at the same time limiting and dominating. Hence domination is never fixed and eternal. It is subject to processes of creation and innovation which can weaken it to the same extent that they can strengthen it.

Facilitative power originates in the systemic-economic circuit, and it creates change and tension, making possible new organizational forms. In contrast, *dispositional power* originates in the social circuit, and supplies social integration and stability to the power relations. According to this explanation it is easier to change structures of domination because they

get built and they flow in a changing and dynamic circuit of systemic-economic power, and in principle they are more open to change and innovation than structures of social belonging and meaning, which get built in the social circuit of power.

It is important to remember that what happens in actuality is not dependent only on what happens in one of the circuits. The ability to exploit new opportunities that open up in the economic circuit to human agents who want to resist depends, among other things, on efficient organization on their part, which is made possible with resources from both the social and the economic circuits. We will recall that organizational outflanking (Mann, 1986) supplies a key to the question as to why people obey so frequently and agree to be subservient: because they are surrounded by organizations of power that are controlled by others. They are organizationally outflanked and lack a strategy of a collective organization.

Power and resistance are two separate, although inter-dependent, aspects of social life. The *circuits of power* model distinguishes between two main kinds of resistance:

1. **Effective Resistance.** This is organized resistance and is very rare: it becomes possible in conditions of victory over organizational outflanking. Such resistance becomes institutionalized as a new power and creates an entirely new field of relations. Michel Foucault argued that the events of May 1968 in France, in which students organized and demonstrated together against the regime, were an example of effective resistance of this kind.

2. **Episodic Resistance.** This is the most common form of resistance. It generally manifests itself only against the exercise of power: it is a resistance which operates in the overt circuit and is conscious only of this circuit of power. Episodic resistance itself actually strengthens the stability of power and confirms its representational character. This is resistance on a manifest level, which is based on obedience in the covert (social and economic)

circuits which determine the division of resources and the rules of power relations. A hunger strike by prisoners, or a demonstration by wives of policemen against deterioration in their husbands' conditions of service, are episodic resistances.

Clegg's circuits of power provide the theory of power with a strategic approach to power relations. The circuits describe a field in which all the possibilities are open, and none of the sides have the possibility of maintaining advantages or a fixed state over a period of time. Another important idea stems from the fact that a stormy and dynamic environment which requires complex resources creates a permanent opportunity for change and for the incorporation of new groups in the power relations.

The rarity of effective resistance is proof of the importance of organization when people are interested in resisting power successfully. (It also explains the success of military coups—these lean upon the military organization, more than on the military weapons, although efficient organization is generally also accompanied by efficient resources).

The three circuits of power also propose an interesting tool for evaluating the degree of power achieved in a process of resistance. The evaluation is divided into three groups of questions: questions about the outcome of the process—which are revealed in the overt circuit; questions about the inner ability created in the course of the process—which develops in the social circuit; and questions about the actual resources available to the process—which are made possible in the systemic-economic circuit.

Michel Foucault on Power

It is almost impossible today to deal with the subject of power without relating to Michel Foucault. Thanks to him, thinking about power, which for many years was ponderous and predictable, has become fascinating and full of surprises.

Foucault does not present an ordered doctrine of power. He himself lives in peace with the contradictions and the dialectics that his approach creates; however, anyone who, like myself, is interested in applying his approach, runs into more than a few difficulties. The solution I have found is drawn from Foucault himself, who claimed that anyone who wants to make use of the knowledge may and should quote aggressively, and make use of what she requires without committing herself to the entire theory. In this spirit, I will make use only of the principal points of Foucault's thought on the subject of power and the research of power.

