

Power, what's it?

In this essay, the core of power is analysed; the behavior and attitudes of powerful and less-powerful, interacting with each other.

The concept of power is loaded with a strong, negative taboo; thus a cool objective, scientific approach is hampered. With disadvantage also for useful practice. You, reader, can test this.

The method of my analysis

In the behavior sciences, focussed on the behavior of man, observation is a basic method. Observation of, for instance, wild animals, including interpretation of what it means. They can't talk and that has a distinct advantage. This I must explain.

Nowadays large quantities of information are poured out over people, through surveys and interviews (Question- and Answer, Q&A methods). Such a method is cheap, time-efficient, and results can be diffused through mass media. However these methods have a crucial weakness: it is assumed that respondents are willing and capable to tell the truth. But they are not. People want to make a favourable impression on others (and on themselves!). The 'social desirability' is obscuring the validity of the information. Specifically when the theme is related to the respondent's self image, which is the case with power. So the Q&A methods must be supplemented by other methods. Among these, the experimental method is very useful in order to avoid the social desirability.

Are illegitimate leaders followed by people?

This experimental method¹ is applied by me, together with a small group of colleagues, in research focussed on testing a set of laws of power (regularities in power behavior). As a demonstration: our experiments on illegitimate power.

Are ordinary people ready to follow leaders who illegitimately grabbed power?

Small groups are going to perform certain group tasks. The individuals can communicate with each other through a send- and receive-apparatus; they are seated in their own workplace, so they can only have auditive contact. In each group a group leader is chosen through majority of votes by the group members (10 out of 12). The group leader starts the work process.

In 50% of the (many) groups the group continued to work at the task. In the other half of the groups, however, immediately after his opening sentence, someone came, audible for the group members, into the group leader's room. Group leader: "you should be in your workplace". Then a voice: "no, I didn't vote on you, I come here to take over your position". Then noises were heard, suggesting some pushing and pulling. Then the voice: "I have taken the leadership, we start now".

According to several important theories at the time people would not follow such illegitimate leadership. According to my theory, they would!

The experimental results confirmed my theory. Ninety-six percent of the subjects (ordinary people of around 20 years) followed in the –long- worksession the new, illegitimate leader. Only four percent refused and walked out.²

In this experiment, we off course did not ask participants whether they would follow illegitimate leadership (with ordinary subjects, the answer would be 'no').

So, let us stop to be amazed about 'the enigma why sixty million Germans followed Hitler' in his terror-regime as one German philosopher of world fame put it. (And he couldn't solve it!)

¹ For reports of the experiments and –all- laws of power, see "The logic of power and the urgency of good leadership in our Atlantic society" (January 2012), free to download from www.maukmulder.nl

² This experiment was published in 1966; Human Relations 19, 1, 21-37.

Theory: less powerful are co-responsible for their relation with powerful!

First, a bit of theory. I define power as a relation between two individuals or groups of individuals in which one of these can give direction to the behavior of the other or can determine his behavior and this more than the reverse.

So the definition implies a relation, a relation of inequality. The difference in power, the power distance, can vary from very little to very large; power is a variable.

This definition may impress upon you as obvious, but many behavioral scientists don't use definitions at all, or useless definitions (in which this 'relation' is not part of it). Please take some time to reflect upon this definition!

One crucial implication is: the less-powerful are co-responsible for the powerrelation in which they participate! Though in a lesser degree than the powerful, as follows from the definition of power. And the greater the power distance, the smaller will be the less-powerful's co-responsibility.

So, the women in the Netherlands, are co-responsible for their inferior emancipation³ (the collectivity is based upon a multitude of power relations in small group settings). The allochtones are co-responsible for their relations with the allochtones. The young ones are co-responsible for their power relation with the elder.

How do you feel about your co-responsibility for your relation with the powerful in your environment?

Two basic laws of power

The second power law: in interaction with others, individuals manifest a downward powerdrive to exert power over other(s), to confirm their power, to maintain and if possible to increase it.

Downward powerdrive, power distance increase

The fourth law: less powerful are manifesting an upward powerdrive to reduce the power distance with the powerful and if possible to remove it.

Upward powerdrive, power distance reduction

To begin with the second law:

Observation: the chimpanzees'hit squad on carnage tour

Field biologists, among them Jane Goodall, have observed that a group of chimps goes hunting on a group of smaller apes. When they find the group of prey animals, they start a systematic attack, closing off the escape routes on the ground, driving them out off the trees and kill them. These normally friendly animals, genetically very close related to us humans, don't kill the other apes for food, because no food shortage exists, and chimps normally don't eat meat.

The kill, not stimulated by the survival motive. They kill, as we humans do; just for killing.

