The oxymoron of control in an era of globalisation
Vulnerabilities of a mega myth

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Abstract *In response to developments around as well as within organisations, managers are faced with a control-commitment dilemma. A new rationality of governance has emerged besides the well-known rationality of bureaucratic control. This new set of governance strategies, which is presented under different labels such as commitment-based management or trust-based governance, is directed at access to and leverage of intangible resources like employee commitment, tacit knowledge and learning behaviours. In this special issue, six studies are presented that address the subject of how top management teams deal with this control-commitment dilemma and the intended or unintended consequences of choices made.*

Introduction

The focus of this special issue is on managerial control strategies, the managerial beliefs on which these strategies are based and the effects of these strategies on the functioning of organisations. Top managers have to deal with fast changing demands posed on the organisation by external parties, market conditions and societal developments, which often create cross-pressures that are not easy to deal with in a straightforward mode. The strategies employed to deal with these conditions also affect the internal governance structure and the effectiveness of internal relations between actors. A central issue of strategic choice is the problem of control. While top managers often believe that centralised decision-making and command and control strategies are the best way to secure high performance, especially in times of turbulence and instances of organisational crisis (Cameron *et al.*, 1987; Mishra, 1996; Pfeffer, 1978), they also experience that control is harder to gain than ever before. Market predictability has decreased, customer demands regarding quality and cost efficiency have risen, and competition has become increasingly intensive and global in character. As a consequence, competitive advantage is increasingly dependent on alliances with other firms and on intangible, potentially high mobile resources, like consumer trust, employee commitment and innovative capacities, which are hard to manage by command and control strategies.

In response to these developments, a new rationality of governance has emerged besides the well-known rationality of bureaucratic control. A new set of governance strategies, directed at access to and leverage of intangible resources like employee commitment, tacit knowledge and learning behaviours, promises to be more effective in promoting organisational flexibility and innovativeness. Different terms are used to denominate the new rationality, such as organic regime (Burns and Stalker, 1961), commitment-based management (Walton and Hackman, 1986), trust-based governance (Powell, 1996), clan control (Ouchi, 1979), value-based control (Eisenhardt, 1985) and social control (Das and Teng, 1998). It can be expected that given this new paradigm of

governance, top managers feel confronted with a control-commitment dilemma that is not easily resolved. The seemingly incompatible assumptions underlying both rationalities tend to push managers towards a choice between the well-known, well-tested receipt of control-based governance, that is said to have grown obsolete and a newer receipt of commitment-based governance, which is argued to be more suitable in handling contemporary and future challenges. In this special issue, six studies are presented that address the subject of how top management teams deal with this control-commitment dilemma and the intended or unintended consequences of choices made. The first two studies of Hoecht and van Marrewijk concentrate on choices made in external alliances. The study of Bijlsma-Frankema is about how managers deal with the dilemma in post-acquisition processes. The studies of Holden and Roberts, Hoogervorst *et al.* and Meek focus on choices in internal governance and consequences of these choices.

External developments

In the past decades, changes in the external environments of organisations have decreased the effectiveness of bureaucratic modes of governance in handling the challenges that organisations face at present. Where formerly insight in local markets and knowledge of competitors on these markets sufficed to build competitive advantages around the products sold and services delivered, the development to global markets and competition, shorter product life cycles and fast evolving information technologies confronts management with problems of incomplete information and control that seem hard to resolve in a traditional mode. Strategic decisions have to be made under conditions of increasing uncertainty and risk, while demands of customers on quality, efficiency and effectiveness of products and services grow in importance as co-determinants of the success of these strategies. These developments challenge control-based forms of governance which are not fit for handling complex and unstable environments, as was concluded decades back (Burns and Stalker, 1961; Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967).

In coping with the pressure to be flexible and innovative in dealing with fast changing contingencies, firms increasingly engage in strategic alliances and other forms of cooperation between firms. As Powell (1990, p. 315) notes:

> Firms pursue cooperative agreements in order to gain fast access to new technologies or new markets, to benefit from economies of scale in joint research and/or production, to tap into sources of know-how located outside the boundaries of the firm, and to share the risk for activities that are beyond the scope or capability of a single organization.