As already stated, Foucault's writing is full of contradictions. He does not have a sense of some profound and final truth. Instead of this, he finds layers that have to be peeled away. He is influenced by the phenomenological theory, but does not agree with its main idea that the center of meaning is an autonomous subject. His writing evinces a strong structural element, but he rejected the model that develops in his writings, and refused to create a uniform model with rules of its own. Foucault was influenced by Weber and Marx, but unlike them did not feel committed to a comprehensive analysis of organizations or of economic aspects: he chose each time to analyze a different social institution. Despite his claim that he prefers to focus on the micro-politics of power, his theory is suffused with structural macro principles (Walzer, 1986; Ritzer, 1988).[4]

Foucault, as noted, was influenced by structuralist ideas, but because he did not adhere to them and preferred a combination of personal and structural considerations within a single explanation, he is considered a post-structuralist, although there are some who dispute this (Walzer, 1986), himself included. Foucault is also considered a post-modernist. If modernity is connected with terms such as rationality, purpose, totality, synthesis and determinism, and post-modernism is an approach characterized by the opposed concepts—irrationality, play, deconstruction, antithesis and non-determinism, then Foucault is indeed a post-modernist.

Power/Knowledge. Foucault adopted Nietzsche's ideas about the connection between knowledge and power. He assumes a power/knowledge connection which cannot be separated, even semantically. A review of Foucault's writings, rather than a reading of a particular book or essay, reveals his theory of power, and especially the way the power/knowledge connection is created.

In his book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1979) he discusses the period between 1757 and 1830, when the practice of torturing prisoners was replaced by close surveillance of them by means of the prison rules. Foucault interprets this change not as a humanizing of punishment, as is commonly thought, but as a more correct economy of power. The meaning of the change is the development and implementation of a new technology, which he named disciplinary power. The principal mechanisms that disciplinary power develops and by means of which it operates are:

1. The hierarchical observation. The ability of those in charge to observe their entire range of surveillance in a single gaze.

4 Apart from his own writings, two books are to a large extent authoritative sources on Foucault's approach to power, because they were edited during his lifetime and with his collaboration. These are: Power/Knowledge, edited by Colin Gordon (Gordon, 1980), which is a collection of Foucault's lectures and interviews on the subject; and the book by Dreyfus and Rabinow (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982), which contains mainly their interpretation and concludes with two chapters written by Foucault. In addition to these two books, I have drawn upon the book by Gane (Gane, 1986), which is a collection of critical articles on Foucault; the critical article by Michael Walzer (Walzer, 1986); Giddens' chapters on Foucault (Giddens, 1982, 1984); Rojek's approach to Foucault's research methods (Rojek, 1986); Ritzer's chapter on Foucault's sociology (Ritzer, 1988), in a collection of essays edited by Gutting (Gutting, 1994); Eribon's biography (Eribon, 1991).

2. The judgment of normality. The ability to determine who is normal and who is not, and to punish those who violate the norms, in three dimensions: time—if one is late; activity—if one is not attentive; behavior—if one does not behave properly.

3. The examination. The examining observation of people and the judgment of them according to the norms. This mechanism makes scientific research possible. It makes use of the hierarchical observation and uses science to determine the standards of normality in all spheres of life.

   By means of this mechanism the power/knowledge circle is completed; the knowledge that is derived by means of the scientific examination and judgment is fed back in order to impose standards of normality in all spheres of life, and grants the society (by means of its various institutions and its regime) the permission to legislate laws to reinforce the standards and to supervise all the citizens of the disciplinary society in order to prevent a deviation from these laws.

Disciplinary power is not only negative; proper functioning of the military or of industry, for example, is an expression of its positive outcomes. Nonetheless, Foucault is concerned about the expansion of discipline in the governing system and the police, bodies for which the entire society is a field of action and an object of disciplinary action. Although Foucault did not believe that disciplinary power spreads throughout society systematically, he estimated that most of the major social institutions are already infected by it, and hence the great similarity in the structure of prisons, factories, schools, detainment camps and hospitals. The transition from torture to rules, Foucault explains, is also a transition from physical punishment to psychic punishment of the soul and the will, and this is also the beginnings of the scientific discussion of normality and morality (Ritzer, 1988). The combination of power and knowledge with the rule of the state and its

supervision of normality has created something beyond a sophisticated technology; Foucault calls this combination, which is typical of contemporary Western society, *the disciplinary society*.

