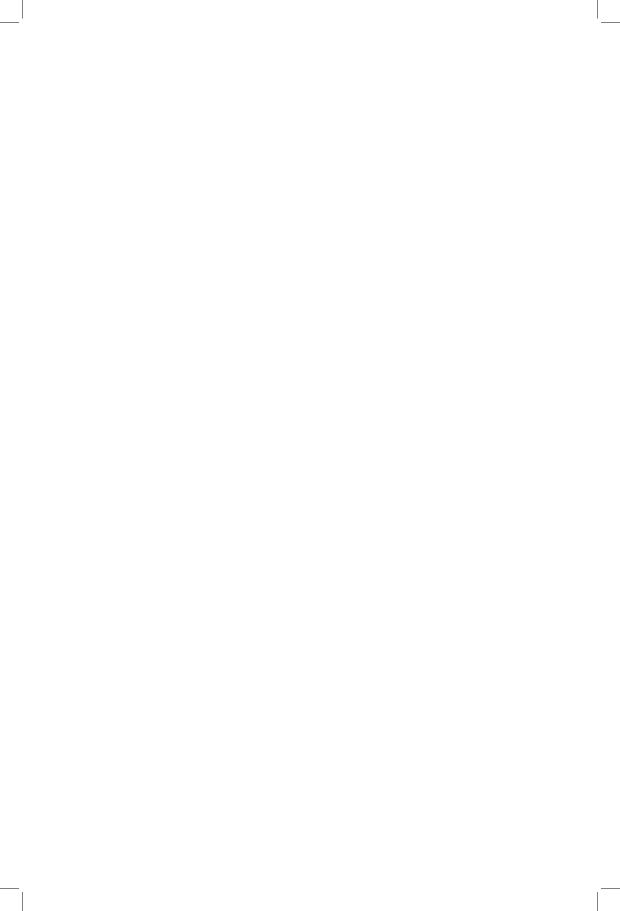# Part I

Spatial Vocabularies of Power

In the first part of the book, the term 'spatial *vocabulary* of power' is employed to convey the fact that in many recent studies of power and power relations, space is indeed considered important to its exercise. Space has a role to play in the overall description of how power manifests itself or how it is realized in different contexts and settings. But, as I argue in each of the following chapters, the understanding of spatiality outlined never really gets beyond a richer vocabulary in which power is either distributed or extended over space, or regarded as something which flows or has the ability to be all around us in some kind of immanent fashion. As a result, we are offered a documentation of the spatial aspects of power, rather than an examination of what it means to think through the diverse effects of power spatially.

If this sounds rather precious around the issue of space and spatiality, it is not my intention to dwell on the minutiae of differences between various authors' understanding of the latter. Rather I hope to be able to show how going beyond an understanding of the scalar landscape as one of fixed distances, well-defined proximities and uncomplicated reach has much to offer, not least for what it means to experience a brush with power.

2

Power in Things: Weber's Footnotes from the Centre

How often are we told that power is in the 'hands' of the professionals or some notable government figure or global institution, like the World Trade Organization? We may wish to quibble about the extent of their power or ask questions about who behind the scenes really has the power to set the agenda or fix solutions, but by and large it seems entirely reasonable to suggest that someone somewhere must have it. After all, it would seem a little odd to suggest that power has no reference point at all, no location to speak about.

The sense in which power is thought to have a location rests largely on the assumption that it is something that can be *held or possessed*, in much the same way as local political elites, managing directors and government ministers are said to possess the power to shape our lives. It then seems relatively straightforward to say that people and institutions 'hold' power and do so by drawing upon the range of abilities at their disposal. This view of power as tactile, as something that can almost be touched, is a compelling one. It is this quality which gives the impression that power may actually be located or stored in 'things' – in imperious or less authoritative institutions and the people who run them.

From this, it is but a short step to talking about powers held 'in reserve' or as a resource capability 'located' in the apparatus of institutions, be they public or private. On this account, power is considered as something which may be delegated or distributed, almost invariably from a centralized point to various authoritative locations across any given territory.

Bruno Latour (1986) has described this type of imagery as a 'centred' conception of power, where a central source is responsible for the diffusion of power within and across society. At its simplest, power is delegated or distributed in a relatively straightforward manner down through an organizational hierarchy under clear lines of authority, and there may be one of

two outcomes. Either the rules, regulations and constraints imposed by the centre are successful in meeting its goals or their organizational impact is minimized or deflected by the degree of resistance met. As such, power is located in 'things' in a relatively transparent fashion, although its effects are perhaps not as easy to unravel or anticipate as Latour would have us believe. Indeed, whilst it may be possible to locate with a reasonable degree of accuracy which institutions and which individuals or groups 'hold' power, it remains uncertain as to how, when and where that capacity will be exercised.

Another way of expressing this is to draw attention to the *dispositional* quality of power that defines such capacities. If, for example, an institution has the capacity to influence and control the actions of others in a particular way, that capability is regarded as a latent ability, rather than an observable exercise of its powers. The capacity to do something is clearly distinct from the actual exercise of that capability. In other words, the power that the institution 'holds' is potential: it is known to be possessed by the institution, but it is only exercised under certain conditions. From the longstanding powers bestowed on professional groupings such as those practising medicine or law, to the prestige and symbolic power attributed to banking and other financial institutions today, or to the disciplinary powers inherent in the nineteenth-century agencies of colonial control that enabled them to wield authority at great distances, the capacity for domination is generally conceived as present and capable of being exercised should the need arise or circumstances dictate. Such bodies are said to have the power vested in them, regardless of whether or not they actually use that power. It is this possession of power – as a property, relation, or attribute – that reveals its 'centred' location.

Also revealed by the above is the ease with which the language of power as capacity translates into the language of power as domination. The idea that individuals or institutions possess specific capacities to secure the compliance of others can be thought about as just so many ways of achieving dominance over others. Such an instrumental view of power, whereby one's will is imposed on the actions of others, is strongly reminiscent of the line of thought that runs from Thomas Hobbes to Max Weber. On this instrumental view, in any situation of conflict or competition, those with the greater amount of power are often assumed to prevail over those with less. Indeed, writers like Barry Hindess (1996) take this quantitative conception of power as the cornerstone of any view of power which regards it as a general capacity. One side always gains at the expense of another, or so it would seem.