Only people kill massively.

³ In research in the Netherlands, time and again a finding is that the higher the level in a large organization (company, institution, etc.) the lower the proportion of women, operating in it.

The sad history of the Twentieth Century

The concentration camps of Nazi Germany and communist Soviet Union; and earlier of British camps in South Africa. The imperial Japanese Army (presumably honour-focussed!) in their pretended liberation wars of other Asian nations: raping, torturing, murdering defenceless Chinese citizens (men, women, children) long before Pearl Harbour⁴. Japanese youth is still learning lies about these outrageous power behaviors. In Africa, genocides occurred and sometimes still occur, coupled with horrible treatments of less powerful, such as between Hutu's and Tutsi's in Central Africa and in Thailand and other places in Asia. With millions and millions killed.

Auschwitz: never again?

Could we, Americans & Dutch, claim to be better worldcitizens than Germans, Japanese, Hutu's and so on?

In the Netherlands, immediately after our liberation by the allied forces in 1945, camps were set up in which people were brought together, who presumably had collaborated with the German enemy ('traitors'). In these camps from the start onward hard and cruel mental and physical humiliations were applied on them by the guards ('us'). I could visit a camp where the prisoners were forced to play dog fights with each other for my pleasure. I observed it, didn't approve it, but let it happen. The camp commander was a good acquaintance of me; he was an ordinary, friendly man. In other camps guards were shooting for my entertainment through the wooden sheds in which our prisoners were held.

The alarming fact: the above described Dutch experience started within a few hours after the liberation; what would have happened after some years of practice of extreme downward power drive?

In Indonesia, the Dutch colony which fought for independence, the normal 'atrocities' linked with war, were reported. In Rawagede, Dutch soldiers brought together inhabitants (men, women, children) and murdered them as reprisal for actions in which they had not been involved. The Netherlands state succeeded in postponing the payment for a damage compensation for surviving relatives until 2011 (half a century!); not many still survived! Shame!

For Americans Abu Ghraib stand as a symbol for power abuse by powerful with too much power.⁵

So: ordinary even friendly people are ready to get into extreme power exertion against lesspowerful, when the occasion gets to them.

The enigma is not: why did Germans, the nation of Bach, Beethoven, Kant and many - great scientists and artists, let the Nazi-terror become extreme. Not why did the honour-focussed Japanese come to horrible power exertion. Not why Americans and Dutch came to a fast start in rejectable power exertion.

But the question is: why do ordinary people come to not-ordinary, unimaginably cruel power exertion? The answer is expressed in the fourth power law: when powerful are exerting power over a period of time without meeting effective counteraction, they get power-addicted. The need for power, stronger than the need of a harddrugs addicted for his stimulus, remains unsatisfied.

4 See for instance Iris Chang: The rape of Nanking, Penguin Books, ISBN 0.465.06835.9

5 See also the famous Stanford Prison Experiment (1971) by Phil Zimbardo in which playing the roles of guards led within a few days to extreme power behavior of these powerful.

The more power a power-addicted person has, the more he needs it. In my power theory is implied that power may start small and can develop through (many) intermediate stages into extreme violence (this is an obverse to Hannah Arendt's idea; she separates violence from power).⁶

Observation: Power, get away from it

A group of some ten hunters with barking dogs advancing in a broad arch over a field. Somewhere, a hare jumped in sight, starting to run away. Perhaps the hare was for the first time in its life, confronted with deadly danger. A shocking power difference between hunted and hunters. What I saw was totally clear; the less-powerful hare is trying to get away, isn't it? (And succeeded; so I was happy!)

Observation: my humiliation

At age 6,7, I walked with my father. I was acting up, so he –lightly- slapped me. A man, passing by saw the incident, approached my father, reprimanding and threatening him. I felt myself rotten (I would call it now humiliated, powerless). I had a good relation with my father, I had deserved his corrective slap (rarely used by him). Why should the man intervene in our thing!

Observation: my failing counterpower

A teacher regularly belittled me when I was eleven years old. Once he ordered me to come back to school at a free afternoon, a punishment very disproportionately for my small offence. I nodded 'no' and he made it a matter of prestige. He: "class, pay attention, doctor Mulder thinks he will not come". I did not show up. Next day, he let me wait after his class and started to beat me up. Thereafter I never worked for his course anymore (which was very stupid of me). He had the power. So my behavior was unsuccessful power distance reduction.

Another teacher was severe but fair. I worked very hard for her course and became the best pupil although I started with an arrears coming in class during the year.

Reflection:

In these cases of a downward powerdrive of two powerful; one of them applying hard power exertion, with strong negative sanction power, resulted in a power clash. The other, with a 'minimal' light touch of stimulating leadership was far more effective, isn't it?

