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Strategies and Identities by Mobilization Context*

Harrison C. White

Identities come from turbulence. Identities are triggered by disjunctions in interactions, social and environmental. For example, awakening each morning is a disjunction from sleep which re-triggers an identity into action. On a larger scale, disjunctions associated with a sudden University budget deficit are material from which some new corporate Faculty identity may be triggered.

Every identity, of whatever scope, reflects tensions between fresh action and routinized agency. Strategic actions by some identities make use of these tensions, and so deal in disjunctions. Strategic action implies that identities and their connections are being reshaped during the course of mobilization.

Proposition: *Cumulative impacts of strategic action reflect as well as yield larger contexts which themselves build from control struggles across local structures where strategies are sited.*

This essay explores the apparent contradiction between agentive strategy and determinate structure.

Nesting of levels accompanies formation of identities within ongoing patterns of mobilization: that is the structural side of this analysis, which identifies several distinct topologies of the social network space of action. The challenge is accounting for this action in terms of agentive strategies that are shaped just as they shape the structural context. Five particular conjectures are identified, expressed through constructs which are widely applicable; these conjectures cover scopes from personal to national. Pending full operationalization and testing, numerous illustrative cases are cited. These are cases diverse in size, in domain, in period, in institutional venue, etc. to emphasize that the goal is theory, transposable theory. The seed case is Elisabeth Bott's comparison between two populations of married couples, while we end up with colonial empires, but with special attention to business and with focus on the upper reaches or organizations. This analysis is meant to enrich approaches siting organizational action in environment (for which see Bidwell/Kasarda 1987; Lawrence/Lorsch 1967; Pfeffer/Salancik 1978).

Social processes are laid down by as well as generate actors of many scopes, at least some of whom are anticipating changes. Anticipating changes is the basis of any social engineering, any *strategies*, whose principal raw material is deviation from merely extrapolated social process. History, of every scope, is the traces left by such strategies.

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Reshapings from strategic action weave together as social engineering with strands from technology¹ and from culture more generally. So these reshaping are interpretive as much as behavioral. Would-be engineers thereby are garnering some additional control in an overall process that we can call *mobilizing*. Mobilizing requires attending as much to how other actors anticipate and report (or conceal) changes as to external exigencies. Organization, whether codified or customary, grows through deposits from repetitive and interlocking solutions by and among such engineers.

Whatever the provenance of strategies, interaction among current strategies contributes to subsequent changes in social organization among identities. That much is sure. The puzzle is to derive insights about and regularities concerning outcomes of what seems irremediably chancy and ad hoc, of what is indeed a denial of smoother and more familiar accounts of strategy in terms of given identities with fixed preferences.² The attraction is generalizing the analysis to social processes of mobilization that reach beyond current formal organization and economy.

Siting Strategies within Patterns

Full analysis requires attention to calculi of context, perception and manipulation. Start from basics.

Identities in networks

Beginning as it does from disjunctions, an *identity* is the expression in social context of the same urge for secure footing that also leads to habits of posture in physical settings. An identity relates insides to a whole, the whole to its insides, and both to the outside. Identity is achieved and expressed or operationalized in some array, some *discipline* in which each constituent has 'face' just because it is a social face, one of a set of faces together. A larger identity emerges from the social discipline only through and as realization of the dovetailing of 'faces'. It follows that identity implies *levels*, it induces distinct levels.

One's own personal identity may be achieved as dual to, as part of and induction to a larger identity of which it is a reflection. Such identity is flexibly built from and stored in sets of stories held in common which record social ties and thence networks.³ Each story is internally sensible, and the set are conformable one with another, and they are mutually intelligible across an interacting social formation. The key is that they can account for what happens to any identity –

¹ From a comprehensive survey, Ted Hughes concludes that all engineering is in part social engineering: "We now study technology as sociotechnical systems" (in Sladovich 1991, 7).

² In such accounts, strategy is expressed as rational choice and implies and works through planning as well as duplicity. The evidence for these latter attributions is weak. Strategy as a plan often is attributed to and even claimed by top authorities in bureaucracies, but many studies find little or no correlation between such plans and later actions. And strategy usually has to be read back out of observed pattern of interaction so that duplicity becomes a matter of the interpreter's viewpoint. See Zuckerman (1999). Rationale and references for identity as disjunction are given in a larger monograph (White 1992, Ch. 1).