It is not necessary to adopt a quantitative conception of power, however, to adhere to a 'centred' conception of it, where the capacity to dominate is delegated or distributed over space to secure certain goals. In this chapter,

attention is drawn to the – often implicit – spatial vocabulary of power that is entailed whenever power is represented as a capacity and to the limited understanding of the relationship between power and space that is involved. At worst, power is conceived as something which radiates out from an identifiable centre, triggering an effective capacity for control. Once you have the measure of power and a grasp of its capacity to administer, control and fix a territory and its population, the rest, it seems, amounts to little more than a series of footnotes from the centre. And even where power is no longer seen to operate in quite such a straightforward top-down or centre-out fashion, as for example in recent accounts of 'multi-level' or 'multi-tier' governance, I would argue that it rarely adds up to more than a reorganization of geographical scale, where power is more or less redistributed intact across the scalar landscape.

Before we consider these spatial issues, however, it is important to be clear about what is meant when power is referred to as a *capacity*.

Power as a Capacity

As mentioned above, the notion that power may take the form of a capacity which enables its holder to secure certain outcomes or realize certain objectives is a dispositional quality. In whatever way we may wish to think about it, it reduces to the proposition that power can be held without being exercised. In practice, however, the two aspects are often conflated, with the possession of power only readily acknowledged in its exercise.[1] It is not uncommon, for example, to 'read off' the power of the multinational 'giants' in the oil and petroleum industry on the basis of their past performance. The likes of Shell Oil, Texaco and Exxon Mobil, for instance, are assumed to be powerful on the basis of what they have done, or are alleged to have done, around the globe – dictate the terms of negotiation with host countries, play off local interests, dominate particular markets – regardless of whether or not they are presently engaged in such activities. It matters not one jot that the operational headquarters of such companies may fail to

1   In many ways, the classic political science debates on power in the 1960s and 1970s which ran from Robert Dahl (1957, 1961) to Steven Lukes (1974) and beyond revolved around Dahl's conflation of the possession and the exercise of power. For Dahl, the observable exercise of power – in the key political decisions taken – was all that really mattered, although he implicitly assumed that ruling groups possess power on some basis. In contrast, Lukes and others pointed to the latent interests and actions which influenced outcomes beyond the arena of observable conflict. The dispositional quality of power, however, was not a consideration as such in the debates, even though it was evident in outline. See Ted Benton (1981) for a critique of Lukes and projection of a dispositional view in terms of a realist philosophy.

recognize such 'leverage'; the point is they are deemed to possess it irre-spective of where or indeed whether they use it. Their power is always already present, as a 'thing-like' quality capable of being marshalled and exercised. In this instance, power is likely to be attributed to such com-panies on the basis of their size and assumed performance.

With bureaucratic power the logic is likely to be different, in so far as power is deemed to be held on the basis of position within an organization rather than on any notion of institutional size. The managers in a hospital or their professional equivalent in a high-technology or oil company occupy their decision-making roles by virtue of their technical expertise and competence to do the job. Authority comes with the position and with it the structural limits of what an official may dictate or prescribe. There is nothing monolithic about the capabilities involved; in so far as power is exercised, this happens in a downward fashion within the strict limits of the rules laid down by the bureaucratic institution.

The capacity to act or dominate, however, is not restricted to institutions. Social groups may exercise their power in ways which serve to exclude or check the freedom of movement of others. The construction of gated communities in the inner city, for example, complete with high security walls and remote-controlled gates, can be understood as but the latest in a long line of instances of the middle classes flexing their economic capabil-ities to protect their lifestyles and differentiate themselves from the urban 'mass'. The capacity to exclude, to 'purify' a piece of inner-city space, is thus a possibility that the middle classes have at their disposal – should they choose to exercise it.

In each of the above contexts, however, the mere fact that corporate and bureaucratic institutions, along with the middle classes, share a set of cap-abilities tells us little about what these abilities comprise, or how institutions or people became endowed with them, or even that they refer to the same 'thing'. The notion of power as a capacity may, for example, refer to a set of causal properties intrinsic to the very nature of what it is to be a monolithic multinational corporation. Or it may refer to a range of interests attributed to affluent social groupings. Or indeed, the meaning of the term can be al-together looser, with the intention of conveying through metaphor some-thing that is merely 'held' by social groups or institutions. As a means of disentangling the conceptual issues involved, it may be helpful to draw upon Barry Hindess's forthright assessment of power conceived as a capacity.

Scripted power plays?

Much of Hindess's *Discourses of Power* (1996) is given over to a critique of the view that power can be conceived in terms of a capacity which enhances

those who possess it. Eschewing any notion of power-in-general in favour of a more heterogeneous conception based upon Foucault's techniques of self-regulation (discussed in chapter 4), Hindess identifies a number of shortcomings in the notion of power considered as a general capacity. Leaving to one side for the moment his metaphysical worry that there are those who appear to attribute a common substance to such a capacity, a kind of 'essence of effectiveness', Hindess's main concern is that the description of power as a capacity lends itself to a quantitative and deterministic conception of power:

> If to have power is always to possess the essence of effectiveness in some definite quantity, then those who possess a greater quantity of that essence obviously will be more effective than those with a lesser quantity . . . This view of power as a quantitative and mechanical phenomenon which determines the capacity of actors to realize their will or to secure their interests has been enormously influential in the modern period . . . The great attraction of this conception of power as quantitative capacity for so many social scientists is that it appears to promise an easy means of identifying who has power and who has not. (1996: 26–7)

Related closely to the idea that power is a quantitative capacity, therefore, is the assumption that it is possible to determine in advance who wins and who loses. If more power prevails over less, then the outcome of distributive struggles would appear to be simply a matter of the summation of the respective powers involved. Drawing upon Max Weber's definition of power to illustrate the asymmetrical nature of power relationships which flow from this assessment of quantitative power, Hindess concludes that power, on this view, may be used to command and control others:

> People employ power in their dealings with things and in their dealings with each other. In the latter case, this conception of power implies that the wishes of those with more power will normally prevail over the wishes of those with less. It is for this reason that Weber identifies power with 'the chance of a man or a number of men to realize their own will even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action' (Weber, 1978, p. 926). This conception of power as simple capacity suggests that there will be an unequal relation between those who employ power for their own purposes and those who are subject to its effects. Power, in this sense, may be used as an instrument of domination. (1996: 2)

A link is thus established between the differential capacities of actors, the summation of their powers, a tally of who gains and who loses, and domination in general. The apparent ease of this logic, however, sits uneasily alongside the earlier observation that the potential capacity for

domination may also be understood as context dependent; that is, subject to prevailing conditions and circumstances. Part of the difficulty, as we shall see, rests with Hindess's insistence that any talk of parties holding more or less power brings to the fore an assessment of their quantifiable essence or capacity.

