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Sociology of Organisations

1. Introduction to the Sociology of Organisations

Over the past twenty years, the sociology of organizations has become a well-established and coherent field, producing a number of significant empirical and theoretical studies. However, the sociology of organizations has never been more than one of several subfields of sociology. In the present decade, with the revival of Marxism and the renaissance of sociological theory, the central core of the subject has tended to drift toward abstractions, away from the detailed empirical study of concrete organizations of humans in action.

The concept of the organization and the implications for the members and their relationships is the major concern of the sociology of organizations and organization theory, but any brief definition is a major oversimplification. Organizations have multiple rather than singular characteristics, derived largely from the nature of activities that are performed within the organization and the infrastructure that members have developed over time to allow these activities to be performed. These activities and the enabling infrastructure must be performed within the broader social context, and this context adds its own overlays to both the activities of the members and the enabling infrastructures. The resultant social interactions then give rise to social relationships, both formal and informal, which have consequences for the organization as a whole.

2. Theoretical Foundations

The roots of the sociology of organizations can readily be found in the classic works of Max Weber, Émile Durkheim, and the Behavioral Sciences. Marx was concerned with the rise and fall of great social systems, identifying two primary factors in social change. There is a general view that society moderates individual behavior through a variety of group relations: associations, collectivities, and institutions. Weber subsumes the others with his concept of the group. For him, groups are composed of human beings directly interacting with one another in small-scale relations. An association is just the crudest form of a social group, an identifiable cluster of persons temporarily affecting each other and conscious of doing so.

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In Weber's terms, then, social life oscillates between two sets of social relations. On the one hand, there are relations characteristic of associations, collectivities, and institutions, relations based on specialized technical competence and authority expressed in the form of administrative decisions, commands, and rules. On the other hand, social life takes place between human beings in small-scale relations based on affective ties of friendship or kinship and on shared symbolic systems of meaning. The first set of relations dominates the political, economic, legal, and other institutional systems of Western society. Hence, this is of primary interest to the aspiration for a rigorous and interdisciplinary social science that would form the basis of any social theory capable of accounting for all aspects of social life.

3. Classical Perspectives

The beginnings of organization studies can be traced to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and the pioneering work of authors such as F.W. Taylor, H. Fayol, M. Weber, and C.I. Barnard. This work was integrated by the classical perspective, whose main proponents are Taylor and Weber. From the point of view of historical developments, by far the most influential works in this area are those of Max Weber. Even the most primitive forms of organizations are sociological constructs. They are not extensions of political, economic, or legal entities. Therefore, the day-to-day operations of social organizations are now considered to be within the purview and context of sociology.

In the classical organizational sociologists' view, social organizations are collective goal-demand behaviors. In its fullest formal form, it is a relatively large, complex, and secondary social organization. This means that the purpose of the organization is more or less separate from its membership—that is, it does not provide its members with a way of satisfying the vast majority of both their financial and social needs. However, the organization is purposeful or goal-directed. It serves a collective or public purpose. It is neither a means-ends ratio nor is it an image of management.

3.1. Max Weber's Bureaucracy Theory

Max Weber identified six main principles of the modern bureaucratic approach to organizational structure. The participants are distanced from one another by the bureaucratic forms; each participant has a different set of rights and duties and receives different benefits. The participants are governed by rules or impersonal orders; operations are supposed to be effected by means of administrative

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regulations, decisions, and instructions according to reason, will, and custom. Authority is clearly derived from agreement and is supported by a power that carries sanctions. Intelligence and skill are the defining qualities of the leader, and organization members must have qualifications and select them on the basis of those. The action taken by organization members and their leaders must be based on written documents, as proof or evidence is the only guarantee of it. The principle of hierarchy demands that all actions should be carried out in the form of a simple chain of command, and finally, the leader and his or her subordinates are accountable for success or lack of it as long as activities are performed within the regulation.