³ See Podolny (2001).

after the fact. Disciplines thus are sustained, and at the same time contending control efforts among them become equilibrated as ties (cf. White 1992, Ch 3).

There is in human social organization an additional, crucial contribution to identity that comes from frictions and errors across different social settings and cultural domains. Disciplines always are embedded in different domains of specialized activity: work and family being especially prominent. Our everyday construct of 'the person' builds from the mismatches and social noise in life across domains, from all the screw -ups, mistakes, and errors encountered even as a child.⁴ But the same is true at high levels of government and business (cf. Leifer and White 1986)

In the course of mobilization, further actors at higher levels become triggered as identities. Depending on organization context, some of these various actors are called officers, some clans, and some are called committees or departments, and yet others called tribes and markets and so on.⁵ Again clusters of stories develop around mismatches.

One can speak of a further sense of identity, identity as in ordinary talk, as more or less coherent accounts, as biography. This is identity after the fact, analogous to the official identity proclaimed in a 'strategic plan'. Identity in this sense is all about rationalization of failures at fresh action. Strategic action is fresh action within networks of control and so concerns identity in the previous sense.

Strategy, control, and structures

Strategic action attempts to subsume others' social engineering, but so does control, and so does disciplinary structure itself; the interactions cross-cut scopes and networks. Anticipations are the key. Distinguish just three scopes of anticipation: call these distant, medium and local scopes, and correlate the scopes accordingly to strategy, control, and discipline.

Anticipation of actions and their changes is importantly an interpretive puzzle. These anticipations can, but need not, stand for 'intentions' elicited from particular humans as actors or attributed by them to others. Anticipation, perspective and such can be construed for actors of any sort from patterns in social intercourse and structure. The wiser counselors of business have long understood these matters: "Our approach still tends toward making plans for something we will decide to do in the future, which may be entertaining but is futile (...). The question that faces the strategic decision-maker is not what his organization should do tomorrow. It is 'What do we have to do today to be ready for an uncertain tomorrow?'" (Drucker 1974, 125; and see Porter 1985)

Strategies and corporate forms should correlate with one another: that follows from our beginning Proposition. Actors at different levels in a dominance hierarchy or other stratification structure, for example, tend to distribute attention differently across the three scopes. Within a hierarchical organization that is reproducing itself, strategy is most

⁴ Burt (1992, chapter 7) develops this Simmelian and Goffmanian inheritance.

⁵ White (1995) is an intensive comparison of personality with market identities.

commonly employed at the top level, and least commonly at bottom level.⁶ Discipline has the inverse pattern; whereas control is least common at both bottom and top. But there are other phases and varieties of organization, and, even in hierarchic organization, during episodes of major change the distribution of strategy, control and discipline may become different.

Bott catnets

Strategy is not just inward turnings of plan or feint, but rather strategies renegotiate broader strategic action fields (Fligstein/McAdam 1990; Bourdieu 1995) and thereby change control patterns and reshape structure. Influences of context go beyond particular organizational form and so should be referred to basics of network and category in social organization. We seek to specify and designate social network contexts for control structures that cut across local organizations.

Begin with a phenomenon among structures observed at the largest scope:

*Phenomenon #1. In an international system, say Europe, corporatism in internal structure is found only within the units that are smaller and weaker: the Netherlands and Austria, for example, in contrast to Germany or France.*⁷

From the general *Proposition* with which we began, one can expect to find parallels to phenomenon #1 at other scopes and in other institutional realms. We seek to account for all of them together in terms of strategic action in network context.

An important early formulation of network in a context of strategic choices is by Bott (1957). She considers husband and wife as the unit organization, from which each has separate ties and thus may embed quite differently into networks. Two topologies result, which can be generalized for actors of other scopes and in other institutional realm.

Bott distinguished marriages of companionship from segregate marriages, common in the English working class, in which husband and wife relate separately to tasks and to others. Figure 1 is a stylized representation of the respective network *topologies* that result. Since there are both categorical (attribute) and network aspects, label these diagrams 'catnets'. Let 'marriage' hereafter stand for bounded discipline of any size, from market of five producers to guild of one hundred craftsmen.