What is perhaps rather misleading is that Hindess should consider the term 'capacity' in relation to power as being almost univocal in its meaning. On this account, anyone who refers to power as a differential capacity, whether intentionally or not, is forced to endorse a quantifiable view of power. As such, the likes of Anthony Giddens and Michael Mann are reprimanded by Hindess for their interpretation of power as a set of capabilities which make it possible for individuals and organizations to achieve their desired goals. The fact that Giddens acknowledges that power can be conceived as a capacity to realize intended outcomes, and that such a capacity can 'make a difference' to eventual outcomes, is taken by Hindess as evidence of a simple, quantitative conception of power. Yet both Giddens and Mann in their writings conceive of power in a more rounded way than that, recognizing that power may have a collective as well as a distributional sense. Indeed, both writers recognize that power can be exercised *with* others, as well as *over* others.[2] Moreover, as will be argued in the following chapter, powers gained through association are not necessarily gained at the expense of others and are therefore less susceptible to simple 'more or less' equations of power.

Interestingly, where Hindess does make an exception to the sense of capacity as a quantifiable substance, it is the collective conceptions of power advanced by Hannah Arendt and Talcott Parsons which are drawn upon to illustrate power as a capacity bestowed by the consent of others.[3] Here it would seem that whenever the capacity of a particular authority to act is legitimized by consent, the quantities of power involved are less decisive to

2   Both Giddens (1977, 1984) and Mann (1986, 1993) recognize that power can be something that is mobilized to achieve collective ends rather than something inherent in social relationships which always works to the advantage of one party and to the disadvantage of the other. Indeed, both acknowledge the influence of the earlier work of Parsons on power as a 'generalized means' to further collective goals, although neither subscribes to Parsons's consensual approach to power. These points are spelt out further in chapter 3.

3   As indicated, Parsons's (1963) approach to power will be considered in the following chapter. Arendt's (1958, 1970) work will also be considered there, in particular her view of power as something produced by individuals 'acting in concert' to achieve common goals on the basis of shared understandings. It is indicative of Hindess's rather blinkered view of power as a capacity that Arendt's positive conception of power is acknowledged and her contribution briefly noted under the heading of power as a 'legitimate capacity' (Hindess 1996: 10–11).

the outcome. The assumption quietly at work here is that when power rests upon consent, it is less likely to be conceived as a property or an essence which is then capable of predetermining the outcome of distributive struggles. There is thus less call for a simple calculation of the quantities of power involved. The question never seriously posed by Hindess, however, is why, when there is talk of more or less power, this should automatically call forth a notion of capacity as a fixed essence capable of measurement.

The crucial point of all this is that the instrumental language of domination and 'power over' is far more flexible in its meaning than Hindess is prepared to allow for. It simply does not follow that to talk about groups or individuals who are more powerful than others is to ascribe to them automatically an 'essence of effectiveness'. Power as a capacity may be *attributed* to individuals on the basis of custom and practice, as Max Weber recognized; it can be *inscribed* as a causal force in oppressive and unequal relationships, as Karl Marx demonstrated; or it can be *implied* in a loose metaphorical sense, as one might say that advertising agencies 'hold' a capacity for seduction through their use of images and meaning. In each of these different senses of capacity there is nothing fixed or predetermined about the subsequent outcomes, and there is nothing to suggest that differential amounts of power are there simply to test our skills of addition.

Hindess, it would seem, considers that whenever power is referred to as a differential capacity there is some kind of trickery involved, whereby the exercise of power is merely the scripted expression of an inscribed capacity or essence. This is clearly unhelpful in the case of contemporary theorists of power such as Anthony Giddens and Michael Mann, who operate with a more differentiated conception of power. It is also radically misplaced to include reference to Max Weber as someone who subscribed to a conception of power as 'simple capacity'. More than most he understood the various combinations of ways in which power may be conferred and the various claims to legitimacy involved. Accounts which proclaim that power is a capacity possessed by individuals, groups and institutions alike can be interpreted in a loose, metaphorical sense or, at the other extreme, as an inscribed relational property. Only in the latter case should Hindess have any cause for concern, although even then quantitative scripts of power are not really what is at issue.

Potential capabilities and contextual outcomes

One of the most thorough accounts of power as an inscribed capacity is to be found in Jeffrey Isaac's *Power and Marxist Theory: A Realist View* (1987). Drawing upon the outlines of a realist philosophy of science developed by

Rom Harré and Ed Madden and Roy Bhaskar in the 1970s,[4] Isaac is probably the iconic figure that Hindess has in mind when he lambasts those who view power as a generalized capacity or, more pointedly, as an 'essence of effectiveness'. Implicit within this criticism is that power is conceived as some kind of unchanging, uniform substance which lies close beneath the surface of the daily life of individuals, social groups or institutions. If this were true of those who subscribed to a notion of power as inherent in the bodies of institutions, then this would indeed be a damning critique, but *contra* Hindess this is simply not the case.

Following Harré and Madden (1975), to attribute a power to any one thing is to say something about its constitution; that is, what it is capable of doing by virtue of its intrinsic nature. On this view, power is a causal property bestowed by the very structure of relations of which it is a part. Certain things are disposed to act in certain ways by virtue of their constitution, although whether or not such powers are realized is dependent upon prevailing conditions. Dispositions in this sense, to adopt a line of reasoning from Bhaskar (1975), may be possessed unexercised, exercised unrealized or realized unperceived, depending upon the context. Translated into the domain of social relations, it is the *enduring* nature of socially constituted relationships which Isaac locates as the basis of power and the source of an agent's capability:

> What I am suggesting is that a generalizing social science takes as its primary object of study those enduring social relationships that distribute power to social agents. Individuals certainly possess idiosyncratic powers. But what makes these socially significant is the way they are implicated in more enduring relationships. It makes perfect sense to claim that 'David Rockerfeller is a powerful man.' But a social theory of power must explain what kind of social relations exist and how power is distributed by these relations such that it is possible for David Rockerfeller to have the power that he has. To do this is not to deny that it is *he* who possesses this power, nor to deny those personal attributes determining the particular manner in which he exercises it. It is simply to insist that the power individuals possess has social conditions of