These alliances need governance structures that can effectively handle the specific risks involved. Especially in knowledge-intensive industries, a central risk is the leakage of sensitive information. In this volume, Hoecht explains that the higher this risk is in research and development alliances, the more social forms of control are needed to effectively deal with it. The study of van Marrewijk also shows the critical function of commitment and trust in processes of value-creation. Especially in international alliances in unstable markets like the Unisource case he studied, the alliance can collapse because trustful relations between partners, needed to balance control strategies to sustain the alliance, wither away once control strategies of parent firms gain dominance.

The growing influence of consumers on goods and services is related to developments in societies, such as liberalisation of markets, increasing individualism, and a tendency towards lower tolerance of power distance and lower uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 1980). These developments have partly broken down traditional forms of consumer loyalty and stirred more assertive and calculative behaviours among consumers. In pursuing value for money, there seems to be a growing tendency to substitute a good or service for another with a better price-value rate.

Developments within organisations

These developments in western societies also entail that the organisational members who have to produce these values are less willing to submit themselves unconditionally to the authority of supervisors, that they like to participate in decision-making and that they increasingly weight their individual interests against those of the organisation. A well-known weakness of bureaucratic control is the restrictive capacity to ensure congruence of individual goals and the goals of the organisation (Wilkins and Ouchi, 1983).

A related development that challenges the effectiveness of bureaucratic modes of governance regards changes in the internal design of organisations. As organisations have become flatter and more team centred, lateral relationships and alliances have been growing in importance, besides hierarchical relationships that used to dominate the framing of work relations (Sheppard and Tuschinsky, 1996). Organisations tend, moreover, to develop from traditional hierarchical forms into divisional, matrix and network forms, which demand increasing levels of mutual trust, goal congruence and commitment to function effectively (Creed and Miles, 1996; Powell, 1990; Tyler, 2003). Owing to processes of globalisation, flexibilisation of labour relations, continuous change and virtualisation of organisational forms, work relations have become looser and behaviours are less easy to monitor by managers at present. Tasks have become increasingly complex, ambiguous and knowledge intensive, another factor that constrains the monitoring capacity of managers (Tyler, 2003). At the same time, organisational performance is more and more dependent on employee behaviours such as exploring opportunities, knowledge sharing, helping colleagues and heedful interrelating (Bijlsma-Frankema et al., n.d.; Von Krogh, 1998; Weick and Roberts, 1993). Since command and control styles of governance are less suitable to promote these extra-role behaviours, hierarchy can be less relied upon to bring these behaviours about (Kramer, 1996; Tyler, 2003). It is in these circumstances that commitment and trust-based forms of organising are advocated as modes of governance that better fit to promote the behaviours needed to sustain competitive advantages of organisations (Creed and Miles, 1996; Oliver, 1997; Powell, 1990).

Dismal paradox of bureaucracy

The "old" rationality, which often is treated as if it were a mega-myth, frequently makes managers believe that traditional forms of bureaucratic control like formalisation and direct supervision are the best guarantee of cost efficiency and performance. The core tasks of management and the culture that often develops around these tasks may explain these strong beliefs. Schein (1996, p. 237) argues that the "culture of executives" reflects their main task: to guard the financial liability of the company. They have learned to make "tough financial decisions based on imperfect

information because they become isolated and find it harder and harder to trust what their subordinates tell them". Financial criteria are central in the executives' considerations; people are seen as "human resources" and "cost factors". Executives often block progress in the learning capabilities of teams, which tends to be advocated by operators, "on the grounds that the financial returns cannot be demonstrated or that too many exceptions are involved that would undermine the control system" (Schein, 1996, p. 238).

