PARTICIPATION AND THE ESSENCE OF ORGANISATION THEORY

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ABSTRACT

This article departed from the fact that participation is one of the most critical parameters in organisation theory. This article evaluated the issue of participation in the context of organisation theory. It analysed this term concerning modern theories of organisation, post-modernism discussion, and changing nature of reality. In the search for such analysis, the central argument was to test whether "participation" matters in changing the essence of modernist reality. In doing so, the article referred to the discussion on post-modernity, the shift from Fordism to post-Fordism, globalisation, governance, ethical concerns. After mentioning such issues, the analysis included types of participation in administration in organisational life in the last part. Thus, the argument gained a more concrete basis. The article argued that despite the broadness of discussion, participation proved to be fruitful in the context of organisation theory. The article concluded with the suggestion that to construct a theory of participation, complete emancipation of paradigms and approaches from their inherent modernist capabilities, which result in the transfer of the same essence to every theorisation, is necessary.

Keywords: participation, organisation theory**,** psychic prison, classical organisation theory, neoclassical organisation theory

INTRODUCTION

Participation is one of the most critical parameters in organisation theory. In this paper, we will evaluate participation in the context of organisation theory. We will analyse this term concerning modern theories of organisation, post-modernism discussion, and changing nature of reality. In the search for such analysis, our central argument is to test whether "participation" matters in changing the essence of modernist reality. In doing so, we will refer to the discussion on post-modernity, the shift from Fordism to post-Fordism, globalisation, governance, ethical concerns. After mentioning such issues, the analysis will include types of participation in administration in organisational life in the last part. Thus, the argument would gain a more concrete basis.

PARTICIPATION IN A "PSYCHIC PRISON"

It would make sense to start with the "emancipatory" aspect of participation in organisational life. Psychology-centred outlooks are gaining interest in this respect. Gareth Morgan (1980, p. 617) points out that the radical humanist paradigm focuses on the alienating nature of organisations, and he refers to the metaphor of "psychic prison", "an image which focuses upon the way human beings may be led to enact organisational realities experienced as confining and dominating." Like many approaches in social thought, the critical theory developed from Marx (1844) and Lucas's (1971) works emphasises "the process of reification through which

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individuals over-concretise their world, perceiving it as objective and real, something independent of their own will and action" (Morgan, 1980, 617).

Thus, to get rid of the gratings of the psychic prison, participation has roles to play. In this sense, it might be praised as an instrument to curtail alienating nature of modern organisations in which alternative realities are dismissed, and an over-concretised organisational life dominates the will of individuals. For example, Chell (1985, p. xii) focuses on the issue with a psychology-centred approach in her book, namely *Participation and Organization*, by using a broader definition of participation as such: "'interaction between people to achieve specific goals or outcomes." Reference to the achievement of goals will be discussed in the following sections in relation to the changing reality of organisational life, but seeing participation as "fundamental to social life and *mutatis mutandis* to organisational behaviour" has a special meaning in this context (Chell, 1985, p. xii). Thus, participation implying "interaction between people" has an integrative role in coping with organisational domination in modern theories of organisation.

"MONIST" PARADIGM AND PARTICIPATION

At his point, referring to the modern organisation theory makes sense to address the inherent participation problem. The practice and theory of democratic participation and an organisational perspective based on a "monist" philosophy contradict (Üstüner and Keyman, 2003, p. 307). Modern organisation theory does not abandon the adherence to centralisation and direction of power by the administration. Thus, modern organisation theory and practice exhibit the problematic aspect of participation since it could not free itself from the monist paradigm. Üstüner and Keyman (2003) refer to two basic approaches to illustrate this concern. The first is Taylorism, based on F. W. Taylor's book published in 1911, namely *Principles of Scientific Management*. The second one is the theory of bureaucracy constructed by Max Weber (1921 [2015]).

In Taylorism, participatory management or participation of members of an organisation whose principal task is not management was rejected due to being contrary to "scientific" principles. Reference to "science" has a special meaning in this context since it is an ideological shield. In a way, ordinary people are excluded from administration as they lack education in scientific principles of management (Üstüner and Keyman, 2003, p. 308). Thus, management is perceived as a technical issue. Moreover, some assumptions of Taylorist scientific management about human nature obstruct participation. For example, Taylor assumed that when workers (or members of an organisation) come together, the risk of "soldiering" increases. Thus, it is believed that in order to get rid of such a risk, workers should be isolated as much as possible. Concerning the Weberian approach, it is evident that Weber focused on the legitimation of power on the grounds of "rationality". Following the same line of analysis, both approaches are a reflection of the monist paradigm, and they see the organisation as an instrument of social control while the former realises it with the claim of being "scientific", the latter does it with reference to "rationality" (Üstüner and Keyman, 2003, p. 310). Then it becomes natural that participation is a problematic aspect of such theorisations when power is perceived as central.