In *The History of Sexuality* (1980), Foucault describes sexuality in particular, and concern with the human body in general, as an especially dense transfer point for *relations of power* (Gordon, 1980). Medicine, in his view, deals more with the morality of sexuality than with the science of sexuality. Foucault sees medicine, together with psychology and psychiatry, as substitutes in scientific disguise for the religious confessional that preceded them. Medicine is a source of surveillance more than it is an instrument for researching the truth about sexuality. If before the 18th century the society sought ways to control death, since then it has been interested in controlling life, and especially sex. *Bio-power* took on two forms: 1. Anatomo-politics, which aims to discipline the human body (and its sexuality). 2. Bio-politics, which aims at controlling and regulating population growth, health, life expectancy and so on. In both cases sex was central, and society came to see life as a political object. Sex has become more important than the soul, and almost as important as life itself.

Assumptions about Power

Power relations are dependent on culture, place and time, and hence Foucault deals with power discourse in contemporary Western society only, which he characterizes as follows:

  A. Power is not a commodity, a position, a prize or a conspiracy. It is the activation of political technologies and is concomitant with the social body. Power not only operates in specific spheres of social life, but occurs in everyday life. Power occurs at sites of all kinds and sizes, including the most minute and most intimate, such as the human body.

B. Power relations are mobile, non-egalitarian and asymmetrical. We must not expect to find a stable logic in power, or a possibility of balance in its domain.

C. Since power is not a thing, is not control of a set of institutions, nor a concealed historical pattern, the aim of the researcher of power is to discover how it operates. To do this, one must isolate, identify and analyze the network of relations which creates political technologies. It is important to research the level of the micro-practices, from which one may learn how power operates in a social institution on the most routine everyday level.

D. From all the previous assumptions it follows that power is not limited to political institutions as it has been commonly thought. Power has a direct and creative role in social life. It is multi-directional, and operates from the top down and from the bottom up. Although power is at its peak when it is situated inside specific institutions such as schools, prisons or hospitals, we should be wary about identifying technologies of power with particular institutions, because power is neither a superstructure nor a quality of an institution.

E. When disciplinary technologies create a permanent connection with a particular institutional framework, they become productive. This is the positive aspect of power—productive power. This point emphasizes the advantages of efficient technologies of power in many productive domains—economic, industrial, and scientific.

F. Power is a general matrix of power relations in a given society at a given time. No-one is outside this matrix, and no-one is above it. The prisoners and the jailers are subject to the same procedures of discipline and surveillance practiced in the prison, and act within the actual limitations of the prison architecture. Even though all are trapped in the grid of the power relations, there also exist rule and domination: the jailers nevertheless have certain advantages according to the prison rules,

as do those who are in charge of them and those who designed the prison.

G. Domination, then, is not the essence of power. Domination does exist, but power is exercised upon the rulers too and not only upon the ruled. For the *bourgeoisie* in 19th-century France to turn into a class it had to activate technologies of power upon its members. Technologies of confession, as well as surveillance over life, sexuality, and health, were implemented first of all upon the bourgeoisie itself. Bio-power served as a central strategy in the bourgeoisie's self-creation. Only a century later would the same technologies be activated upon the French working class.

H. In power relations there is intention, but there is no subject. Only on the micro level, the tactical level, does power have intentions. On the strategic level, which includes the complex of power relations, no subject exists. Hence we may not attribute the totality of what happens in the power field to any personal plan whatsoever (Walzer, 1986).

Nonetheless, power relations are suffused with calculations. On the local level we can generally discover a high level of decision-making, planning, manipulations, intrigues, and co-ordination of political activity. Foucault calls this the local cynicism of power, and does not attribute secret motivations to intentions and interests on the local level. Actors more or less know what they are doing when they do it, and express this clearly. This, however, does not imply that the broader consequences of local actions are coordinated, and that there exists someone (a subject) to whom the total meaning of this activity may be attributed. "People know what they do; they frequently also know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what they do *does*" (Dreyfus & Rainbow, 1982, p. 187). In other words, people are not conscious of the by-products and the implications of their deeds.