It is however a well documented phenomenon that this form of control can turn out to be an oxymoron, the "dismal paradox" with which Max Weber struggled for most of his life (Reed, 1988). Weber considered bureaucracy as the most rational form of organisation, because rules and routines free employees from arbitrariness, one of the characteristics of patrimonial governance. He also recognised the costs involved for individuals: the rules can become an iron cage (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983), meaning a loss of freedom, discretion and variation, all of which are sources of commitment to organisational goals, mutual trust and cooperation among employees. Later studies of the "dynamics of bureaucracy" like those of Blau (1955), Crozier (1964) and Gouldner (1954) provided insight in the paradox "that managerial interventions in support of more disciplined bureaucratic control directly reinforce the perceived problem of commitment and collaboration which they were originally meant to solve" (Reed, 1988, p. 35). These studies show that, as a consequence, employees tend to turn to each other for moral commitment and develop goals amongst those that are incongruent with the organisational goals. The consequences of the iron cage seem even more severe at present, because goal congruence is a major factor in producing the extra-role behaviours needed to sustain competitive advantage. The emerging rationality of commitment governance is mainly directed at promoting congruence between organisational goals and individual goals of employees (Wilkins and Ouchi, 1983).

Challenge of knowledge creation
A more recent development that enhances the critical value of external and internal governance strategies is the increasing importance of tacit knowledge as an intangible resource. While control modes of governance are fit to sustain *exploitation* of knowledge, trust- and commitment-based governance is far better suited to sustain *exploration* of tacit knowledge and knowledge creation (Boisot, 1995; Brown and Duguid, 1998; Janowicz and Noorderhaven, 2002; March, 1991; Nonaka and Konno, 1998; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Weick and Roberts, 1993). Tacit knowledge is a most valuable resource of organisations on which, if tapped as a source of knowledge creation, competitive advantage of a company can be built (Lekanne Deprez and Tissen, 2002). As Von Krogh (1998, p. 133) notes "the company's overall performance depends on the extent to which managers can mobilize all of the knowledge resources held by individuals and teams and turn these resources into value-creating activities". The nature of interrelations between organisational members is a critical factor in knowledge creation. Untrustworthy behaviour, constant competition, imbalances in giving and receiving information and "that's not my job" attitudes endanger effective sharing of tacit knowledge. Managerial governance can enable knowledge creation in several ways, of which care is a central means. Care, broadly defined as "serious attention, a feeling of concern and interest" is a key factor for employees in shifting from "self-commitment" to "other-commitment" (Von Krogh, 1998). Besides, care

promotes high levels of trust in horizontal and vertical relations needed for successful sharing of tacit knowledge and knowledge creation (Creed and Miles, 1996; Dirks and Ferrin, 2002). The study of Bijlsma-Frankema in this volume shows that the development of distrust between top management and middle managers severely hinders learning processes that may evolve between them.

Roles of management

So, the question of which modes of governance can guarantee to make workers produce high quality and added value in the eyes of customers and cost-efficiency at the same time, should be high on the management's agenda. The choices to be made are not simple, especially since both rationalities are based on quite different assumptions about the nature of human beings and the optimal way to govern human behaviour. The control rationality is mainly based on the low-trust theory X, which implies that since human beings are lazy rather than tired, they must be supervised, while "sticks and carrots" can be employed to guarantee compliance. The commitment rationality is mainly based on theory Y, which is built on the notion of humans as problem-solving beings that will show extra-role behaviours if given autonomy and other enabling conditions that provide opportunities for these behaviours (McGregor, 1960).