4   In particular, Isaac draws upon Harré and Madden's *Causal Powers* (1975) and Bhaskar's *Realist Theory of Science* (1975) and *The Possibility of Naturalism: A Philosophical Critique of the Contemporary Human Sciences* (1979). In the 1980s, Bhaskar went on to elaborate his particular version of transcendental or 'critical' realism in such books as *Scientific Realism and Human Emancipation* (1986) and *Reclaiming Reality: A Critical Introduction to Contemporary Philosophy* (1989). In the 1990s he developed a 'dialectical critical realism' (Bhaskar 1993, 1994) in which he distinguishes between power as a transformative capacity intrinsic to action and power as the capacity to get one's way despite resistance – that is, domination in general. See Andrew Sayer (1992) for a counter-argument to the accusations of essentialism within a realist philosophy of science.

existence, and that it is these conditions that should be the primary focus of theoretical analysis. (1987: 80–1)

For Isaac, then, it is the durable character of social relationships rather than their uniform or unchanging nature which endows an individual or group with power. There is no interest here in revealing a single, fundamental 'essence of effectiveness' in those who are said to possess power. Following Bhaskar (1975, 1986), Isaac is not seeking 'ultimate explanations' of the distribution of power, but rather fallible attempts to convey in succeeding accounts the enduring structure of relations which distribute capacities to some agencies but not others. As the nature and the make-up of groups and organizations change, as the power of institutions waxes and wanes, the task of analysis is to trace their altered social conditions of existence and to identify the new elements which constitute them. Invariably such a task is fraught with difficulty as an attempt is made to separate the potentially enduring characteristics from those of a less durable nature, but the aim is quite clear.[5]

Another way to think about what is meant by 'enduring' in this instance is to consider an example: that of the institutional power associated with the oil multinationals mentioned earlier, or with any of the software or electronics 'giants'. Multinationals, although not all big in terms of size, are involved in cross-border activities, and it is precisely because they are capitalized, multi-country operations that they have the power to switch investments from one location to another. Thus the ability to relocate operations or to exercise powers of acquisition and merger across national borders may be said to stem from the intrinsic nature of multinationals. However, to maintain such powers over time – and indeed space – a multinational engaged in the production of microchips, for instance, would not only have to remain profitable, but also have to be able to reproduce its own conditions of existence – in terms of technology, knowledge, capital and the like – often in new geographical locations. Power, in this sense, is said to be accumulated over extensive regions of space and time and deployed on the basis of 'reserves' which are continually reproduced by the firm. If such a firm fails to reproduce its capabilities or to develop others, then it loses its 'store' of power and thus ceases to be a multinational force.

5   Indeed, a distinctive feature of Bhaskar's work since *The Possibility of Naturalism* is the incorporation of a transformational model of social activity which stresses the mediated and reproduced nature of social structures. It is, of course, intensely difficult to establish the limits of mediation, although if anything there is a tendential determinism in Bhaskar's assessment of inscribed or structural powers which makes it difficult to talk about 'generated' powers in the way that Giddens (1984), for example, is able to in his theory of structuration.

Power, on this view, is clearly 'centred' in multinational institutions; it is something that they are considered to possess in relation to nation states or national workforces, although only for as long as they are able to reproduce themselves. It is not, then, an unchanging substance which sits just below the economic surface of firms, but rather a sustained capacity which is maintained in a wide, yet not unlimited, series of locations. Moreover, power is not conceived merely in terms of size, as if it were nothing more than a measurable component. Naturally there are 'big' multinationals and 'small' ones, which can be distinguished on the basis of the size of their assets, sales and employment numbers, but the difference in their capabilities is not a simple reflection of such quantitative characteristics. It is not merely the amount of capital at the disposal of multinationals which is at issue, but their technological and organizational capacities too, as well as the network of relations which constitute them. There is a qualitative side to this kind of power which is glossed over and ignored if it is presumed that power is merely a uniform substance capable of measurement.

It is obvious, I hope, from the above that the powers of multinationals, or for that matter the causal powers of any body or institution, can be held without being exercised or displayed. To speak of a 'reserve' or a 'store' of power in this context is thus to convey the impression that it is a capacity which may be drawn upon or used as and when the appropriate circumstances prevail. More realistically, as Isaac stresses, the successful exercise of such powers is a complex, contingent affair in a number of respects.

In the first place, particular institutions or groups with their own respective powers will stand in a multitude of relations to other agencies who may also possess a specific combination of powers. The specific powers of, say, an international finance house in New York, London or Frankfurt may rest upon a particular form of capital whose nature is to be liquid and mobile, but the ability of that house to achieve certain objectives will be enhanced, modified or deflected by the ensemble of relationships of which it is a part. Other financial and commercial institutions in those cities as well as in other international financial centres, together with their respective government bodies, will, through their actions, have a complicating effect upon the 'store' of powers held by any one institution and how they are exercised. In such a situation, neither the exercise of joint powers nor the annulment of particular capacities can be ruled out.

A similar set of contingent effects comes into play when the same international finance house extends the reach of its powers across national borders by distributing certain regulatory, disciplinary and risk-taking powers throughout its regional organizational structure. The delegation of powers from the centre, the distribution of power relations within the organization to achieve certain objectives in the mobile world of finance, is necessarily an open-ended affair simply because all outcomes are

conditional. They are conditional upon the result of their interactions with other agencies and institutions in various global regions and also on the particular circumstances and conditions in which such powers may be realized. In short, there are always *other* capabilities and contexts to contend with.

Whatever credence we may wish to give Hindess's argument, it is evident that in Isaac's formulation of power as an inscribed capacity there is no sense in which the eventual outcomes of power plays are a scripted expression of some underlying essence. On the contrary, the intrinsic capabilities of roving multinationals or global finance houses are considered to be potential powers which may or may not be realized given the wide array of circumstances possible. It is in this sense that power, to stress an earlier point, may be referred to as dispositional in nature. There is always a likelihood or tendency for any individual, group or institution to act in certain ways because of the social relations which bind and reproduce them over space and time. Whilst such an analysis fails to address the scope and reach of such powers, concentrating instead on their distribution over space, it does none the less produce a 'thing-like' representation of power as a centralized capability which then radiates out through the surrounding social space. As such, there is little ambiguity as to its location.