FOLLETT: PARTICIPATION AND INTEGRATION

After mentioning Taylorism, which is in the classical period of organisation theory, it would be helpful to point out the contributions of Mary Parker Follett, who represents a transitionary vein between classical and neo-classical schools. She emerged as a critique of neo-classic school by grounding her criticisms on humanistic arguments. She departs from Taylorism as she focuses on authority, power and cooperation. She also sees power as a collective thing. Thus it cannot

be delegated from top to down (Follet, 1996, p. 161). In her conceptualisation, there is a distinction between "power-over" and "power-with". Power-over aims at dominating and oppressing the one with coercive means, while power-with concentrates on cooperation and consent between workers and managers. In other words, power-with should only be constructed if, at the same time, the worker can have an influence on the manager (194?, p. 105). Feldheim (2005, p. 411) states that "Follett advocated an integrative unity of organisations or the state where members work together to get the facts and consider the situation and in which where there is collective responsibility for decisions." She recognises differences within an organisation and searches for integration of these differences since they are helpful for the well-being of an organisation. With reference to "creative experience", she argues that every individual makes the organisation richer since everyone is different. For example, in her book *Creative Experience*, she writes that

> What people often mean by getting rid of conflict is getting rid of diversity, and it is of the utmost importance that these should not be considered the same. We may wish to abolish conflict but we cannot get rid of diversity. We must face life as it is and understand that diversity is the most essential feature… We seek a richly diversified experience where every difference strengthens and reinforces the other. (Follet, 1951, pp. 301-302)

The participation of individuals can realise the integration of diversity. Thus, "it is this creative integration which lies at the heart of what Follett calls true democracy" (Morse, 2006, p. 8). However, the neo-classical school could not be evaluated much more progressive than Follett concerning the participation of organisation members since "it is for a limited participation of members only in maximisation of outputs" (Üstüner and Keyman, 2003, p. 311). The human-centred theories of Mayo, Maslow and McGregor are examples of such an approach. While Mayo emphasised group dynamics, Maslow focused on the pyramid of needs, and McGregor conceptualised the human side of organisations to increase labour productivity (Şener, 2005, p. 5).

A CHANGING REALITY?

With the 1970s, there are increasing numbers of examples within the discipline of public administration, which attaches importance to the concept of participation. Marini's (1971) new public administration; Vincent Ostrom's (1973) critique of the classical school; George Frederickson's (1982) emphasis on civism; and Blacksburg Manifesto (Marshall and White, 1990) are inline with this trend. Nevertheless, as Üstüner and Keyman (2003, p. 313) note, all of these examples are incapable of developing new alternatives to the monistic structure of organisations. Consequently, the idea of reforming modern organisation theory was revived.

It is argued that the 1970s and 1990s represent distinct contours of participation. Therefore, while in pre-1970 theories, participation was seen as a means to reach efficiency, after the 1970s, participation became a means of legitimation not only at the level of organisations but also at the societal level. After the 1990s, participation and pluralism seem to end on their own (Şener, 2005, p. 2). In other words, with the influence of post-modernism, it is claimed that efficiency started to be rejected, and participation appeared to be a value on its own (Şener, p. 15). Kenneth Gergen (1992, p. 213-215) asserts that post-modernism draws upon three interrelated propositions about the nature of knowledge: (1) the replacement of the real with the representational; (2) the understanding of representational as a communal artefact; (3) the need for the ironic self-reflection. In post-modern thinking and theories asserting to be post-modern, reality gives way to temporary truths or temporary communicational truths constructed by discourses. In this way, rejection of the monist paradigm or modernist pretensions of being "scientific" or "objective" gains an epistemological ground, contributing to the development of

alternative theories based on participation. In other words, post-modern thinking gave way to new understandings of organisations by emancipating organisation theory from rigid ontological demarcations of modernism. However, it would be inappropriate to argue for a united post-modern theory of organisation (Hancock and Tyler, 2001, p. 64).