The distinct rationalities also entail different roles of top management in designing and monitoring organisational processes. Management within the bureaucratic mode of governance is considered to be dealing with planning, personnel and capital budgeting, organising and controlling by creating formal structures that define the machine-like system rules (Kotter, 1988; Mintzberg, 1989). Decision-making is considered the prerogative of management, since as Barnard (1938, p. 189) notes, "they represent a specialization of the process of making organisational decisions – and this is the essence of their functions". When discussing the classical management approach, Lawrence and Lorsch (1967, p. 26) identified the same assumption about the importance of managerial knowledge as the locus for organisational control, given the principle "that superior authorities have superior knowledge". When seen from the subordinates' position, submission to authority is thus expressing that the "source of knowledge is outside of oneself" (Block, 1991, p. 26). Besides financial techniques, various tools and techniques in the area of work analysis and planning have been developed to support the above-mentioned management practices, like management-by-objectives and critical path methods, such as the PERT-technique. These techniques aim at "systematisation, routinisation, and predictability" (Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967, p. 161). However, since complexity, uncertainty and unpredictability are essential aspects of the managerial environment, experiences with techniques show the "limits to rationality" (Simon, 1976).

In the commitment-oriented rationality, top-down prescription of rules and supervision are shifted towards more employee autonomy, participation in decision-making and exploration of opportunities by employees, leading to top-down and bottom-up flows of information, which connect management to the work floor. The crucial role of management is shifting towards designing a structure that promotes and coordinates behaviours of employees and a strategic mission and goals that guide and integrate employee behaviours into a productive figuration.

Rather than planned, strategy emerges in a dynamic interplay with contextual conditions and in connection to organisational learning processes. As Mintzberg (1989,

p. 77) observed, "planning is not a means to create strategy, but one to operationalize strategy already created by other means". Hence, formal plans are merely a confirmation of strategic decisions already reached through other informal, intuitive or political processes (Yukl, 1994, p. 27). Clearly, planning refers to decomposition, while strategy development rests on synthesis and integration, aspects that are difficult to conceive as the result of analytic processes.

Leadership styles

Effective interaction between leaders and followers also takes rather distinct forms within both rationalities. Two forms that are often distinguished, *transactional* leadership and *transformational* leadership, rather neatly illustrate this point. In control-based forms of organising, transactional leadership was found to be effective (Hoogervorst, 1998). Currently, transactional leadership is the most frequently observed type of leadership. For some authors, the "transactional process is at the core of the employee relationship and can be viewed as a type of contract, explicit or implicit, that imposes reciprocal obligations" (Gerhart and Milkovich, 1992, p. 482). In commitment-directed modes of governance, a more encompassing style of transformational leadership is argued and found to be more effective to motivate followers and to ensure goal-congruence (Den Hartog and Koopman, 2001). This style implies a more complex and deeper mutual relationship between leader and followers.

Transformational leadership is often identified with charismatic leadership, the ability to inspire dedication and enthusiasm for some transformational course. This type of leadership is based on the compelling personality of the leader, rather than on formal position (Burns, 1979; Ott, 1989). Emotional and meaning-defining aspects in relation with employees are carefully attended to, which positively affects the employee self-image, self-esteem and self-efficacy (Yukl, 1994, p. 325). This kind of relation requires mutual trust and integrity.

It can be concluded that there is a strong relationship between mode of governance and behavioural outcomes that can be expected. A command or an explicit message from top management is not fit to realise commitment among employees. The studies of Holden and Roberts and Hoogervorst *et al.* in this volume underscore this point. Holden and Roberts found that in situations of crisis, a combination of intensified centralisation of resources control by top management and holding middle managers responsible for commitment creation amongst employees reduces the ability of middle managers to produce the intended results. The study of Hoogervorst *et al.* addresses the effects of inconsistency between explicit and implicit communication within organisations. They discuss the behavioural effects of organisational settings where "the talk" is commitment-oriented while "the walk" is much more control-oriented. Their empirical data support the economic value of consistency by management, to "talk the walk" as suggested by Weick (1995).