It may be useful at this point to recall that there are other, more ambiguous ways in which power as a capacity may be represented, from the general idea that someone or some event has the capacity to change our lives to the somewhat firmer notion that power may be employed to advance certain interests at the expense of others. What is striking about this imagery, however, is that regardless of the tangibility of the representations involved, power as a capacity always seems to call forth a particular *modality* of power: namely, that of domination. This logic operates in Hindess's critique, but it is by no means peculiar to his assessment of power as a capacity.

Domination as a Mode of Power

Perhaps one of the main reasons for the deeply embedded association of power with domination in much social theory is that, Weber's influence notwithstanding, it is *the* plausible language of power. While Hindess readily talks about domination in terms of winners and losers, the word also invokes a sense of control, constraint, compliance or imposition in which the powerful are often counterposed to the weak. In the context of less stark oppositions, domination none the less conveys a sense in which the reach of multinationals, for example, or the apparatus of the state possesses the capacity to impose their will on others in a variety of

situations. In all such cases power is conceived as a vertical relationship; power is something that is held *over* others.

Asymmetries of power

In making a case for the structural nature of 'power over' others, Isaac locates the asymmetry in the unequal distribution of power in society. As he puts it, 'relations of domination and subordination comprise a subset of power relations, where the capacities to act are not distributed symmetrically to all parties to the relationship' (1987: 84). Some people and some groups have more power than others, not by accident or by a series of fortunate events, but by virtue of the structure of relations of which they are a part. The capacity to secure advantage thus stands in relation to the potential loss realized by others who, in one way or another, are enmeshed in the same web of asymmetrical relationships.

Rather than a sporadic or random event in which domination takes place, therefore, the ability to secure the compliance of others can be seen in, for example, the vertical relationships of bureaucratic control exercised by managers and supervisors over those further down the chain of command; in the impersonal structures of political domination exercised by a unitary state over its peoples and territories; and in the relationships between global institutions such as the IMF and developing economies attempting to pull themselves out of poverty. In each of these scenarios, it is the relationship itself, rather than any particular actions taken by the dominant party, that potentially secures the compliance of the weaker party. For Isaac, this instrumental ability to direct and to constrain the practices of others is precisely what Weber had in mind when he spoke of domination as the 'authoritarian power of command'. Recruiting Weber to his argument, Isaac quotes approvingly one of Weber's more explicit definitions of domination:

> *domination* will thus mean the situation in which the manifested will (*command*) of the *ruler* or rulers is meant to influence the conduct of one or more others (*the ruled*) and actually does influence it in such a way that their conduct to a socially relevant degree occurs as if the ruled had made the content of the command the maxim of their conduct for its very own sake. Looked upon from the other end, this situation will be called *obedience*. (1987: 84; in original, Weber 1978: 946)

If the language of command and obedience, ruler and ruled, is taken to be the defining feature of domination, then clearly the parties tied to one another are, as observed, unequally related. Now it could be argued that

because of the unequal distribution of power in society, it follows that any pay-offs to the parties involved in terms of privileges and benefits will be similarly skewed. This, you may recall, is the basis of Hindess's argument. While such an outcome is entirely possible, it is none the less far from inevitable. But there is a deeper concern lurking at the base of this assumption: namely, that domination is a zero-sum game.

A zero-sum game is one in which the scores of the winner and the loser sum to zero. There is only a fixed number of resources in play and thus one side's gain is another side's loss. In Isaac's account, despite the stress upon the contingent character of power plays, such a zero-sum game appear to frame the analysis. The successful exercise of power in vertical relationships, notwithstanding the manoeuvres performed by the different sides involved, would appear to benefit one side at the expense of another. Whether the loss or gain in absolute terms is one of power or one of benefits is unclear, but there is no mistaking the fact that, say, for workers to challenge management successfully or for the less developed economies to achieve some kind of progress, there has to be some give elsewhere in the (closed) system. In sum, the needs of the different sides are considered to be mutually exclusive.

Yet there is nothing about an asymmetrical view of power which requires that the pay-offs sum to zero. The outcome of power plays can be positive-sum, with no absolute winners or losers, or indeed negative sum, where losses of some kind are recorded by all players involved. In fact, all the unequal distribution of power signifies, as Weber well knew, is the *greater degree* to which one party may influence the conduct of others – nothing more, nothing less. Indeed, as Weber set down in his *Economy and Society* one of the most influential and closely reasoned accounts of domination as an asymmetrical mode of power, it is worth noting exactly what he did have to say on the matter, not least for the clarity of the ideas expressed.

Weber on domination

Significantly, for Weber domination represents only one among a number of different modes of power; it was for him a 'special case of power' which in its broadest sense involved the will of one party influencing 'that of the other even against the other's reluctance' (1978: 947). While there are any number of structures of domination shaping and influencing spheres of social action, from, as Weber noted, 'the social relations in a drawing room as well as in the market, from the rostrum of a lecture-hall as well as from the command post of a regiment, from an erotic or charitable relationship as well as from scholarly discussion or athletics' (1978: 943), the general characteristic of domination is that it involves some degree of *imposition and*

constraint. It is important to be clear what Weber meant by domination here.

Situations of domination in this broad sense may involve relationships close at hand or across vast distances, but in either case the imposition of a form of conduct according to a set of particular interests is characteristic. The City of London in this general sense, as a powerful financial centre with a distinct and specialized position in the circuits of money capital, could be seen to influence the policy actions of the UK's political parties, departments of government, and industrialists alike in line with their own interests, despite the reluctance of the last to comply and without the slightest hint of obligation on their part. The language of influence in this context is thus far less restrictive than Isaac's selective interpretation of Weber's account of domination as command and obedience, ruler and ruled. There are no clear relations of interdependence involved between the City and other interested parties, and no formal lines of constraint, only 'objective circumstances' which realistically make it difficult for the other parties to do anything other than meet the interests of those in a dominant position. Above all, Weber stresses the fact that all parties involved are free to act in all kinds of ways, yet in following their rational self-interest they find themselves forced to fall into line. Although free in terms of their conduct, therefore, in practice those who are 'objectively' constrained have no choice other than to submit to the dominant will.