3.2. Emile Durkheim's Division of Labor Theory

The division of labor concept has surfaced in a variety of economic and sociological theories, both contemporary and historical. Among those theorists who favored a sociological perspective was Emile Durkheim. For Durkheim, the division of labor is more than an economic concept; it is a powerful integrating force in society. It is this seminal work which has remained a hallmark in sociology.

To be abstracted, Durkheim's concept of the division of labor is straightforward. It is the idea that in a society there is a diverse array of tasks and activities carried out by individuals. Frequently, such an observation converges with the observation that most people are likely unable to produce the necessities of life for themselves. Hence, there is a need for social cohesion, ensuring that these disparate tasks are executed to the benefit of most people. This theme is recurrent in economic arguments and can be traced back to the fascination with the mutual gain that two people receive from exchanging objects. Rather, attention is drawn to the presence of specialists in the market: the doctor who heals, the dentist who fixes teeth, and so on. The storytelling of a market of specialists that exchange services equivalent in value partly conveys the idea of the division of labor. For this reason, the label of not merely an economist but also a sociologist is often applied. In Durkheim's work, the division of labor pertains not only to the functions of individuals but also to conflicts and all other types of social interactions that human beings perform in order to live and stay together. The concept is thus general in nature, not restricted to any specific epoch. To Durkheim, the concept of the division of labor is social because it implies an integrated form of structure that shapes the way in which society operates.

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systems approaches by considering how organizations are, in reality, negotiated with and contested by their members, while not analyzing the ultimate ends or survival of the organization.

The approach used generally assumes that people are reflective, self-responding, and capable of making comments and therefore taking a collective part in the shaping of their organization and role. It assumes that most human action is planned in the light of anticipated responses. This would lead the member to negotiate with the organization in some way, while their continuous presence may be taken to indicate a general acceptance of the situation on both sides. So, there will always be a strain in favor of giving new groups coming into the organization political rather than simply acultural dominance within the workgroup.

4.2. Network Theory

Concern with the fact that people in organizations seldom work in isolation and that activities in organizations are typically coordinated in some way has led to a pervasive concern for the social relations taking place in those organizations. However, it was structural functionalism that first proposed the concept of working life as composed of a series of roles or positions defined by society, governing and guiding individual participation in organizational life and predicting that through these social relations value consensus would emerge. But social reality is not only so neutral and obedient. There may also be over a neutral effective consent caused by structural relations that oppose common interest to produce or maintain an oppressive integration. From the outset, there have been critics who observed that the reality was one in which there was not always a value consensus and there were increasing forces pushing towards conflict.

The measure of conflict conducted in such catalyst models of group processes was developed more fully as an exercise in exchange theory. It was pointed out that not all interpersonal comportments were exchanged and that these imbalances had potential for social relationship development. The working out of social life could scarcely be treated without having presented in detail the notion of the power position, which later became the focal point of a prediction theory on the relations between inducers and inhibitors. The reasoning process conducted by analysts of organizational theory tried to prove the idea that we only had to exchange perceived valuable things and have in this activity behavior attracted by potential gains to retain interaction and perpetuate the same association. In the following concepts of

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social network affiliation with positions of authority or worth and important flows critical from the structural positions in the organization may be explicitly identified.

5. Organisational Structure and Culture

Authority influences behavior. Many people find behavior in organizations structured by authority levels counterintuitive. They do not understand, for example, how ordinary employees let people who often have no specific skills issue them with instructions. If they do not obey, employees are not fired, nor are they really penalized.

The key is therefore deference, and much of the structure of formal organizations is designed to produce, sustain, and conceptualize this. Deference is not an innate feature of people in lower-level positions. In most modern organizations, we would like employees to help make decisions about their work, be flexible and innovative, help each other, and take on tasks that go beyond their formal job descriptions. In many modern organizations, people will be given the information they need to take part in decision-making and hence will not be willing to defer to higher authorities. If they are to work efficiently, most organizations still require such deference. But with the exception of some bottom-line work in some organizations, is it the managers or the employees who require the deference? Simply, how important is it that employees obey managers?