Fox and Miller, and Farmer's theories illustrate this break-off. Fox and Miller's (1995, p. 12) discourse theory is built on two categories: The first one is "few-talk" dominated by elites in which no other one can get to talk. The second one is "many-talk", in which everyone can talk without any limitations. Nevertheless, their proposal is "some-talk" in which not only elites or everyone can talk, but the ones who want to talk can talk. They argue that the self-governing of the people is no more meaningful, and thus, election polls are not the appropriate means to realise democracy (Fox and Miller, 1995, p. 39). In this sense, the prevention of manipulation in discussions is good for participatory mechanisms. As for Farmer's (1997, p. 17) theory, we can argue that "anti-administration" is a motto aiming at denying administrative-bureaucratic power and rational-hierarchical Weberian appearance. It suggests confrontation of opposing discourses (administration and anti-administration).

GLOBALISATION, POST-FORDISM AND LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

Üstüner and Keyman (2003) have a different attitude towards the discussion of post-modernism in the context of organisation theory. Their argument takes form with the inclusion of globalisation and liberal democracy. According to them, the assumption that today both at national and international levels, there are deep-rooted changes, and these changes constitute a rupture in our manners of analysing relations of domestic/international, inside/outside, identity/difference, at the same time make up the ground for broadening the scope of liberal democracy (Üstüner and Keyman, 2003, p. 301). Nevertheless, this does not mean that these deep-rooted changes represent a shift from modernity to post-modernity. Thought of post-modernity becomes meaningful when it symbolises a style of criticism to modernity, which needs broadening of its internal scope. It is on the agenda that the liberal democracy model, which could not accord with globalisation and pluralistic social structure, should be restructured. This restructuring process gains a post-modern quality as long as it represents an internal critique of modernity and broadens its internal scope (Üstüner and Keyman, 2003, p. 302).

Moreover, economic relations undergo deep-rooted changes in this restructuring process (Üstüner and Keyman, 2003, p. 304). This is a shift from Fordism to post-Fordism or flexible model of production. This post-Fordist restructuring has a global characteristic, and thus, economic models within national boundaries come out to be in crisis. Therefore, the global/national/local interaction undermines the legitimacy of thoughts that claim the integrity of society realised by the nation-state (Üstüner and Keyman, 2003, p. 305). This interaction has two crucial influences on liberal democracy. Firstly, the concept of citizenship is broadened to accommodate differences. Secondly, with the problem of the representation of this category of citizens, representative democracy is in crisis (Üstüner and Keyman, 2003, p. 306).

Üstüner and Keyman (2003, p. 306) argue that the area of the question of democracy shifts to civil society, and civil society organisations become subjects of representative democracy more. This shift represents a shift from representative democracy to participatory democracy. In this context, the concept of participation seems to exhibit a much broader meaning. In other words, its scope shifts from organisational to social and political levels.

GOVERNANCE AND RESTRUCTURING PROCESS

However, in this study, we are critical to the claimed global/national/local interaction since this interaction does not broaden the scope and essence of participation. To put it in another way, nothing becomes more participatory in essence during the restructuring process. Moving to the discussion on "governance" is helpful to assert this claim. "Governance" became a key concept as a reflection of the restructuring process. For Gerry Stoker (2000, p. 3), this term implies "a concern with governing, achieving collective action in the realm of public affairs, in conditions where it is not possible to rest on recourse to the authority of the state." This definition gives us the idea that, firstly, governance is highly related to governing, but not using the state authority; and secondly, it is a way of collective action. Stoker (2000, p. 3) writes,

> Governance involves working across boundaries within the public sector or between the public sector and private or voluntary sectors. It focuses attention on a set of actors that are drawn from but also beyond the formal institutions of government. A key concern is processes of networking and partnership. Governance recognises the capacity to get things done which does not rest on the power of government to command or use its authority. Governing becomes an interactive process because no single actor has the knowledge and resource capacity to tackle problems unilaterally.

The passage above involves most of the terms that are key to governance. These are "public-private-voluntary sectors, networking, partnership, interaction." These terms have much to do with the trend that the discipline of public administration faces from the 1970s. The combination of these terms resulted in a shift from governing to governance. For Tarık Şengül (2001), the welfare state practices in the West regressed, and in place of this, there emerged some market mechanisms with the rise of the new right. Then, the nation-states started to be abraded with the search for increasing the mobility of capital on a global scale. The privatisation process could be accounted for the very same logic. The areas that were abandoned by the state started to be filled by the private sector. However, state-market distinction proved insufficient, and a third sector was transformed in local administrations. In this framework, a tripartite model came to the fore with the combination of local state, local capital and civil societal institutions. Since the local government could not embrace such a formation, this new genesis was entitled "governance" (Şengül, 2001, p. 52).