None of this is meant to imply that Isaac deliberately misinterpreted Weber's concept of domination. On the contrary, Isaac merely adopted Weber's 'narrow' or 'formal' sense of domination, which reflected Weber's own preoccupation with all matters of administration and organization in society. Reference to domination in terms of the power to command and the duty to obey represents a more structured, authoritarian form of organization which is tightly bound by rules and regulations, and in which there is little or no scope for the influence and interests of independent parties. Thus in contrast to Weber's broad sense of domination, in this more bureaucratic sense there is no question of one party making it difficult for the other not to comply with the first's wishes. On this restricted view of domination, there are no 'objective circumstances' which make submission the only realistic option. Instead, the asymmetry of relations is clearly inscribed in a vertical chain of command between superordinates and subordinates, where obedience is achieved through custom and practice or through the instrumental calculation of advantage.

Domination in this formal sense thus represents a more tightly orchestrated means of influencing the conduct of others. If constraint and imposition signify the core characteristics of domination, then *close discipline, continuous control* and *supervision* represent the organizational means by which domination may be achieved. The validity of such means, however,

is by no means self-evident according to Weber, especially if domination is to be maintained on a continuous basis. For that to happen, such means have to be perceived as legitimate:

> Experience shows that in no instance does domination voluntarily limit itself to the appeal to material or affectual or ideal motives as a basis for continuance. In addition every such system attempts to establish and to cultivate the belief in its legitimacy. But according to the kind of legitimacy which is claimed, the type of obedience, the kind of administrative staff developed to guarantee it, and the mode of exercising authority, will all differ fundamentally. Equally fundamental is the variation in effect. (1978: 213)

So, if the exercise of domination in the formal sense is to be maintained, it has to be clothed in legitimacy. As is well known, this was the role Weber bequeathed to *authority*. Unlike domination, however, authority is conceded, not exercised in a straightforward sense. It is something that is claimed and, once recognized, serves as a means to secure a willingness to comply. It is not, as is sometimes said, simply a type of domination. To be sure, authority for Weber can be read as legitimate domination, but on closer inspection it reveals a particular means of securing assent within 'structures of domination' (1978: 941). Importantly for the argument of the book as a whole, domination should be seen as *one* among other modalities of power, one which can be used selectively in combination with other modes such as coercion to establish and maintain a structure of domination. In contrast to domination, the hallmark of authority, as Hannah Arendt pointed out, is 'unquestioning recognition', whose greatest enemy 'is contempt, and the surest way to undermine it is laughter' (1970: 45).

The distinction between domination and authority as separate but often related modalities of power also points up the difficulties of sustaining domination over time and indeed across great distances. The capacity to impose a set of personal or institutional interests on a continuous basis, potentially across different regions, is at best limited unless recourse to other modes such as authority is sought. One of Weber's preferred illustrations of precisely this point is the role that large central banks or major credit institutions can play in exercising a 'dominating' influence over the capital markets, in the first instance by virtue of their monopolistic position, and latterly by extending their 'powers' on a continuous basis through authoritative structures of control and regulatory supervision (1978: 943–4). In this way, such financial institutions may formalize the practices of domination by clearly setting out the obligations involved and the requirements to submit to them. Imposition in this context is considered to be particularly effective, because of not only the capacity of the institutions to

exercise a general constraining influence on the conduct of the market but also the manner in which that influence may be consolidated through techniques of discipline and control and objectified in the form of authority.

Seen in this way, it is not altogether surprising that power, domination and authority are often treated as synonyms. In particular, the deeply embedded association of power and domination, however much we may pull them apart on reflection, has the ability, as Arendt warned, to reduce all kinds of power plays to the 'business of domination' (1970: 44). Authority, however, is not the same thing as domination, and as will be stressed throughout this book, neither is coercion, manipulation or seduction for that matter. Whilst there will always be some slippage of meaning between the different terms, the different modalities of power imply different forms of social relation which entail quite specific effects, as was argued in the introductory chapter. To conflate their different meanings, or worse, to reduce their specific effects to domination, is to misunderstand the diverse ways in which power achieves its effects.

Take the issue of cultural domination as it is often perceived in the case of the film industry or in advertising. The former, in the guise of Hollywood, is frequently portrayed as an agency of cultural domination. On a number of occasions in recent years, for example, French politicians have accused the US film industry of promoting a less than subtle form of Americanization: Hollywood images are said to promote uniform cultural tastes, guiding behaviour from the outside and spreading a particular cultural form like a sheen across the globe. Above all, they are perceived as a direct threat to French culture, an imposition on the French way of life. Clearly, there is a sense here in which the conduct of the French people is open to an external influence. The question, however, is whether or not such an influence is tantamount to domination. If it were domination, in Weber's general sense of the term, then the degree of constraint would have to verge on the monopolistic. Regardless of the percentage of box-office takings in France derived from Hollywood films, the US film industry would have to be in a position whereby it could 'prescribe' what is and what is not shown in French cinemas and on French television. In short, it would have to have a near monopoly on the French visual media through its control of the distribution channels which would make it difficult for audiences to view anything other than US products. If, however, French viewers on the contrary are not considered to have been stripped of all their autonomy, but to be free to opt for different visual fare, then the mode of power involved is closer to that of *seduction*.

Seduction, following Lipovetsky (1994), leaves open the possibility that a subject can opt out of the action. In contrast to domination, in either its general or narrow sense, seduction works at the level where choices are possible. It may encourage a desire for certain kinds of image and film,

redirecting curiosity in the process, but it does so in a context where reflection and choice are both present. In the absence of cultural prescription, and no matter how gentle the methods of subversion involved, there is always the possibility of refusal or indifference. In making the case for advertising as a seductive rather than a dominating force, Lipovetsky stresses the limited effect of advertising as an *intended* effect:

> Advertising influences, but it does not threaten; it suggests, but it does not seek doctrinal domination; it functions without invoking Manicheanism or inducing guilt, in the belief that individuals can correct their own behaviour almost on their own, once they are aroused to responsible awareness by the media . . . Advertising does not take on the task of completely redefining the human race; it exploits embryonic tendencies that are already present by making them more attractive to people. Far from signifying an exponential race towards total domination, the spread of advertising reflects the reinforcement of a modality of power with minimal ideology and with strictly limited goals. (1994: 164–5)