This issue can be confused by senior managers who are simply unpleasant people. They like to tell people what to do. But this, per se, requires a certain relationship from those who are told. If a person was not responsible for hiring or promoting someone, what special form of association makes them defer? Many people struggle with these questions and end up hiding behind the veil of structure, employment contracts, and formalized authority and responsibility relationships. But if organizations require deference, the problem becomes to encourage it without feeling silly about asking for it. There is voluminous literature discussing the informal ways in which such cultures develop. Such an approach looks in the first instance at the tastes, preferences, and active or potentially active behavior of the people who make up the organization. They do not do this just in response to formal communications, employment contracts, or salary rewards. Organizational members have their own reasons for behaving in a particular way, and a universal question pertains: why do these reasons make them work with rather than against the interests of the organization.

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6. Power and Authority in Organisations

Power and authority are central concepts in the sociology of organizations. Power is one of the elements allocated to the enabler role, and legitimate authority is given to the level role holder over the manager role. However, the concepts of power and authority are not simple; rather, they are complex and multifaceted. Indeed, the sociology of organizations is itself a multifaceted field with areas of interest that include the study of trends, recent research, and theoretical explanations of how people behave in organizations. This chapter addresses the ways in which a manager's ability to exert influence and use power and authority are intertwined with the roles of enabler and level. The chapter combines contemporary management perspectives and sociological theories.

Managerial power and authority are not simple concepts but complex and nuanced; indeed, they are central to the question of how and why people behave in organizations. Generally, such concepts are examples of the sort that we think about very rarely and then with great difficulty. However, a consideration of power and authority is central to any discussion of organizations because organizations are the locations where hierarchical relationships and power distribution are sustained. Organizations are seen as bounded systems that use rules and norms to direct the behavior of their members. In doing so, rules and norms impart patterns to their members' behavior that help to maintain organizational stability. Power and authority are devices that administrators use to guide and control the behavior of those who work within the organization. Clearly, power and authority are important concepts.

7. Gender and Diversity in Organisations

Gender has become a central focus within organizational studies, both in terms of structures and practices and in terms of how these things are understood. The emergence of these concerns has always been set against broader political discussions but has also been linked to significant social and demographic change arising from increased female employment and the entry of different groups of women into different types of work. Promises of diversity and gender equality are part of what is often known as the 'surface' of organizational culture, but it is important to consider the underlying structures and assumptions that may serve to maintain processes of social exclusion. There has certainly been an increase in the proportion of women in management and senior management positions, but these

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are still relatively low, and fewer women are promoted to executive posts. The famous glass ceiling, preventing the advancement of women, can be understood in terms of organizational culture but also in terms of the organizational environment. There has been some discussion of the so-called sticky floor – situations, such as child care, that prevent women from even gaining a toehold on the lowest rungs of the career ladder. However, it is necessary to consider not only the reasons why women sometimes choose to remain at the bottom of the ladder; we need to consider the choices they are offered and, indeed, whether there should be any ladder at all. By the 90s, the number of women CEOs was 1 percent of the total. It may be easiest to explain this problem in terms of the characteristics of women workers themselves, yet it is organizations that maintain these structures – an act, for some, of institutionalization. There is no easy answer to why these patterns exist. Some are structural; some are part of society as a whole.

8. Globalisation and Organisations

Organizations are increasingly coming to be seen as global entities; in particular, the increasing trend towards global production and marketing networks has sparked new interest in the internal processes, structure, and strategy of global corporations. Contemporary debate within the study of managed companies is preoccupied with the extent to which international institutions can defy, reinforce, manage, appear compliant with, or actually operate outside the frames of national regulation. Understanding the globalized organization involves exploring a multiperspectival approach towards the structural and cultural adjustments made to manage a multinational organization positioned within a significantly turbulent and unpredictable world. The global corporation is an organism that can survive outside the structures of the nation-state and society. It is able to operate at this broader level of governance and command and, in doing so, move forward into an ever more integrated global production and consumption system. The global corporation behaves as an organism, placing its own distinct pragmatic and utilitarian needs and institutional interests above those based on the national interest. Consequently, the traditional nation-state is felt to be incapable of managing or even constraining the energy and creativity of the global corporation. Political democracy and representative state institutions, together with the prospect that multinational companies can consolidate too much economic power and feel themselves to be above the law, only look feasible as long as the power of the nation-state or states that are members of broader interlocking political institutions

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is capable of governing and civilizing the economic world in which the global company exists.