⁶ But episodes of strategy from the bottom can be crucial, whether in breaking out generations and styles or effecting revolutions (cf. Schwartz 1976); and similarly for strategy from the middle (cf. Kuhn 1970).

⁷ This phenomenon has been remarked, for example by Katzenstein (1985).

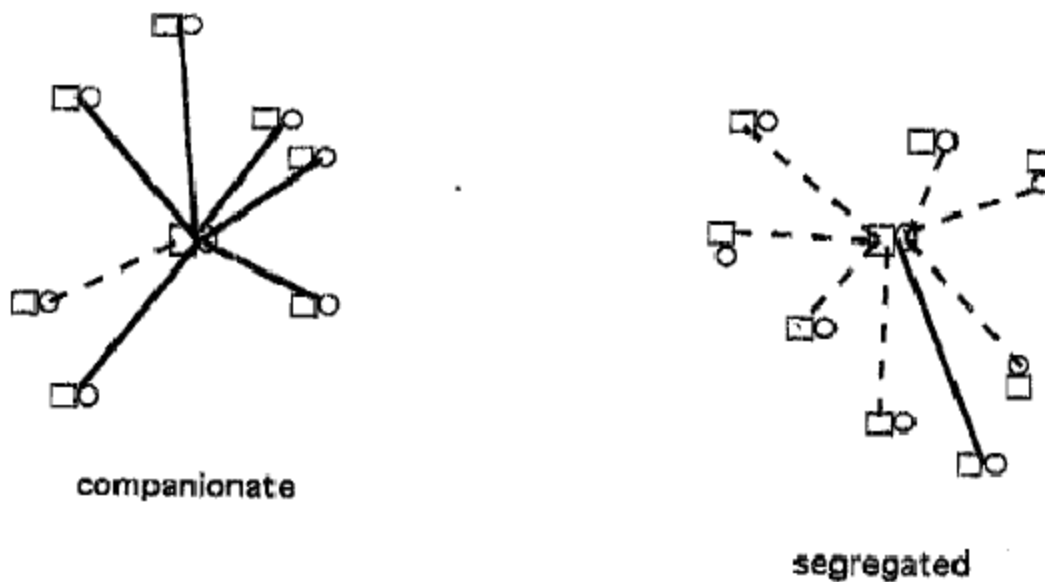


Figure 1: Two types of catnets, illustrated by ties to other marital couples, following Bott (1955): code—solid line from couple to couple, dotted line from just one spouse to just one spouse; focal couple for each diagram at its center and slightly larger.

In the *companionate* topology, the further network partners of various members of a given marriage are all found mingled together among other marriages. There is no 'marking' of marriage partners, as by sex, with separate and distinct networks as there is in the *segregate* topology, where individual partners choose independently of one another but each within its own type.

An example of companionate catnet is an economy such that firms are caught up in the 'group marriages' of production markets (White 2002). The familiar Leontief input-output system among such product markets is sustained on the basis of firms' transactions, given conjugal-parallelism in network partners. An example of segregate catnet, on the other hand, is personnel and professional relations among firms with functional divisions, where engineering recruits from and talks with engineering, sales with sales, including sometimes from out of other industries.⁸

The important point is that companionate networks tend to come with invidious rankings of actors.

⁸ Neil Fligstein suggested (private communication, May 2, 1992) that a companionate catnet might be the condensation of a previous segregate topology.

Mechanisms for/from Strategies

Now shift to an intermediate, meso level in scope, and focus more explicitly on strategy and mechanism. In standard accounts of business an executive is seen as responsive to shifts in and among its supplier and product markets, as well as being responsible for actions by the firm's own management, so that executives reflect on and strategize for the big picture. Conjectures will be offered about cumulation of such strategies into mechanisms identified by their structural embodiments.

