Organizational Micropolitics

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Contents

1 Micropolitics as a ‘new’ paradigm in management and organization science ........................................... 7
  1.1 Management and organization science and micropolitics: First observations and concerns ......................... 7
  1.2 Methodological challenges ......................................... 10
  1.3 Images and descriptions of micropolitics. ........................... 11
  1.4 Sources of power .................................................... 12
  1.5 Politics and the rational organization ............................ 17
  1.6 Organization suppresses the market ............................. 19

2 Power as a game ........................................................ 22
  2.1 Organizations as a result of games ............................... 22
  2.2 The individual ‘Program’ ........................................... 23
  2.3 Micropolitical tactics ............................................... 25
  2.4 Political games: Attempting a definition ....................... 26
  2.5 Micropolitical games: Empirical evidence ...................... 27

3 Analyzing micropolitics .................................................. 29
  3.1 The need to predict: The problem of small numbers .......... 29
  3.2 Watching You Play ............................................... 31
  3.3 Managing pluralistic organizations ............................. 36
  3.4 Losing innocence: The need for political expertise .......... 37

4 Micropolitics in the digital era: Some observations ........... 40
  4.1 The crisis and the emergence of new organizations .......... 40
  4.2 Watching you at work in the digital era ....................... 43

5 Strength and weakness of the micropolitical concept ......... 46

Solutions for exercises ................................................. 48
Bibliography ............................................................ 52
About the author ......................................................... 56
Chapter 1: 

Micropolitics as a ‘new’ paradigm in management and organization science

Learning outcomes

- To explore and challenge definitions and images of micropolitics in management and organization science.
- To introduce working definitions of micropolitics.
- To understand sources of power in organizations.
- To explore the relationship between micropolitics and the assumption of rational behavior.

1.1 Management and organization science and micropolitics: First observations and concerns

In organizations—so they say—life is raging. Political behavior plays a more significant role in organizations than is often recognized or admitted. We like to think of organizational behavior and structures as being characterized by some kind of order, rationality, transparency, collaboration, and trust. The reality, however, is often very much different. Competition sits alongside cooperation, information hiding is often more dominant than transparency and the exchange of data and information. We see self-interest, deceit, and cunning as well as the pursuit of moral ideas and high aspirations. Reason and logic must be seen and heard to prevail, and to think otherwise is to risk censure and ostracism. But initiatives are followed and decisions are taken to preserve and extend the power bases and influence of individuals and groups—as well as to deliver corporate benefits. Major decisions and significant changes are particularly liable to heighten political activity. When observing occurrences of either consensus or conflicts, behavior cannot be fully understood without a knowledge of the role of political motives, agendas, and strategies. Thus, micropolitics seems to be ubiquitous and yet, at the same time, hard to grasp. These features have always made it difficult for the student of organizational theory to tackle
About the author

Prof. Dr. Dr. Ayad Al-Ani is professor of Change Management and Consulting. Previously, he was rector and professor at the ESCP Europe Business School in Berlin and professor at the Hertie School of Governance, also in Berlin. Ayad Al-Ani currently investigates the change of organizations, economy and politics, as well as the simultaneous transformation in society, economics and education at the Alexander von Humboldt Institute for Internet and Society and is an affiliated member of the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies. He has worked for more than 20 years in international consulting firms. He was an Executive Partner with Accenture and director of the Vienna office.
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