Seduction as a mode of power, therefore, involves a renunciation of total domination, not its propagation; it is a modest form of power which is intended to act upon those who have the ability to opt out. To consider advertising as a form of cultural domination is then to misunderstand the ways in which the advertising industry seeks to influence social conduct. There is no orchestration of tastes along monopolistic or bureaucratic lines which disciplines the subject. Similarly, there is no sense in which *coercion*, the ability to influence conduct through the threat of negative sanctions, operates as an intended strategy of advertising. Obedience exacted through the threat of force, for example, is not conducive to advertising as a communicative medium. No more so, for that matter, is *manipulation*, where the concealment of intent serves to bring about the desired outcome. Whilst it is certainly the case that advertising may seek to influence by making veiled suggestions about its promotions or selectively restricting what is known about them, the process works on choices, on curiosity, not on an unwitting audience. The manipulation of needs is claimed rather than known to be an effect of advertising, as indeed is cultural domination. In considering the power of advertising or indeed the Hollywood film industry, therefore, it is instructive to note that domination is not the only mode of power held *over* others. There are any number of different ways in which one party may influence the conduct of others, with or without their resistance, but these ways are not all reducible to Weber's broad sense of domination or indeed to any looser sense of imposition.

Weber's preoccupation with a more 'technical' sense of domination, with the practices of discipline, control and supervision, reflected, as noted, his

interests in bureaucratic forms of administration and organization. It was not intended as a general model of power, although he clearly argued the case that structures of domination are pervasive in the broadest of senses. While an emphasis upon the significance of different modes of power is central to the arguments of this book, it is, however, instrumental relationships of power, in particular that of domination, which inform most 'centred' conceptions. How that capacity to influence the actions of others is thought to be executed over space at distances far removed from the centre is one of the issues to which we now turn.

Centred Powers, Distributed Capabilities

As I see it, when a person or an institution, or a social class for that matter, is said to 'have' power, an implicit spatial vocabulary of power is invoked. Whether attributed to them, inscribed in them on the basis of structured relationships, or loosely implied, the possession of power itself identifies the location. The identification of so many different centres of power, however, does not exhaust that vocabulary. For Weber, and indeed Isaac, supervisory and regulating powers are distributed across organizations, for instance, on the basis of allotted roles and bureaucratic structures. Each person occupies a certain position in the vertical chain of command and each has a specific task to perform which can be executed only on the basis of orders received from above. The discretion that an official may exercise, in relation to others who have to carry out their demands or in relation to those on the receiving end of such demands, is strictly circumscribed. Strict adherence to the rules and procedures embedded within an institution is thought to avoid any elements of personal favour entering into the bureaucratic relationship.

   In this case, the powers of the centre are said to be delegated through a variety of bureaucratic positions and realized in the form of administration. Domination in this context appears to be transmitted from the centre through a hierarchy of commands passed intact from the hands of one official to the next, so to speak. According to Weber:

> In the great majority of cases he is only a small cog in a ceaselessly moving mechanism which prescribes to him an essentially fixed route of march. The official is entrusted with specialized tasks, and normally the mechanism cannot be put into motion or arrested by him, but only from the very top. The individual bureaucrat is, above all, forged to the common interest of all the functionaries in the perpetuation of the apparatus and the persistence of its rationally organized domination. (1978: 988)

Not all forms of centralized power are transmitted in such a rigid, bureau-cratic fashion, of course. But the sense in which power is extended or distributed *intact* is one that I would argue characterizes most 'centred' conceptions of power. When the capabilities of a middle-class group are extended to restrict movement across 'their' community, or a US film distributor attempts to disperse its capacity to control media outlets in Europe, or the financial and decision-making powers of a multinational concern trigger an effective capacity for control across a world-wide system of markets and production locations, their powers are assumed to be extended in such a way that the whole, unitary force comes into play. Expressed in different terms, the relationship between the centre and its extended powers is equivalent to that between a whole and a part. When a group or an institution extends its powers through the surrounding social space, it is *as if* the entire capacity is transmitted, made up as it were of a pre-formed power which is then delegated or distributed across the land-scape. Once the capacity is known, whether awesome or otherwise, and extensive reach assumed, the rest of the equation quite literally amounts to a series of footnotes from the centre.

Footnotes from the centre

The spatial vocabulary of power here, then, is one of centres, distributions, extensions and delegated capabilities. It is as if a 'store' of centralized power is marshalled and transmitted intact through space and time and, allowing for an element of distortion and resistance, used to secure certain organiza-tional or institutional goals. There is little in between in this linear story: success is attributed to the powers of the centre and its distribution, and failure is attributed to the extent of resistance. Whatever the outcome, the force of unitary, centralized power remains intact and its 'store' of capabil-ities present and awaiting distribution.

Because of the commonplace nature of this representation of power and space, it is perhaps not that surprising to find that it is frequently under-stated. It is for, example, one that underpins the 'state-centred' versions of power criticized by John Agnew (1994, 1998, 1999; see also Agnew and Corbridge 1995) in his attempt to map political power across state bound-aries. His target was the conventional understandings of the geography of political power held by mainstream international relations theorists and those of a related political realist persuasion who considered the state to be a unitary and singular actor. At the core of his critique was the sense in which state territories had been reified as a fixed unit of secure sovereign space. In so far as convention distinguishes between an internal, domestic space in which governments exercise power in an orderly fashion over a

defined territory and its peoples, on the one hand, and an external, international domain defined by the absence of order, on the other, the 'territorial state' in mainstream international relations is represented as a homogeneous political community maintained and controlled from an identifiable centre. The state as the central actor guarantees social order through the distribution of its powers to select elites and bureaucratic organizations and thus effectively 'contains' society within its territorial boundaries. As such, the spatial organization of rule-making authority is portrayed as an almost effortless process whereby power is impelled outwards from a capable centre.

There are parallels here with simplistic notions of money and capital which by virtue of some apparent inscribed qualities, a kind of capacity-in-waiting, are thought to exercise 'command over space' – as if it were simply a question of adding space to a pre-formed power.[6] Multinational firms can be thought about in this way, with their headquarter locations acting as centres of command and control in the global economy, co-ordinating and integrating the flow of capital movements and commodity markets across national boundaries. Although now something of a caricature, it is surprisingly easy to fall back upon this representation of economic power and total reach, where the multitude, dispersed and potentially far apart in territorial terms, are subject to the effortless reach of the 'big' transnational corporations. 'Command over space' is after all what domination is all about, but to secure and maintain it on an ongoing basis across far-flung locations was never going to be that straightforward. On its own, domination from afar, whether exercised through the operational HQs of multinational administrations or through the 'powers' of a unitary state over its sovereign territory, is always likely to be less than totalizing.