A huge normative literature exists that imputes elaborate and stately planning to strategy-formation, planning necessarily assisted by many agents. There strategy usually is portrayed as themes of planning by some great marshal, themes which directly control subsequent efforts of agents at many levels. Along with commentators and aides, general managers do speak of their strategic planning. Yet observational studies of management⁹ find that even the chief executive officers are immersed in very staccato interactions across large networks of diverse persons and other actors on topics of immediacy. And reconstructions of the decision processes through which significant strategic changes were promulgated, such as Bower's case study (1979) or Pettigrew's corporation history (1985), assign limited influence to pre-set plans in business.

Similarly negative findings on planning emerge from studies of high politicians (Namier 1961), and of high decisions in political administration (Bailey 1984). And such also are found in organization for producing science (Merton 1973; Zuckerman 1979) or for popular culture (Faulkner 1983) and no doubt also in still other institutional realms and at smaller scopes. From all these studies, formulation of strategy as planning appears as a rhetorical guise.

There is a conundrum here: a contradiction between the rhetoric of strategy as planning and the observation of strategy being traces from shaping chaotic reactions to fleeting opportunities and pressures. The challenge becomes estimating how contending strategies and control patterns interpenetrate with one another in laying down tracks of determinate network sorts of sociopolitical organization. One must identify topological properties which may result from the cumulation of continued strategic initiatives by upper managers. But such conjectures about impacts from strategic initiatives depend upon their consistency with how control is sought at middle scope by managers just below an executive. There is interaction between levels.

⁹ Two early ones from Harvard Business School faculty are Kotter (1982) and Eccles (1985); see also Mintzberg et al. (1976).

Parallel vs. complementary¹⁰

Begin by drawing a contrast between parallel departments versus functionally specialized and thus complementary departments, as alternative organizational partitions on the level just below the chief executive. At a first approximation, parallel subunits give more control to the upper level of the organization, whereas functional subunits – though they may have technical advantages for efficiency – tend to keep more control lower down. The stipulated catnet itself runs between production markets, industries, with network ties being between firms as wholes, as if among the chief executives. The issue is how dovetailings among various strategic anticipations from and near the top are likely to interact and cumulate differently according to the larger context of that unit as a whole (and possibly further patterns of control below).

The first conjecture attempts to extrapolate Phenomenon #1 into a generalization for any companionate catnet:

Conjecture #1. Within an interacting system of larger identities, it is inside the weaker and smaller identities that structuring in complementary sub-units tends to be found, a partition into units which are coordinate.

For example, in a production economy represented as input-output network, only within a weaker or smaller industry are guild-like market shares and reputations enforced.

For example, independence of separate Faculties (Law, Business, Medicine, Arts and Sciences, etc) is maintained most strictly within the weaker members of a national university system.

One rationale for this conjecture is the willingness of secondary leaders to concede greater effective control to the executive in light of perceived structural weakness, within the system, of the unit as a whole. A secondary rationale is the use as a rhetorical tool within the larger system, by the most active leader(s) of that weaker unit, of the strategic claim that their success in 'international' negotiations depends on rigidly balanced internal partition.

The argument can be advanced further by making explicit the dual to the first conjecture within a companionate catnet system:

Conjecture #1'. Bigger/stronger units internally are split among parallel units, invidiously ordered.

The same dovetailing as in Conjecture #1 of distinct strategies held by various upper managers of a unit here yields different concrete outcomes. Strength and size translate into advantageous position in system process for that unit, which is exploited best with central control. Top managers of the weak unit seek all the more to guard autonomy from

¹⁰ It is difficult with existing network techniques such as blockmodeling and triad analysis (Wasserman/Faust 1990; Boyd 1991), to derive when segregate as opposed to companionate catnets will evolve. Elsewhere (White 1992, ch. 4) I discuss this as the problem of the origins of institutions. But more powerful approaches are being developed—see Breiger (2000) for one overview, Doreian (2002) for an incisive account of difficulties in verifying tendencies toward network balance, and Abbott and Tsay (2000) for sequential analysis.

external *threat* perceived as great, while executives of strong units seek efficiency in order best to exploit what is seen as great strategic *opportunity*. In the Europe of 1990, Dutch Lubbers perhaps can be thus contrasted with German Kohl.

Evolution over time

So far the mechanisms in strategy interactions have been identified only by resulting cross-sectional nesting pattern of organization. Now turn to segregate catnets, where there is no neat nesting of levels and network.