One could easily argue that there was no need to make a new conceptualisation to explain the new contours of local government if the essence had not changed. Since the market and civil society were not novel to governing process, the shift in emphasis did not eradicate the essence of governing.

Like Tarık Şengül, Bob Jessop (2000) argues for the failure of state-market separation, and he defines the process as "market failure". Hence, governance was a response to this failure in the form of public-private partnerships. Bob Jessop (2000, p. 11) points out that

> The 1970s saw growing assertions that state intervention was failing and that the state itself was in crisis. In the 1980s, the dominant neo-liberal response in Britain to this alleged crisis largely involved turning to the market and, to a lesser extent, community or family self-help. Successive Thatcher and Major governments promoted privatisation, liberalisation, deregulation, the use of market proxies in the residual state sector, cuts in direct taxes to enhance consumer choice, and internationalisation to promote capital mobility and the transfer of technology and "know-how". They also advocated an enterprise culture and popular capitalism to make civil society more market-friendly.

THE RATIONALITY OF GOVERNANCE AND POST-FORDISM

Regarding the rationality of governance, Jessop (2000, p. 16) identifies that "the rationality of governance is dialogic rather than monologic, pluralistic rather than monolithic, heterarchic rather than either hierarchic or anarchic." Goodwin and Painter (2000) raise another approach to the shift to "governance". While scholars such as Jessop and Şengül put the emphasis on "marketisation", Goodwin and Painter make use of the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism as an analytical tool. They write that

> Under Fordism, for a period, the provision of social welfare was functional for economic growth and development, and also brought a degree of social cohesion and stability. Under post-Fordism, international economic competitiveness would be paramount, and social policy would be subordinated to supply-side requirements, particularly the need to provide a flexible labour force with training matched to the requirements of private investors. In consequence, new forms of coordination between the public and private sectors (governance) would be required both to maintain the subordination of social need to economic competitiveness politically, and to ensure that supply-side provision was indeed tailored to the needs of the private sector. Welfare policy becomes decoupled from economic development and increasingly a mechanism for mitigating the social consequences of the restless search for competitive advantage. As it is no longer central to the mode of growth, welfare need no longer be provided or underwritten by the state, and new forms of coordination ('governance' again) can be introduced here too. (Goodwin and Painter, 2000, p. 42)

The reason for referring to the discussion of governance is to clarify how the restructuring process accommodates the essence of the previous structure within itself. In other words, the restructuring process does not make the essence more participatory. In order to conceal the failure of the new model proposed by neoliberalism, governance became an enforced theory to make things appear more "participation-friendly". Ascribing increasing roles to civil society organisations seems more participatory, but it has no meaning when considering current NGOs' professionalised, market-oriented, undemocratic and exclusionary nature. The discourses of flexibility, interaction, dialogue through civil society are all in line with this new enforced theory. However, the changing position of the masses within the new framework needs to be discussed since new forms of oppression and exploitation gained an appearance of participation. To put it in another way, this is an illusion of liberal democracy as it becomes inefficient in the context of post-modern thinking. Organisation theory should reflect such an approach more explicitly and assertively with the contribution of post-modern thinking.

PARTICIPATION WITH ETHICAL CONCERN

Denis Collins's (1997) approach is an example of how participation is used as a means to sustain efficient management. Collins (1997, p. 490) argues for the analogy between political/economic systems and organisational systems. For example, Collins (1997, p. 490) identifies authoritarianism with traditional management, communitarianism with participatory management and libertarianism with self-management. However, this theorisation is somewhat contradictory. He argues for the superiority of ethical arguments over economic arguments, and he is for participation due to the superiority of ethical concerns (Collins, 1997, p. 493).

Nevertheless, in the final analysis, participation helps economic goals, and this shows their primacy. Moreover, Stephan Cludts (1999) focuses on participation and organisation theory with ethical claims. However, the ethical aspect is only for justification of participation, and productivity is a major motivation. He writes that "the functionality of participation can be enhanced by extending participation to value-setting. In addition, we claim that such an extension can be justified, and is even desirable on moral grounds" (Cludts, 1999, p. 157).