9. Technology and Organisations

Definition of technology and machinery: Technology is the totality of all means, operations, activities, techniques, and methods of production and service that apply to a particular industry or enterprise, which are related harmoniously to the general program and scientific production plan that constitute the scientific basis of technology, aiming at the most rational technological processes that will lead to the satisfaction of the needs and the highest possible level of quality and quantity of the respective products at the lowest possible cost. Machinery is one form of technological equipment, in the sense that it often constitutes the body and interlocking channels of the productive program, thus defining it more widely than technology. Technology, productive powers, and the development level of society: The speedy and frequently accelerated introduction of new technological achievements by modern European and world capitalism is giving leaps in the development and increase of the major productive powers in a much shorter period of time compared to the old pre-monopolistic period. Capital's ability to create in a shorter space of time than it otherwise seemed, the opportunity for the dissemination of cultural and educational levels of a large percentage of people around these new productive conquests, to make the large mass of the working class their sovereignty is one of the greatest realities and enormous growth of the hold of the exploiting class in systematic political power.

10. Organisational Change and Development

Organizational change involves altering an organization's structure or processes. Organizational development is a slow, incremental process that seeks to affect the entire organization. Change and development methods include action research that involves employees in problem analyses and solutions. Multiple interventions involve addressing multiple facets of an organization simultaneously. Resistance to change is a significant problem. Two key theories about the change process are the Lewin 3-Stage Model and Kotter's 8-Step Model. Advice for managing change includes creating a sense of urgency, ensuring top management support, communicating effectively, managing for results, valuing team learning and employee stability, setting short-term goals, and avoiding the unnecessary.

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Successful change requires aligning internal and external environments, culture, and resources.

It is not an easy process. Managers could have supported the change process through the actions of the following stages: creating a clear vision of what the company will be after the change. This step is essential to a change process, as the attitude of the managers toward the change process will influence the decisions and behavior of employees. Management systems should use journals, reports, project controls, etc., to guide the parts involved in the change process. The management should consider the potential for resistance to the change from the employees. Choose the leader to direct the process; it is said that the leader should be a good communicator, a good motivator, and able to share a vision of finance, personnel, and the other areas involved in the change process. It can be said that changes are necessary for the organization to achieve its goals within the competitive environment. The success or failure is not limited to small firms or large firms. It involves all firms, regardless of their sector or country. Managers need to be prepared to deal with a complex and changing process.

11. Leadership in Organisations

Leadership is a universal and important part of human existence. It is seen in families, communities, and nations, as well as in schools, businesses, and governments. Such universal importance means that the study of leadership is subject to a wide range of research across a broad discipline area, with numerous definitions and varying ideas about the qualities and talents of leaders. Some consider leadership as an individual trait, others see it as a process, and yet others think of it as a property of a social system. Psychology, sociology, communications, and management science all have their own ideas about the nature of leadership.

Business organizations are the most common and most significant institutional setting for leadership activity. Managers are required to lead employees to achieve assigned objectives. A considerable literature exists within industrial sociology that criticizes management theories that characterize both managers and employees according to idealistic, rationalist principles. These critics portray organization and the exercise of management as social phenomena, where prevailing ideas are created within wider social contexts. Crucially, they argue that the interests of some groups within society are furthered at the expense of others.