Conjecture #2'. In bigger units within a segregate-catnet system, top managers rely upon exact timing, in relation to control routines, and also use changes over time, even up to style change at system level, to gain leverage.

Its obverse, a conjecture #2, is that in smaller units within a corporatist system, with segregate catnet, timing is less important and strategizing less available so that interlocking group pressures are relied upon.

Companionate and segregate catnets each seems to tend to invoke fragments of the other, as byproduct on adjacent level from the cumulation of strategizing. The problem of distinguishing catnets is historical as well rhetorical, interpretive as well as technical, and it becomes overlaid with definitions become established in that culture. Formal organization often comes from attempts to override the topologies. Big U.S. firms in 1900 mostly were departmentalized on functional grounds, and the extraordinary parallelism in the departmental labels used shows that they were already an historical system. Then, in a few prototypes new identities were triggered in crises and these firms moved toward a now multidivisional format; others followed along quickly (Chandler 1969; and see Fligstein 1988 for subsequent replays).

Evolution of a network system raises questions of dependencies along a chain either of concrete generations or of abstract levels. A number of investigators have suggested the following:

Conjecture #3. Alternating generations (levels) are allies.

The conjecture is that elites, for example, try when clever to bring in functional specialization two levels below them, among their 'grandchildren', in order to enhance the latter's autonomy vs. the intervening 'parents'. The conjecture calls not only for putting together different perspectives but also for allowing for certain anticipations of others' anticipations to become conventionalized.¹¹

¹¹ The black hole of unrestricted game theory must be avoided; what is argued above is akin to the experimental findings that Prisoner's Dilemma games reach socially enjoined solutions especially when repetition of the game is anticipated.

Broader Contexts for Strategy

Inferences of strategy must depend upon institutional context and nuances of timing. These can be hampered by a maze of subtleties and specificities that are exacerbated by the slipperiness of strategy itself as an outcome. The account thus far has been over-simplified in several respects.

One complexity needing address is how impetuses from quite distinct institutional realms are being summarized as one network system. For example, when are international trade pressures offset by security considerations? When do copyright-patent infringements control intra-market relations? A further look at strategic interaction should allow for the overlap of distinct cultural aspects.¹²

The social scope and boundaries perceived for 'the system' also are put at issue in strategies. How do actors allow for such tendencies to relabeling, to mis-assignment of alternative stories in descriptions of such system? Historically, a firm may have started with functional departments, for example, and then retained that designation as it moved to parallelism among its units.

A further look at strategic interaction should also allow for more complex topology, involving several sorts of catnets. Furthermore, given human memories, several and joint, other time frames can obtrude into strategizing. For instance, career considerations may be prominent in what seem to be immediate matters of control and strategy.

Turn to how such complexities may distort or confound regularities claimed in the previous Conjectures.

Strategy for chief executives

An executive tends to overall identity of his or her organization in order both to constrain others' independent actions and to enable some parallel actions. But an overall identity can only subsist out of interactions among many identities, some of them lesser, and then only as triggered by the erratic and unexpected – an organization in calm seas is no organization. This shows some of why the executive focuses on the erratic and idiosyncratic, not despite but because of concerns with a 'big picture'. Barnard (1938) early underlined identity for large, long-lived organization, but he failed to note its dependence upon erratic happenstance,¹³ and he confounded strategy with goals.

Tending identity is important to any executive not just in its own right but because of its connection to strategy. Identities and their structures constrain both strategy and executives' views of it. Any statement about an executive 'strategy' becomes itself part of the interacting processes. And the executive is looking outside the organization to civil

¹² For background and further development consult White (1992, Chapter 6).

¹³ An excellent case study of this dependence is Pettigrew's study of Imperial Chemical Industries (1985), and on a much larger canvas there is Gottwald's (1979) tracing of the emergence of identity in a tribal confederation which came to be known as Israel.

society as well as specific other organizations. This public stance helps explain the ritualistic, elaborate nature of most ostensible statements of executive strategy.