Resistance to Power

In his writings and in the interviews he gave, Foucault related to resistance in different and contradictory ways. In his view, power exists only when it is exercised, and it does not depend on agreement or resistance. Power operates only upon free subjects, and hence it presupposes the concept of freedom. Freedom means the ability to choose from a range of possibilities, in different ways of behavior. The relations between power and the freedom of the person who refuses to surrender to it are part of a single whole picture, and are inseparable. Hence, slavery, for example, is not part of the power relations, but merely the exertion of coercion (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982).

Resistance to power is part of the power relations, and hence it is at the same time rich in chances and without a chance. On the one hand, any resistance to existing power relations confirms this power network, and reaffirms its boundaries. On the other hand, the very appearance of a new factor in the power relations – resistance – brings about a redefinition of and a change in the power relations (Wickham, 1986).

It is important to understand the somewhat cunning way in which power shapes the resistance itself. Power is the force that produces the resistance, determines its place, and administers it. In other words, resistance to power draws its means of struggle, and even its actual social position, from the existing form of power. It follows that a successful exercise of power means promotion of *certain* forms of resistance no less than effective mobilization of means against this resistance (Minson, 1986). This has another important meaning: those resistances and individual forms that are promoted by the existing power relations also create conditions for preventing the appearance of other maybe more dangerous and subversive forms of resistance. Hence, a local failure in the exercise of power cannot always be analyzed simplistically: a tactical

failure may be related to in more than one sense as a strategic victory.

Research of Power

Power/knowledge is the critical coupling that Foucault warns us about. The research of power is a scientific activity which has to avoid entrapment in the power relations in order to understand their meaning. Analytical interpretation is the only valid method of analyzing and understanding social phenomena, and it includes three inter-related steps:

1. The interpreter has to take a pragmatic stance of some kind, on the basis of some shared social feeling, about the direction in which things are transpiring. In other words, she cannot speak from an arbitrary personal sense of transcendence or distress.

   Of course, in any given society at any given time there will be various groups possessing different shared feelings about a given state of affairs. Even were a general consensus about the social situation to come about in a particular place at a particular time, it would only prove that a certain orthodoxy has taken over in this society, and not that the situation has arrived at a status of a single objective truth. Hence the interpreter never represents a pure truth or an inclusive social feeling, but only the view of a certain social group, and he has to be critical towards this relativity and also accept its limitations.

2. The interpreter has to supply a disciplined diagnosis of what has happened and what is happening in the social body that explains the shared feeling. At this stage, the work involves a gray and meticulous search in archives and laboratories in order to establish what has been said in the past and in the present by whom and to whom and with what results. In the framework of the diagnosis, the social critic has to investigate the context as an inseparable part of his field of research. This contextual research is different from the research that is common in the social

sciences, which behaves like an entity with internal rules of its own, ignoring the broader social context within which it functions, and relating to important variables as though they were self-evident.

3. To complete the task, the interpreter has to give the reader an explanation as to why the practices he has described create the common good or evil that was the reason for the interpretative research.

Although since 1968 Foucault's writing is suffused with the concept of power, he himself insisted that there is no need to develop a theory of power. He declared that he had not created a theory for fear that it might serve the existing power relations. Foucault claimed that there is no such thing as the objectivity of the scientist, and no validity in the privileged intellectual pose of standing outside the social order like a prophet or a sage (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982). Since knowledge is one of the things that define power in the modern world, the researcher is not powerless and is not outside power, he is part of the power relations whether he wants to be or not.