Balancing commitment and control

Since both rationalities are based on different assumptions, the need for consistency seems to urge a choice in resolving the control-commitment dilemma. The developments in and around organisations underscore the plea of many authors for choosing commitment-based forms of governance, where worker autonomy can produce more variety of thinking, and higher levels of moral involvement, commitment

and trust needed to create competitive advantages of firms (Pfeffer, 1998; Watson, 2002). Other authors, however, warn not to throw away the baby of bureaucratic practices with the bathwater of the flaws. They plea for a careful balance between *exploration* and *exploitation* (March, 1991; Weick and Westley, 1996), or for alternating value creation and value exploitation (Boisot, 1995; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). Others point to studies which show that standardisation of work processes and managerial control strategies can enhance effectiveness in some parts of the organisation, while other parts, like R&D departments, are more effectively governed by commitment-directed modes. As Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) convincingly showed, a mix of differentiation of governance within the organisation and commitment-directed integration mechanisms to coordinate the parts can be highly effective in promoting performance. Another argument in favour of a mixed regime is that, if designed well, the flaws of both regimes may be minimised by the strengths of the other. The dark side of the commitment-oriented regime may be less well documented than the dysfunctions of bureaucracy, but this does not mean that there is only a bright side to this regime. There is, for instance, ground to argue that too much consistency in governance and too high levels of trust can promote counterproductive effects. Variety, which is highly critical as input for learning, can get smothered by these very factors, as the study of groupthink by Janis (1972) showed. The study of Meek, in this volume, shows another dark side of purely commitment-based governance. The study of bullying at the workplace and death through overwork in Japanese firms reminds the reader of Weber's argument that bureaucratic rationality once freed employees of the arbitrariness of patrimonial forms of governance. Meek shows that a mode of governance that is heavily grounded in social control can produce very high levels of arbitrariness that were once effectively conquered by bureaucracy.

The oxymoron of control and the dark side of a pure social control-based regime may be overcome by striving for an optimal balance between control- and commitment-oriented strategies. In the literature on inter-organisational alliances, such a combination seems to reflect common practices more directly, as the study of Hoecht in this volume shows. The study of van Marrewijk, however, discloses the difficulties that managers can have in balancing control and commitment. On the one hand, managers do understand the governance demands of exploratory ventures, while on the other hand, the executive culture urges them to switch to a control strategy if the financial expectations are not met as soon as they expected. The study of Bijlsma-Frankema shows that if top management stick to the control strategy, based on their financial responsibility, middle managers can be weakened because they are caught between control demands and the strategies they would prefer based on their understanding of the people management.

In the literature on internal organisation, there is less emphasis on how to balance control and command effectively. Some pleas can be found, however, for substituting constraining forms of formalisation for enabling forms that are co-developed by management and workers in a process of mutual learning (Adler and Borys, 1996; Edmondson, 2002).

These authors see organisational knowledge creation as an essential element to arrive at an optimal balance between control and commitment. This element also fundamentally affects the core tasks of management. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995)

argue that it is a central task of top management to formulate a clear vision about what knowledge the company should create in the near future, to design a structure that enables the knowledge creation process and to maintain a climate of trust within the organisation (Bijlsma-Frankema, 2001). Middle managers should act as "middle-up-down" agents, translating top management's vision into more concrete concepts and to enable knowledge creation by employees. In this way, a virtuous cycle can develop that connects strategy formation by top management to exploration of opportunities at the work floor. The cycle balances managerial control (downward movement) with discretion that, ideally, feeds commitment at the work floor level, resulting in an upward movement of feedback and initiatives. Yet, the sound of this future music is still faint. The studies in this volume suggest that in many situations the myth of control is a barrier that has to be shattered to open the way in the direction of more optimal mixes between commitment and control.

Studies in this issue

The study of Hoecht addresses the question: in which circumstances are bureaucratic control, social control or a mix of both most suitable in research and development alliances within the fragrance industry. Management control systems differ according to the extent to which they rely on formal rules and procedures and the extent to which they prescribe and control the ways in which specific tasks are performed and rewarded. He argues that since bureaucratic control systems restrict the degree of employee involvement, in knowledge-intensive firms or alliances, social control should increasingly replace bureaucratic control. Social control can take the form of individual researchers' concern for their reputation, internalised professional ethics and the relationship commitment derived from the process of building trust.