Strategies in civil society

One can seek a catnet topology for today's civil society. The corresponding 'marital' unit is analogous to a third kind of marriage become more common since Bott's day, call it the *liberated* marriage and associated catnet. Characteristically, the members of such a marital unit are diverse. Their members neither share ties to much the same others, as in companionate catnet, nor yet are the members mutually specialized in determinate, complementary ways. Partners are not marked, as by sex, in their proclivities of association, and yet they are not companionate in shared ties but rather are at an opposite extreme of conjugal independence among partners' networks, which induces a topology of random interconnections.

Turn for model to the topology for an earlier trading economy among markets of pure exchange, among bazaars that do not fit as segregate units into a definitely structured larger field. Such an economy has a *liberated* catnet structure. It requires a distinct theory of its own, the Pure Theory of Exchange (Newman 1965) as extended by anthropologists to a whole trading economy (Polanyi et al. 1957). For discussion and illustration of random networks consult Watts (1999).

Strategies look different in such topology and cumulate differently, if at all. There are no clear nestings and crosssectional patterns of organization relevant to a public level. Competing strategies and control patterns remain at issue, but their groundings are much more interpretive. Social mobilizations in its modern connotations – bringing together otherwise miscellaneous but free-standing individual persons – are the cumulation sought.

The essential point is that it is cumulation of strategic interactions in such topology that gives rise to the identities which are distinctive of such topology in modern societies, namely the civic person. There is a corresponding induction of attributes in the modern sense, the categories which organize identities socially. These categories concern class and ethnicity but most distinctively are the attitudes built up around topics that seem egregious, such as political candidates and popular culture items, but which provide the social infrastructure that supports strategizing and thence the topology of liberated catnet.

Higher-order strategy

Input-output economies are a more primitive strategic context than this civil society with liberated catnet. Production markets are very much specialized mutually, whereas exchange markets are parallel divisions seen in a national economy. But also several of the industrial network examples cited have adumbrated the actual historical evolution of strategies. Turn to examine topology for 'multidivisional' firms each of which has not one but many independent major products, each with its regularized ties to suppliers and buyers who do not however transpose to the firm's other divisions (White 2002, Chapter 12). The familiar Leontief input-output networks obtain only among product markets,

which form a companionate-marriage network only among corresponding divisions from such multidivisional firms. The big firms as wholes interrelate in networks on another level which is in neither segregate nor companionate topology.

Consider a macro-level explanation for the shift to big multinational firms as replacing mere production markets (each with specific product) as the nexus of investment activity. A national financial elite of bankers should prefer the former format as enhancing their power. This is a conjecture for a new order of strategy:

Conjecture #4: Putting in a new layer of parallel units crosscutting an input-output network of production markets enhances potential mobilization of that economy by some elite.

This can be seen with multidivisional firms, where the chief executives figure as the elite. It can as well be seen with financial markets crosscutting firms (multidivisional or not), where the elite become financial and/or State circles.

Such population of multidivisional (or multinational) firms exhibits liberated catnet topology, one without neat nestings, instead approaching random (Watts 2002). Like exchange markets, such topologies introduce a different level of strategic action from ordinary production markets, and the corresponding random network is the only proper basis for the General Equilibrium Theory of economics.¹⁴ This level can come to dominate strategy at the level of production markets.

Strategies are current introjections to contend with the detritus from past strategy. This suggests a final

Conjecture #5: Inconsistent performance measures are a device for strategic shaping of action from on high in liberated topology.

On the mechanism itself there are good published analyses in business (Eccles 1991; Meyer 1991). Setting inconsistent context for others' strategic initiatives and control routines is a higher-order strategy which I am arguing arises and is effective in liberated catnet contexts. The liberated topology is assumed in classical political analyses such as the Federalist papers, and surely the fifth conjecture suggests common practice in governmental affairs.

Governance illustrations

Strategy in upper reaches of organizations thus may and should depend on the larger social context, including other institutional realms. In business, this includes market networks and the organization of competitors, but it also includes cultural definitions of justice or fairness. Consider these results from a comparative field study:

"(We can) see the French and British behavior patterns as alternative responses to a common problem: namely, the relative absence of lateral cooperation among middle managers. The British response is to

¹⁴ For background see Arrow and Hahn (1971), Newman (1965), White (1981, 2002).

structure firms in an extremely decentralized fashion so that such cooperation is unnecessary (...) the French response is to opt for extreme centralization (...). Neither the American nor the French managers can be evaluated (independently like the British can be) (...) the Americans develop close interfunctional cooperation so that informal nonquantitative evaluations can be made of the contributions of the various managers" (Granick 1972, 346-7).