The *Panopticon* created by Jeremy Bentham in 1791 is an illustration of the way Foucault researched and interpreted texts (Foucault, 1979; Ritzer, 1988). The Panopticon is an eight-sided building surrounded by a wall, with a tower at the center. The prisoners (or other occupants of the structure) sit in cells located on floors around the wall. The cells have two apertures – one for light, facing outwards through the wall, and one facing the inner courtyard and the tower. The cells are completely separated from one another by means of walls. Jailers (or overseers of another kind) sit in the tower and observe what happens in every cell. The prisoners are isolated from one another, and exposed to constant observation. Since they cannot know when they are being observed, they supervise their behavior themselves. Research of the Panopticon led to the following conclusions about power:

Power is exercised and not held. In other words, it is not at all important to measure power, or to attempt to locate it. The important question is how power acts and what it produces. Among other things, it produces obedience, discipline, systematic knowledge about the prisoners.

Power tends to be non-personal, diffuse, rational and anonymous, and at the same time all-inclusive—encompassing as many dimensions of social life as possible. The observations of the prisoners in the Panopticon may be exploited for the research and production of scientific knowledge in various disciplines. According to Foucault, the sciences of criminology, psychology and psychiatry developed simultaneously with the development of this technology of power/knowledge.

The most diabolical aspect of power is that it is not entrusted in the hands of someone so that he may exercise it upon others absolutely. It entraps everyone who comes close to it: those who exercise power as well as those who are subject to it. The jailers, like the prisoners, are in certain senses also entrapped in the prison.

A Method of Researching Power

The danger in researching power relations by focusing on institutions is that the researcher may adopt the point of view of the institution itself in the course of his research, and may not notice the technologies used by the institution. When the researcher analyzes power relations from the institutional point of view she puts herself in danger of seeking explanations and sources in the institution itself; i.e., of explaining power by means of power. Another problem in researching power, according to Foucault, is the necessity of researching relations which do not have a necessary particular form. Therefore the researcher has to provide himself with an analytical tool. Foucault proposes a grid that should be laid over the site being researched, with the aid of which it will be possible to analyze the relations in their specific local form. This grid has several dimensions:

1. Differentiation

In the particular institution that is being researched, one has to examine what distinctions are made between workers and clients, between healthy people and sick people, between rich and poor — and also what is included in this set of differentiating distinctions. For example — in the distinction between rich and poor, are further distinctions made beyond the quantity of money? Does the distinction between healthy and sick rely only on medical criteria, or also on social norms practiced in the institution?

2. Objectives

Power is always purposeful, so it is possible to examine its goals. What gains or advantages is the institution interested in achieving? What privileges? What functions does it fulfill?

3. Realization

What is the technology and what are the mechanisms by means of which authority is expressed and obedience achieved? What is threatened, and how? Are patients subjected to physical force, economic punishment, punishment of expulsion from the place? What kind of supervision and control is exercised, what methods of surveillance, and according to what laws or rules? Is the surveillance daily and intimate? Are the rules explicit and clear, or vague, hinted at, and variable?

4. Degrees of Institutionalization

It is worth investigating the influence of four processes of institutionalization (Rojek, 1986):

A. Individuation of Private Space. In almost all the institutions of the disciplinary society there is an increasing tendency to allot each individual a personal space of his own. The purpose of this practice is to enable efficient supervision

of the behavior of each individual, so as to evaluate it, judge it, and calculate its advantages and qualities. The interesting question in a process of institutionalization is how the allocation of a private space influence the life of the individual and the society. Foucault claims that it isolates more than it connects. If the institutionalization isolates, we have to ask what goals or purposes this isolation seeks to attain

B. Coding of Activities. Coding of activities is the prescription of social conduct which may be expressed in manners, movements, but also in tasks, and its aim is the regulation of the relations in certain situations. An activity may be permissible in certain contexts and forbidden in others. The researcher is interested in learning these codes, in order to understand what is permitted and what is prohibited, and especially what is considered *normal* in each context.

C. Routinization of Activities. Routinization is an institutionalizing process that serves the expansion of the power relations, because it makes certain acts *automatic*, and ensures the ease of supervision and surveillance over people, especially in schools and work-places.

