

Institutional resistance: War of positions and Power maintenance

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When addressing institutions and institutional change, received literature increasingly emphasizes the role of agency and power. The aim of this track is to explore an area of agency that is relatively unexplored: strategic acts initiated by self-interested actors that aim at maintaining status quo. The concept of ‘institutional resistance’ (Lawrence, 2008) and the relatively recent enthusiasm for the analysis of phenomena of resistance (Fleming, 2006; Martí and Fernández, 2013) point at a partially unexplored areas of research.

In this respect, the track aims at both clarifying the issue of ‘institutional resistance’ and eliciting how resistance materializes in organizational life. We articulate the concept into the resistance that elites that aim at maintaining hegemony, this latter defined ‘maintenance protocol’ (Fleming and Spicer, 2014), and the resistance of dominated actors that respond established hegemony (Gramsci, 1971; Levy and Scully, 2007; Bohm, Spicer and Fleming, 2008).

In particular, we call contributions to the analysis of three areas of resistance.

First, resistance does not only imply the war to redistribute material resources. Rather, resistance especially applies to preservation of vocabularies and categories. In this respect, common sense assigns to a number of words (utility, health, concreteness, the duality of the sexes, rationality, balance, symbol, body, artifact) a meaning that is strongly biased by the neoclassical economic background that has been accepted as mainstream theory in managerial practices. Resisting has to do with (a) re-discovering how deviant organizational forms and words challenge mainstream accepted common sense and (b) learning from non-managerial fields (Leone et al., 2014; Sicca, 2000; Calcagno et al., 2013) how to manage companies in today’s permanent crisis.

The second area of resistance refers to how economic production subsumes human life. The role played by financialization and novel forms of knowledge creation, both at the basis of accumulation process, entails that a new discipline of managerial governance has arisen. This governance shows that the old “stick” (disciplinarian structure), in any case slow to disappear, is however increasingly accompanied by “carrots”, which assist in creating a new society of control (Deleuze, 1990), which in turn is characterized by a process of *life subsumption* (Fumagalli, 2007).

The third area of resistance refers to the very place in which knowledge is created and legitimated: academia. European academic institutions are in the middle of a transition that aims at a complete rethinking of the concepts of accountability, merit, responsibility and value. A hegemonic point of view represents current European model as deeply inefficient. Colonial and west-centric rhetoric of scientific production forces conformism and, in the same time, stimulates debate and a necessary intellectual resistance.

Given this premise, we invite theoretical and empirical papers that intend to further exploring political strategies of resistance by looking at three dimensions: *actor*, *content* and *mode*.

When focusing on *actor*, we would like to address:

- Strategies aimed at maintaining hegemony by powerful actors, which we call ‘power maintenance’ or “bio-power maintenance”

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- Strategies of bio-political reactions by relatively powerless actors that resist incumbent processes of hegemony.

When focusing on *content*, we would like to address:

- Strategies aimed at preserving allocation of economic, cultural and social or political capital *à la* Bourdieu (1977, 1986, 1990, 1991, 2005) such as, for instance, corporate political action in the form of lobbying.
- Strategies and politics of signification that aim at preserving symbolic structures, meaning and vocabularies. (e.g. resisting by defending pre-capitalistic categories of interpretation, not depending on production of “exchange values”; resisting to strategies of *therapeutic domination* that apply western categories to intervene in countries distressed by political crisis, Pandolfi, McFalls, 2010).

When focusing on *mode*, we would like to address:

- Overt strategies of resistance.
- Strategies of entrenchment such as those described by Gramsci as of ‘wars of position’ (1971: 238).
- Strategies of resistance to dominant managerial rhetoric as taking place, for example, in art management and in the management of cultural organizations (Sicca, Zan, 2005).

We especially welcome papers that look at the subjects from different perspectives. We encourage multidisciplinary perspectives and invite contributions from the fields of organizational and management studies, sociology, economics, anthropology, industrial relations, gender studies, LGBTs’ studies, pedagogy and psychology, education, philosophy (moral, political and aesthetic) and political science, and others.

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