Decentralization is required only as an expedient to gain some measure of centralization achievable in no other way, given engrained culture of interaction! Eccles (1985) demonstrates from a comparative field study in big U.S. firms a similar importance of managerial conceptions of fairness for the effectiveness of strategies and hence their observable cumulations as organization structures.

Strikingly similar contrasts are drawn by students of government. Here devolution to local government is the analogue to delegation to lower management; decentralization is the common issue. The political scientist Ashford (1982) contrasts Britain with France. He sees remote decoupling in the U.K., where there is very little direct supervision from the center, which, however, engrosses policy determination totally. French communes employ 400.000 and have more power and impact than British local government which employs 3.000.000. "French communes evade the territorial, functional, political and economic rigidities imposed in British local government (...). The French local system is more attuned to problem solving *because* it is more intimately linked to higher levels of political and administrative decision-making" (Ashford 1982, p 4).

Concentration and decentralization as constructs cannot reflect the full gamut of such forces which shape control, whether implicitly or through strategy (Eccles and White, 1986). The parallel hierarchies and extraneous social formations encountered earlier also intrude:

"One of the paradoxes of the French unified administrative system is that it more clearly defines ways to influence national policy than the divided administrative system in Britain (...) It is normal for a French mayor to engage in policy making at many levels of government (...) enhanced by rivalries within the administration and by their ability to hold several elected offices at once, the *cumul des mandats*." (ibid.)

He goes on to argue that political neutrality in the higher civil service of Britain insulates them from influence coming up, aided by corporatist jealousies among unions and professions and departments.

Eccles and Crane (1988), Vancil (1979) and others make similar arguments about business in this country. Further examples which each span both political and economic realms come from studies of colonialism. Colonialism is of our world yet meshes business and government more explicitly than do our own regimes. The elegant comparative study by Furnivall (1948; see White 1992 for analysis) draws much the same contrast between British and Dutch colonialism as above were drawn between the U.K. and France in business and then again in government. Moore's (1958) account of the Inca empire as a colonial enterprise resembles Furnivall's, and so does Whitney's account of China. The point is that

objective similarities in how strategies cumulate as social mechanism should not be allowed to be concealed by diversity in the 'cover stories'.¹⁵

Conclusion

Discipline within, and control between identities co-evolve with social organization, energized by actors living their own situations. New levels of actor appear along with new domains of specialized action.¹⁶ Interacting strategies across these situations engender topologies in social perspective and maneuver. The resulting social organization can be as stringent and cogent as the behavioral laws implicit in our visual skills.

Some few topologies of overall organization are the overall legacies from interacting strategies. Above we developed and illustrated a few conjectures about how kinds of network embeddings sort with strategies. Three large-scale analyses of strategy for three different institutional realms – Clausewitz (1976), Vancil (1979) and Key (1977) on statecraft, business and politics respectively – support the approach here to operational meanings for strategy and to its correlates with the resulting topology of organization systems.

Managerial strategizing is a second-order process that begins to make sense only when 'goals' are put aside as a rhetorical distraction.¹⁷ Put all together, the preceding analyses have organization as the trace left behind by strategies for mobilizing, at successive levels in an historical process. These strategies need not map into standard stories concerning procedures that are extant in that context. And no organization is a mere configuration of actors within some homogeneous social space analogous to physical space. The social field, to use Bourdieu's term, instead is an inhomogeneous collation among levels of embedded identities, and moreover such organizations themselves become embedded in still-larger contexts in diverse ways. Nonetheless we uncover plausible regularities in strategizing across many scopes and domains.