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12. Organisational Communication

What is communication? The term communication generally refers to the transfer of information from one place, person, or group to another, with the intention of having an impact on the receiving entity. Communication may be intentional, such as the sending of a message to a specific recipient with the goal of influencing him or her in some way. It may also be unintentional, such as an accidental slip of the tongue or an unconscious gesture that communicates something the speaker did not know he or she was revealing. Despite the intention of the sender, communication does not occur unless the message is understood by the recipient. Isolated with some frequency and heavily dependent upon the development of shared language and grammar, communication is an essential part of social life. Not surprisingly, the transfer of information and ideas from one person or group to another is often equated with social life itself.

The declaration that "Communication is key" is a common phrase used to explain and underscore the importance of all types of relationships, from those between intimate partners to nation-states. As there can be no social relationships without communication, the capacity to send and receive messages seems, paradoxically, both like the least of human skills—given that it is usually achieved without much thought or skill—and the most important—given that all complex associations are built upon it. Indeed, speaking to each other regularly and often is a routine behavior of mature human beings, as essential to socialization as breathing and eating are to survival. Communication occupies a central role in daily activities and permeates social relations, organizational obligations, and political and economic governing processes. In isolation, social associations and professional and technological advancements would be hardly possible. Such shared understandings ensure coordination, access to resources, companionship, and identity.

13. Organisational Behavior

Organizational behavior is the study of how humans behave in an organizational setting, how work affects them and their performance. In order to understand human behavior at work, we must first understand its foundation in the field of psychology. It grew out mainly from psychological research and deals with such areas as individual characteristics, perception, learning, attitude, personality, and motivation. Organizational behavior also inherited concepts from sociology, anthropology, and economics. The major challenge facing businesses today is to

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optimize human capability, not only to achieve higher levels of performance but also to identify and utilize its full potential. This entails an understanding of how human beings react to organizational demands, how they perceive their roles, and all the factors that affect their attitudes. Various people have diverse requirements related to their jobs. Organizational behavior helps in knowing those needs and accordingly suggests and implements measures for satisfying these needs. It also makes managers aware of all resources – human and other – and how their utilization can contribute to higher productivity.

14. Organisational Decision Making

How do organizations make decisions? There is a long tradition within the sociology of organizations that sees organizations as decision-making systems. The basic argument here is that organizations are systems of decision-making related to collective goals that are backed by sanctions. In this view, organizational forms themselves are rational responses to an environment that requires goal-directed administrative action. While this approach has been severely criticized, empirical studies find that it has a good deal of descriptive accuracy.

The essence of this model of organizational decision-making is the need for rational systems to be constructed to deal with the complexity of the environment. These models point to a strict division of labor with specialists in different aspects of the decision process, standard operating procedures, and considerable use of rules and regulations. They also warn against a heavy reliance on discretion and authority because these permit arbitrary and irrelevant considerations to enter into the decision process. Even if the unit has the organizational and human resources to engage in an overwhelming decision-making process, the result is one of reduced goal clarity, with individuals making decisions that cannot be easily coordinated in support of the unit's collective objectives. Therefore, decision-making in organizations is a collective process.

The theoretical position on organizational decision-making, however, has undergone significant change in recent years both because of criticism from the literature on organizational ecology and because of the development of information processing theory. These criticisms argue that under conditions of limited information and capacity, organizations will develop highly proceduralized decision processes and restrict discretion in order to maintain a high level of rationality.

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15. Organisational Theory and Practice

Organizational theory focuses on the formal organizational structure whereby a company places employees with specific skills and work tasks along a clearly defined, hierarchical chain of command. There are two basic forms of organizing work. They are horizontal, characteristic of bureaucracy, and vertical, characteristic of the assembly line. It is noted that economists and political scientists have largely ignored the horizontal form while sociologists and management academics have concentrated on the latter. Formal, hierarchical organizations best exemplify vertical specialization because they are extremely complex and bureaucratic. Horizontal work organizations have fewer levels of hierarchy and rely on a high degree of professional knowledge and expertise.