Much of the recent literature on economic and political governance, it seems to me, is precisely a response to this fact. Less boxed in by grand narratives and more responsive to what are perceived as the newly emerging sites or locations of power, there has been greater recognition among analysts such as James Rosenau (1997), David Newman (1999) and Bob Jessop (2000) that the exercise of power in a globally reordered world is less than straightforward. Increasingly, there is reference to 'multi-tier' or

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6   Such a representation underpins much of David Harvey's earlier work on the capabilities of capital to dominate space. In *The Limits to Capital* (1982), for example, it is the mobilities inscribed within different kinds of capital which are seen to lie behind the uneven character of the built environment, and similarly, in *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1989), it is the capacity of capital to accelerate economic processes which is considered to have produced the latest 'round' of the annihilation of space by time, with the consequent domination of regional or place-based movements by the manoeuvrings of capital. Capital, as Harvey conceives of it, 'continues to dominate, and it does so in part through superior command over space and time' (1989: 238). See Allen (1997).

'multi-level' governance, where power is no longer seen to operate in either a top-down or a centre-out fashion, but rather upwards and downwards through the different scales of economic and political activity, both transnational and subnational. In such accounts, there is a greater recognition of the larger number of interests involved in any instrumental power formation, with multiple sites of authority dotting the political landscape, from numerous quangos and private agencies to local administrative units and other subnational actors. In place of the conventional assumption that the state is the only actor of any real significance, the playing field is now shared with NGOs, multinational enterprises and other supranational as well as interstate organizations. In this more complex geography, power is largely about the reorganization of scale, in so far as it is *redistributed* to take account of the proliferating sites of authority and reordered boundaries.

Globalization and the questions that it has raised concerning 'state-centred' approaches to power, in particular over the permeability of power in the face of the increased capacities of supranational institutions and its dispersal through quasi-autonomous regional and local agencies, have led to a more scalar vocabulary of power (see, for example, Brenner 1998; Swyngedouw 1997, 2000). Rather than a unitary centre of power, there are multiple centres, each with their own capacity to exercise authority and influence within the new territorial reordering. Rather than a simple top-down transmission of power, there is a redistribution or shift in capabilities between the different levels of governance. Above the nation state, for example, the agencies of the European Union, the regional outposts of multinational 'empires' and various NGOs are seen to exercise their influence over the actions of those within their realm, reaching down in many cases directly into the lives of those 'on the ground'. Similarly, within the nation state, the delegation and dispersion of power in the field, for example, of social welfare to a variety of trusts, partnerships and community organizations have increased the number of authoritative locations with responsibility for ordering people's lives.

And yet, for all this talk of power shifting between the different levels or scales of activity, the story remains a remarkably linear one. Multi-level governance is largely about a descending order of spatial scales – from the supranational and the national down through the regional to the local, where each scale appears as unified and as ordered as the 'territorial state' once did before it. Where once it was the state and its territories which were reified as a fixed, 'contained' unit of space, now it seems as if the different levels of governance have inherited this geographical mantle. Despite recognition of the fact that the workings of power involve more than a simple vertical or horizontal reallocation over space, there appears to be a kind of scalar mindset in operation whereby the region is thought to dovetail into the nation, the nation into the European Union and so forth. In this revised

linear story there is much more to consider than the powers of a unitary centre and their remote impact, yet the vocabulary of power employed is still one of capabilities 'held' and the dispersion or delegation of powers between the various levels and sites of authority.

In this territorially reordered set of spaces, it is still hard to avoid the impression that power is conceived as something which is more or less transmitted *intact* across the scalar landscape. There may be more centres of power and authority to consider, more complex dispersals and delegations to contemplate, but what happens to those on the receiving end may still be read as a series of footnotes to the (by now multiple) centre's capabilities.

Out-of-Scale Images

In *Culture and Imperialism* (1994), Edward Said spoke about 'out-of-scale' images, images which distort our understanding of the significance of something and what it is capable of bringing about. Said had the images of 'terrorism' and 'fundamentalism' in mind, 'which derived entirely from the concerns and intellectual factories in metropolitan centres like Washington and London' (1994: 375). I am reminded of the image of mammoth economic corporations roaming the globe, or of the colossal influence of such worldly institutions as the World Trade Organization or the IMF, or, closer to home, of the penetrating influence of state agencies deep into the fabric of everyday life, each of which in its own particular way creates an overblown sketch of what these organizations are capable of bringing about. Such images, related to size but also to their imagined capacities, distort our sense of power's reach. It is as if the very images themselves signify a reel of effects which can be far reaching or established close at hand over the lives of those dispersed in diverse and often distant locations. These out-of-scale images are fed by a spatial vocabulary of power which talks of power's extension (or command), over space, its redistribution across a deeply contextualized landscape. Curiously, it seems that the very fact that power may be thought of as something which can be extended or distributed over space actually makes it that much harder to conceive that it may, in practice, be *actively constituted in space and time*.

But, perhaps more than that, it is the language of power as capacity which sets in motion the inflated sense of power's effortless reach. For me, this is misleading, as the so-called 'capacity' of power is often a euphemism for the resources and abilities which may or may not be mobilized to produce an effect – be it domination, authority, seduction, manipulation, coercion, inducement or whatever. Resources move and can be lost or may simply evaporate, but power has none of those qualities. The

relationships which give rise to the constraints of domination or the allure of seduction or the assent which authority requires are mediated through relations of proximity and presence. Power is not some 'thing' that moves, but an effect that is mediated, and such effects may mutate through relations of successive or simultaneous reach. But that is to run ahead of ourselves.

The idea that power may be something other than a capacity, or that power may not be so much distributed over space as constituted by the many networked relationships which compose it, has yet to be fully absorbed by those who remain convinced that power may be possessed or held 'in reserve'. For that understanding, we need to draw on a different conception of power, one that starts from the position that power is an effect, not an attribute of 'things'.