Devising strategy is most difficult for top managers when there is the least environmental contingency. Stable environments engender little structural complexity and little energy in the social processes embedding work. Uncertainty along with others' commitments to their own local concerns are unquestionably the two prime groundings of effective maneuvering by top managers. Environmental contingency is a solution, not a problem for strategic maneuverings, as is shown for business by the mid-century switch to multidivisional firms, and more specifically by the recurrent waves of mergers and takeovers (Fligstein 1990). Only the specific but yet unaccountable is promising material for getting action above and beyond the self-reproducing action of organization routine. Those who do understand this can have impact even from inconspicuous niches; those who do not will be merely decorative even as top managers or statesmen.

¹⁵ Barkey (1992) offers a striking analysis of Ottoman rule that develops much the same approach to strategy as in this paper, despite completely different economic, political, social, historical, religious and geographical circumstances.

¹⁶ White (1992) introduced this approach to identity, which was further developed in White (1993).

¹⁷ White (1985) and then White (1992) develop this view of strategy at more length.

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ABSTRACT: Identities and strategies both emerge amidst uncertainties. Strategies grow out of their sitings, but at the same time the outcomes of strategies cumulate to shape topology of sitings, the interlockings in network control among identities. Conjectures are offered for interrelations of internal structures and policies of organizations in each of two topologies for economic and governmental systems. Interpretive mechanisms of social mobilization go with a third alternative topology. Principal distinctions drawn are segregate vs companionate in network aggregation, together with levels of scope, and parallelism vs. specialization within a level.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG: Identitäten entstehen aus Turbulenzen. Strategien nutzen Spannungen zwischen neuem und routinisiertem Handeln aus und rechnen damit, daß sie eine soziale Mobilisierung auslösen, während derer sich Identitäten und ihre Verbindungen neu formieren. Der Aufsatz geht der Frage nach, welche Topologien aus der Kumulation von Strategien entstehen. Diese Topologien bilden den Kontext für Handlungsstrategien, die im Widerspruch zu determinierten Strukturen stehen. Strategien verhandeln neu über ganze strategische Felder und verändern somit Kontrollmöglichkeiten und Strukturen. Unterschiedliche Formen von Ehen dienen als Vorbild für die Ableitung und Verallgemeinerung von Topologien, die unterschiedliche Grade von Absonderung beziehungsweise Vergemeinschaftung der Partner aufweisen. Interessant ist, daß die Vergemeinschaftung mit einem durchaus boshaften Ranking der Partner einhergeht. Während Strategien entgegen ihrer eigenen Rhetorik meist nichts mit Planung zu tun haben, ist ihre Rolle im Kontext von sozialer Mobilisierung um so bedeutsamer. Diese Mobilisierung nutzt Differenzen zwischen Funktionen und Generationen. Der Aufsatz unterscheidet zwischen Strategien in Organisationen, in denen Identitäten aufgerufen und gegeneinander ausgespielt werden, und Strategien einer Zivilgesellschaft, in denen es eher darauf ankommt, Unabhängigkeit (eine Form des Bezugs) trotz Freiheit zu behaupten. In letzterer ebenso wie in klassischen Tauschmärkten und multinationalen Unternehmen kommt es auf die Einführung von Strategien höherer Ordnung an, die ihre Mobilisierungseffekte aus Inkonsistenzen gegenüber den Strategien niederer Ordnung gewinnen. Spätestens diese Differenzierung zwischen Strategien verschiedener Ordnung zeigt, daß es nicht genügt, Organisationen nur anhand ihres Grades an Dezentralisierung beziehungsweise Konzentration zu unterscheiden. Strategisch entscheidend sind verschiedene Formen der Vernetzung zwischen niederen und höheren Ebenen.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Harrison C. White, Professor of Sociology at Columbia University, New York. One line of his current research melds economic sociology with mathematical modeling (*Markets from Networks*, Princeton University Press 2002); another meshes social network with discourse analyses. The theoretical foundation of both was laid in *Identity and Control*, published in 1992. He teaches courses also in the sociology of art. White collaborates with an INRA interdisciplinary team in field studies of how the Languedoc-Rousillon wine sector has been evolving. White has also taught at five other universities (Arizona [Tucson], Carnegie-Mellon, Chicago, Edinburgh and Harvard) and has worked in several applied research organizations and business schools. He earned doctorates at MIT (theoretical physics) and Princeton (sociology) and is a member of the National Academy of Sciences and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.