Formal structures are important to the success of every organization. In a large, complex setting such as a hospital or university, an organization must necessarily divide and coordinate its activities in some rational and efficient fashion, regardless of the people involved. Role relationships and command and control processes are established by virtue of the fact that the job exists. Individuals in these roles are engaged in the task of the organization and its systems. They require certain tools or inputs in order to function effectively; importantly, these are not always the same as the technical aspects of the job itself. Employees also require a sense of the purposes of the organization or, in terms of employment and society, the social system. They need an integrated association of interests among employees and a sense of time. Satisfactory levels of both staff and job satisfaction are an important outcome. Different levels of response to different types of organizations will be evident, including a greater erosion of esteem and satisfaction in the career field.

16. Sociological Research Methods in Organisational Studies

This chapter starts by examining the aims of sociologists, the role of theory, and the nature of an organization. The rest of the chapter is largely devoted to sociological research methods that have been developed to study organizations and are used in this collection. Two main sections of the chapter are titled 'Researching Organizational Relationships' and 'Business Research and the Public.' It then presents an opinion on recent developments and suggests alternatives. The results

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should be interpreted with caution. Taken together, the findings raise questions for organizations.

Much quantitative research into organizations is cross-sectional, providing only snapshots of events rather than any awareness of activities unfolding through time. The research methods merely serve to control such time-based problems and open up a space whereby we can look deeper into the nature of information and communication. The findings suggest the need to take more account of the nature of the giving of gifts in interpersonal relations in the context of the workplace.

17. Ethical Issues in Organisational Sociology

Organizational sociologists have generally had nothing to say about ethical issues. While this point was definitely overstated, it is nonetheless true that few people would doubt that our field can and should speak to ethical questions. Part of the reason we have not done more is that our theoretical orientation leads us to focus on organizational phenomena such as power, authority, control, maximization, differentiation, stratification, integration, and norms. Management generally wants to know the 'how' which it can put to use: 'how' to get maximum worker effort, 'how' to build a successful team, 'how' to delegate responsibility and authority, and it does not need and often is philosophically disinclined to pay for or even acknowledge the necessity of answers to the 'shoulds'.

A second reason for the lack of interest at the societal level is that as a discipline we generally lack the interest of ethicists when it comes to moral philosophy. Generally, neither traditional sociological theory nor the interest in morality plays into ethical dialogue. A third reason is that we believe in the "substantive moral autonomy" or the "relatively independent" nature of organizations. In doing so, we avoid ethical resolve because the ethical imperative is to bring society to a point where institutions will be structured to nurture their members rather than consume and exploit employees.

18. Future Directions in the Sociology of Organisations

The sociology of organizations is an inviting field for research and writing, and this is borne out by the large literature discussing organizations from a variety of analytic perspectives. This literature review has brought to light a few future directions that researchers might pursue to provide a deeper and broader understanding of organizations. One pitfall that might be avoided is the

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concentration on the internal organization at the expense of recognizing that organizations are inter-organizational structures.

There are new and under-researched types of organizations emerging over the next 10 to 15 years. Such organizations, which might be the basis for future research, are: comprehensive community initiatives that structurally attempt to pull the social welfare net together; virtual organizations that are integrated by telecommunications and linked computers rather than by office buildings, and built around a series of projects rather than territorial jurisdiction or professional status; alternative country organizations of the corporate provider system; and new liberal, social action, 'populist' organizations in the states.

The sociology of organizations in the future needs to be an intentional sociology regarding the formation and legitimation of economic units, as well as the research of the internal structural properties of the organization. We know a great deal in specific content areas such as organizational structure and dynamics. This content needs to be set within a larger theoretical context, and this will be governed by the attempts to understand the political dynamics of the formation of organizational structures. A renewed theory of organizations will have some immediate payoffs in a greater ability to make these unanswered general questions answerable. (Clegg et al.2022)(Raimbault and Joly2021)(Grothe-Hammer and la2020)(Li Vigni, 2021)(Bátora, 2021)(Acquier et al.2020)(Decker et al., 2021)(Rossier et al.2022)(Brown, 2022)

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