Hoecht discusses the problem of how to handle the risk of sensitive information leakage in research-intensive industries. He states that the risk of information leakage needs to be weighed up against the risk of failing to have access to cutting-edge information and know-how. He argues that social control mechanisms are particularly important for firms that need to be outward-looking by nature of their industry. Reputation concerns are seen as one of the most important self-disciplining mechanisms for individual professionals and "knowledge workers". His central argument is that, while no firm will ever rely on one form of control entirely, a higher degree of employee autonomy necessitates some degree of substitution of direct monitoring and managerial control for social control and trust. So he expects firms to choose trust-based inter-firm control systems when the assets and resources to be committed are highly specific, transactions infrequent, the time-frame long-term, the joint output difficult to measure and future contingencies difficult to predict.

van Marrewijk conducted a case study of AT&T-Unisource, a strategic alliance between five telecom providers from four different countries in Europe and one from the USA. The alliance collapsed under the pressure of changes in the market, cultural differences, dilemmas of identity (local or global), a competition-cooperation dilemma, and the way the control-commitment dilemma was handled by the alliance partners.

Control by the parent organisations is always a critical issue for a successful performance of a strategic alliance. Research shows that the success of an alliance is positively related to a relaxed attitude of control by the parents. Other factors mentioned by van Marrewijk for the success or failure of alliances are mutual trust,

commitment and cultural sensitivity. Mutual understanding between parents must grow. In practice, it is very hard for a company to give up autonomy and decide everything in consultation with the partner. Commitment of the parent organisation does not, however, automatically include the commitment of its employees. Social ties have to be built, a new identity has to be developed. Cultural incompatibility at corporate and national levels can hinder the cooperation in an alliance.

In the case described, several circumstances came together that caused the crisis and ended the alliance. Against the background of drastic changes in the international telecom market, it became highly uncertain if the high investments would be earned back in the years to come. When the alliance did not make any profit, some parents changed their strategic focus from a synergy strategy to more bureaucratic control and domination-based strategies. Mutual trust declined as a consequence of strategy switches on the one hand, and the unstable character of the telecom market, which put trust under pressure on the other hand. The alliance collapsed because the balance between control and commitment could not be maintained.

Bijlsma-Frankema studied the perspectives of managers on failure factors of post-acquisition processes in a multinational engineering company. She shows that a lack of agreement on how to handle the control-commitment dilemma is a main source of failure in this company. She describes the tensions and dilemmas between top management and local managers. Each group has its own main responsibilities and concerns. This influences the dominant "cognitive map" that the group use to control and influence its environment. The Board of Directors is primarily concerned with the profitability of investments made, so they focus on obtaining reliable information about the financial situation of the acquired firm. They want clear goals and conditions set for the managers of the new firm. The presidents of the strategic business units (SBUs) are the most central actors in the acquisition process. Their main concern is to maintain or create commitment within the acquired firm. They expect that disquiet or aversive feelings will bring about a low level of cooperation between managers and employees. The cognitive map of the third group, the human resource managers, is more or less in line with the SBU managers. They see three serious threats to a successful and speedy integration process: distrust among the managers in the acquired firm in the new mother company, enduring "human fights" between managers of the acquired and the acquiring firm, and aversions to the changes made in the acquired firm.

The differences in the cognitive maps of the two management levels have consequences for the preferred actions in the control-commitment dilemma. Four themes are discussed that differ in content and consequences in the perspectives of the groups, they are:

(1) Control versus cooperation.

(2) The way to handle the culture of the acquired firm.

(3) Trust versus distrust.

(4) Speed versus carefulness.

Due to different views, distrust develops between the Board and the SBU presidents, which in turn hinders the sharing of tacit knowledge and mutual learning between them.

Holden and Roberts studied perspectives of middle managers in Sweden, The Netherlands and the UK. The study shows how the way that the top managers handled

the control-commitment dilemma has led to feelings of depowerment among middle managers. A central argument is that some important developments in the role of the middle manager since the 1980s have been presented by the top as part of an empowering process, while these actually *de*power many middle managers. The study shows how middle managers' capacity to create trust and commitment among their subordinates is weakened under conditions of constraining control and centralisation of decision-making by top management.