D. Synchronization of Activities. In the institutionalization process, this means a rational division of labor. The person who operates as a part of a *social machine*, on the principle of *automatic obedience*, was the fulfillment of the dreams of social engineers at the beginnings of this century. When this process of institutionalization reaches its peak, there is no need to exercise influence and compulsion to make people act as they have been programmed to act. They are trained to fulfill functions in concert with others. This is the highest level of the institutionalization of power—the creation of an efficient mechanism in which individuals act predictably on the principle of automatic docility.

5. Rationalization

The exercise of power is a complex, changing, and organized activity. It annexes to itself processes that are more or less appropriate to the situation in which it operates. The search

for the rational asks: What is the effectiveness of the tools available to power? How advanced are they technologically? Do the mechanisms contribute to the achievement of the objectives of power? What is their benefit in relation to their cost? Cost, here, means not only economical cost, but also the cost that stems from resistance to power.

Foucault and the Development of a Theory of Power

Although Foucault, as noted, asserts that he did not develop a theory of power, in fact, as we can see in the present chapter, he did actually develop such a theory (Walzer, 1986). Theoretical insights stemming from his theory will help me further on in the development of a theory of empowerment. For example, to what extent can a practitioner develop a sensitivity to her deeds in order not to mechanically serve systems of power that contradict her original intentions? How to make use of an interpretative analysis as a method for researching the by-products of professional practice? In my opinion, Foucault's method, like Gaventa's theory of power referred to above (1 980), teaches a subversive reading of texts and procedures in order to discover the covert ways in which technologies of power create obedience and powerlessness.

This is also the place to explain why, despite its great relevance, I have not based a theory of empowerment on Foucault's approach. I have found that Foucault contributes more with his ideas and the spirit of what he says than with structure, which is so necessary for building a theory. Like existentialist writers before him (Camus, 1942; May, 1972), Foucault too sees powerlessness as structured into human existence. This understanding serves a theory of empowerment because it is based on a universal human insight about the damage caused by powerlessness. The difficulty is that Foucault does not believe in resistance, because he denies the centrality of an autonomous subject who has the ability to influence and change social relations. On his view, power, not human agency, is the central factor that motivates all

the other relations. He did not believe that there is a chance of bringing about social change through local efforts, and since the belief in the human ability to effect social change is a central belief of the theory of empowerment, there is no room at its core for the skeptical and pessimistic Foucault. For readers who may doubt the justification for presenting him here at all, I will note that a reading of Foucault's writings reveals contradictions in this sphere as well (Ingram, 1994). In contrast to his subject-less scientific method, his writing is suffused with emotion and humanity, and the topics he chose to deal with attest to a sincere concern for the fate of the subject in Western democratic society.

Giddens on Power

Anthony Giddens (Giddens 1982, 1984) discusses power as part of a social theory that he developed, which he called *Structuration*. Giddens and Foucault are similar in that power is an essential component in their social thought, and is incorporated into their principal writings. However, they represent almost absolutely opposite approaches to the place of the individual in society. Giddens, too, allots power an important place in social life. He agrees that power does not have a locus, is not connected to norms and values, or to class interests. However, he objects to the representation of power as all-inclusive and as possessing awesome dimensions. Giddens is very much influenced by Foucault, but he sees every individual as possessing knowledge and even consciousness, and in this he is the most optimistic among the theorists of power.

Power is integrated within a complex social practice, in which human agency has structural qualities, and the social structure is part of the human activity that creates it and ensures its continuity. This *duality of structure* model sees the social structure and the human agency as two factors which build and activate the social relations, and power as a central and important component of both. The social structure makes

possible the human activity, and also limits it—by means of laws, rules and resources, and also by means of human practices that are part of it. It is human agency that creates the social structure—it establishes it, consolidates it, and also changes it while it acts. To the same extent, the social structure is a component of all activity. People speak a language that has a structure of rules and syntax, even if they don't know a thing about syntax and rules of grammar. While speaking, the speaker decides to speak differently, and then he activates two processes: he changes the language, and reaffirms and reconstructs the structure and rules of the language. In other words, human activity does not *just happen*—it is structured. People make use of what already exists in order to know what to say, what to do, and even how to begin acting in situations in their lives.