PARTICIPATION AND SOME MODELS

At this point, we will elaborate on participation in administration with reference to some models. It is argued that the 1980s and 1990s accommodated two adversary trends. The first trend is more effective and flexible relations of work, and the second one is more participatory and based on cooperation in administrative affairs (Murat, 2001, p. 257). However, in our opinion, these two trends cannot be regarded as the adversary. Participation, cooperation, effectiveness and flexibility are the terms that are widely used in recent theories of organisation. In other words, an organisation could be participatory and flexible at the same time without any theoretical contradiction.

Participation in administration is a form of industrial democracy and indicates that workers can affect decision-making processes at various levels. For Eren (2000, p. 381), this requires three essential components. The first one implies the participation of workers in the decision-making processes of the organisation. Secondly, fulfilment of the psychological ego of workers with a democratic environment is essential. The third one is reaching administrative effectiveness and efficiency with the help of dialogue and cooperation between workers and administration.

The models are evaluated as successful if they reflect these components. These components show that the essence of modern theory dominates the literature on participation as well. The models are consultative model, participatory model and model of worker's control (Murat, 2001, p. 260). With the first model, the number of workers resisting the decisions diminishes. The second model provides an opportunity for workers and administration to act together. In the third model, not the participation of workers in the administration but their self-administration is perceived.

TYPES OF PARTICIPATION

The types of participation in administration are divided into two: indirect and direct. Types of indirect participation could be exemplified as workplace representative, trade union representative, and works councils-workplace committees. Quality circles, total quality management, and teamwork practices are examples of direct participation (Murat, 2001, pp. 262-263). According to Rees and Porter (1998, p. 169), "formal schemes of employee participation, whether indirect or direct, critically dependent on the enthusiasm and ability of line management." In our opinion, the reason for that is that all types of formal participation workers are subordinate in these processes.

For Murat (2001, p. 263), indirect participation is the most common type of participation due to the impossibility of participation of all members in the decision-making process in a large-scale organisation, and thus, participation is realised by the representatives of sub-levels. Worker representatives deliver the suggestions, requests and ideas of workers to the administration. However, this may result in disregarding the common interests of workers in the workplace (Murat, 2001, p. 263). Trade union representatives seem to be more effective for workers since they are more potent in bargains and prevent bifurcation among workers and their division of power (Murat, 2001, p. 264). On the other hand, employers accuse the participation of trade unions in the decision-making process and of having desires for extensive bureaucratisation (Murat, 2001, p. 265). In addition to workers and trade union representatives, works councils have the basic function of cooperation, and in almost all continental European countries except for Sweden and Finland, this institution works (Murat, 2001, p. 266).

Direct participation is thought to be an alternative to indirect participation aiming to establish common and mutual responsibility understanding and culture through dialogue and

reconciliation for efficiency, quality customer satisfaction (Murat, p. 2001, 268). For example, quality circles maintain the active participation of members with increasing commitment to the organisation (Scott-Ladd and Marshall, 2004, p. 646). Moreover, teamwork increases efficiency and flexibility by making it easier to accord with environmental pressures such as market, government policies and consumer demands.

CONCLUSION

The models and types of participation mentioned here project the essence that we have been repeating, i.e. efficiency and effectiveness. Arguments for job satisfaction, organisational commitment, flexibility, improving performance, ethical concerns, recognising diversity or opening doors for alternatives all have the basic motivations behind or inherent in themselves. This basic motivation does not change even when the context changes with post-modernity or any other contextual shift. From Follett to Gergen, Taylor to Fredrickson, Fordism to post-Fordism, etc., this does not change in fact.

In this paper, we mentioned the psychology-centred approach to participation to get rid of the psychic prison of organisations. Then, we moved on to an evaluation concerning the contradictory relationship between the monist paradigm and participation. Reference to concepts of Follett such as integrative unity, "power-with", and "creative experience" provided a ground to shift from monist paradigm to changing realities in the 1970s and 1990s. Thus, with the 1990s, post-modern thinking, globalisation and the global/national/local interaction resulted in a discussion on governance, which broadened the scale of participation in this paper. The rationality of governance and post-Fodism was touched upon in a critical manner. Then we looked at the soundness of ethical grounds of participation. In the last section, referring to the types of participation helped us to concretise the argument. Despite the broadness of discussion, participation proved to be fruitful in the context of organisation theory. We want to finish with a suggestion: To construct a theory of participation, there must be a full emancipation of paradigms and approaches from their inherent modernist incababilities, which result in the transfer of the same essence to every theorisation.

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