Since the 1980s, many organisations reacted to a more brutal environment with restructuring and "thinning out" layers of management. The fewer remaining middle managers carry increasing workloads, which are more complex and demanding than before. Holden and Roberts found that the tasks of line managers have become more generalist in nature, having assumed more responsibilities for accounting, budgeting and production processes. They are also increasingly acting as agents of change who have to shoulder the hazards of change processes.

Many of these developments have been sold to middle managers as a process of empowerment, given their enhanced control over budgets, human resource management activities and greater responsibilities in their day-to-day operations. But there have been considerable influences in the opposite direction too. The drive for efficiency in the face of increasing competition has led to enormous pressures to create leaner organisations. Middle managers feel increasingly "depowered" as their professional status is permanently undermined by surveillance in the form of inspections, target and goal setting, over which they have very little control. Thus, although higher strategic policy-making bodies may believe that they are empowering employees, Holden and Roberts' research shows that many middle managers, in particular in the UK, feel in reality more insecure and overburdened. They see increases in workloads, duties and targets without the concomitant supply of resources to enable them to fulfil the requirements they face.

Hoogervorst, van der Flier, and Koopman address the negative effects of inconsistency between explicit communication, which is often commitment-oriented and implicit communication, which is often more control-oriented. They argue that the employees operate in an organisational context determined by the organisational culture, organisational structures and systems, and the management practices. This context acts as a source of implicit communication towards employees. When the implicit signals that are "read" in the culture, structure, or management practices are in conflict with the "official", explicit communication or are lacking internal consistency, the trustworthiness of the communication is seriously jeopardised. For instance, explicit communication that calls for quality and service-oriented behaviour will have little effect if the existing culture is not similarly supportive. Inconsistency of the explicit communication with what the behavioural context implicitly transmits creates a high likelihood of organisational inertia. In a study in 75 organisational units, the authors found support for the hypothesis that favourable behavioural scores, such as creativity, open-mindedness and participation in decision making are associated with greater consistency of the behavioural context's implicit communication. Renewal and change are only successful under consistency of concepts and activities. The ability to change is related to organisational integration and coherence.

The study of Meek addresses the consequences of extreme commitment-oriented regimes. He discusses death through overwork and bullying as consequences of such

extreme forms of constraining social control in Japanese firms. Faced by economic crisis in the 1990s, some Japanese employers tried to save their companies by pressing their employees to work for longer hours and more days, with no extra pay. Sometimes supervisors and co-workers started bullying their subordinates and peers in the workplace to vent their frustrations, and as a means to drive out employees without technically violating the lifetime employment principle. Recently, increasing numbers of cases of death from overwork were also disclosed.

Meek explains these phenomena as flowing from a combination of culture-based socialisation processes that shape employee-employer relations on the one hand and conditions of economic crisis that make managers stretch these relations beyond the limits of what employees take for granted on the other hand. Work is very central in the life of Japanese people. They have learned that ensuring their company's success, and their own long-term job security, requires them to do tasks with maximum effort no matter how difficult or unpleasant these might be. Japanese employees are described as highly committed to fulfilling their obligations, prepared for long suffering, without complaint or anger. They comply because being accepted in one's primary social group is of utmost importance in Japan. Full and unconditional support under all circumstances must be returned by complete and unconditional loyalty to one's primary in-group. This is accomplished through hard work and conformation to the group norms and standards. This absolute duty to persevere means denying one's personal desires and needs for the good of the organisation. Even if employees feel that they are pushed beyond their physical or mental limits they have little power to lower their workload or improve their working conditions.

The cases of death from overwork and bullying show an extreme dependence of employees on their manager's (and their co-workers') whims and wishes. The study shows that in extreme forms of organic control, arbitrariness can be embedded that is characteristic of patrimony, the pre-bureaucratic form of governance that Weber thought of as conquered by bureaucracy.

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