Duality of structure integrates two separate approaches: the idea of power as a voluntary human activity, and the idea that power is structural, and hence is more a quality of the society than of particular people (Hajer, 1989). Hence one can explain power simultaneously in terms of human action and in terms of structure: it is the ability of individuals to act in a directed and voluntary manner and to bring about change; it is also systems of domination and rule, and of the rules and resources connected with these. Power is indeed human activity: a person who exercises power could have behaved differently, and a person on whom power is exercised would have acted differently had it not been exercised. However, this occurrence cannot be fully understood without relating to the social structure in the context of which it occurs.

A number of principles derive from this:

· Power is a basic component of human agency. Absolute lack of power means ceasing to be a human agent. Power is the human ability to intervene in events and to make a difference.

· Power is an inseparable part of the social interaction. Power is an integral feature of social life. It is always part of the relations, and its signs may be discerned even at micro levels of interaction.

· An inequality exists in different people's ability and access to resources, which also creates an inequality among them in the sphere of power. Hence, the development of ability and access to resources are key concepts for an understanding of the power that people can exercise.

· Power can also be described on a continuum of autonomy and dependence. Unequal access to resources for realizing goals and unequal opportunities to influence the course of the interaction ensure mutual relations, because each side is to a certain extent dependent on the other, and also autonomous to a certain extent in its action. The investigation of power involves exposing this dialectics of dependence and autonomy in specific situations (Davis, 1988).

· Power is a process. Power is a factor that intervenes between human agency (in the form of every person's inherent ability to influence the world around him) and social structure (in the form of the structures of domination that determine the degree of a person's ability to influence the world). These relations, between human agency and social structure, are dynamic and processual.

The theory of structuration, or, by its other name, the theory of the duality of structure, will serve, from the next chapter on, as a meta-theory for the development of a theory of empowerment, and so we will go on discussing it. Giddens creates the basis for the discussion of empowerment a theoretical link that integrates micro and macro phenomena: of action by individuals and the change that this action can bring to the environment.

Summary

We have seen how difficult it is to find an agreed definition of power. The discussion of the theory of empowerment will take place in the shadow of the claim that power as a concept is essentially contested. A précis of the views about the essence of power will illustrate this:

· Power has to be acquired. Power may only be exercised. Power is a matter of authority.

· Power belongs to an individual. Power belongs only to the collective. Power cannot be attributed to anyone, it is a quality of social systems.

· Power involves conflict. Power does not involve conflict in every case. Power generally involves conflict, but not necessarily.

· Power presupposes resistance. Power, first and foremost, has to do with obedience. Power is both resistance and obedience.

· Power is connected with oppression and rule. Power is productive and makes development possible. Power is an evil, a good, diabolical, and routine. (Lukes, in Clegg, 1989, p. 239).

This being so, good and contradictory reasons will always be found to prefer one approach over the others. I have chosen to discuss approaches which have a greater methodological value for the development of a theory of empowerment than others: they are conducive to the clarification of problems this book deals with, and they make it possible to deal more comprehensively and profoundly with the central topic—empowerment. Giddens' theory of structuration will be used to establish the general structure of the theory of

empowerment. It reinforces the rationale for an integration between the individual and the collective which it is important to develop. Foucault's influence finds expression especially in the conception of power as an inseparable component of social relations. Foucault and Giddens see the practitioner and the researcher as involved in the social situation in the most subjective way. These principles of the Foucaultian approach have been fully adopted in this book. The theories of Gaventa, Mann and Clegg will be used to illuminate specific spheres in the theory of empowerment: the issue of powerlessness; the importance of organization in community empowerment, and the advantages of the development of strategic resources.