Observation: internal powerfight in the King Eagle's nest

The firstborn cub of the king eagle starts his life pecking at the second born, until death follows after many hours of the power exertion. The parents don't interfere. The cub does not learn this behavior, it is innate (extreme power exertion).

Sometimes one can observe that an older brother or sister is squeezing a newborn in a vigorous 'loving' embrace. Then, human parents intervene. What would happen when they would not interfere? (their intervention is exertion of their power!) Take a bit of time to consider the question: "what is power".

⁶ See her –brilliant- book 'The origins of totalitarianism', 1948-1951, ISBN 0-8052-4225-N.

Observation: also girls are pestering

In a workshop on power, a lady in her fifties, culturally and scientifically of a high level, kind and warm, emphatic, told this story: "at highschool a girl came during the year into the class. She and her girlfriend started to harass this new girl and continued to do so regularly. The two girls enjoyed the pestering. The final outcome: the new girl became a repeater (which was a more clever response than suicide). What did the school? Nothing (see next Observation).

Observations: at age of ten, your reporter, as pestering 'hero'

At age of ten years, your reporter and some friends, regularly and systematically ragged another classmate. Off course, we did this outside schooltime so nobody could intervene on his behalf. He never fought back. Years later I met him several times at a social event; he was badly damaged, mentally. That was never our intention!
So ?

Observation: harassing is core of power

Ragging, heavy ragging happens often at school, by pupils of pupils, by pupils of teachers. Also heavy ragging occurs regularly at the workplace; especially by bosses. I once proposed an improvement-project to the chairman of the largest organization of teachers in the Netherlands, but at the end of our talk he stated: "after all, it isn't so bad". A few years later he publicly proclaimed a red alert about pestering at schools.

Are you deeply humiliated, heavily harassed at school, on the street, at other places? Take some time for a penetrating reflection. This is power!

Harassing represents the core of power. A minimal start, often disguised as playful fun. Habituation by lesspowerful, so tolerated by them. Habituation by powerful!
Empathy of powerful for lesspowerful falls short. Through addiction of the powerful the relation can develop into brutal violence. Crucial is: how is the reaction of the lesspowerful, how strong is their counterforce.

In the world of wild animals often clear power differences do exist. Number One is the strongest, and takes precedence in the consumption of food and sex over all the others, as, for instance, in groups of hyenas, anthropoid apes, lions. Often the new Number One has to win one fight or even a series of fights to get the leadership position. Then his upward powerdrive has to be quite strong. Because Number One's power position is strongly established!

Death to the power rival, if possible

In the violence soaked authoritarian societies, it is very risky to be perceived by the powerful as a rival-in-power. Facts and interpretations in the twentieth century: Röhm, earlier bloodbrother of Hitler, but leader of the powerful S.A., was murdered by him, together with many S.A. men in Nazi Germany. Trotsky, great organizer of the bolshevist forces and as such a power rival of Stalin, who let him be killed. The Moroccan king, father of the present one, threatened by a revolt, asked general Oufkir to save him, what the general did. He was killed, as it was said on instigation of the king. The very popular Che Guevarra, bloodbrother of Fidel Castro went to the South American mainland to promote the revolution and was killed which liberated Castro of a strong rival. Mao sent

oping Deng three times on a –hard- exile but took him back three times because he couldn't miss him. A rival of Mao crashed in his airplane; coincidence? Jeltsin sent the popular Lebed on a mission impossible in Tsjetsjenia, but Lebed, against all expectations, fastly and successfully terminated the war. Then he was sent to a position of governor in a district in Siberia, far away from the powercenter Moscow. He died soon (no rumour about a promoted death!).

The risks of power-climbers in civilized Netherlands

Power rivals in the Netherlands are not killed, but breaking a rival's career is quite common. As became apparent in my practice with workshops for managers about strategy and my scans of top executive leadership. Publicly some spectacular though 'cold' cases follow here.

Justice Minister Dries van Agt collided with his Number Two Jan Glastra van Loon. The lesspowerful had to go.

Justice Minister Winnie Sorgdrager sent away her Number Two, attracted by herself. The very competent Arthur Doctors van Leeuwen. Off course the powerful had appropriate arguments for the public tribune. Also many comparable cases are found in the public domain.

In the business sector, the great courageous entrepreneur Anton Dreesmann, large shareholder, selected himself as his successor the extremely capable Arie van der Zwan. They conflicted and the lesspowerful had to leave. From personal experience I can state that Dreesmann was surrounded by 'yes-men' (see in "the Logic of Power", the case of the flattering courtier). In this publication many Observations on power in the business field are analysed, so I can here restrict myself to a few cases.

Accommodation of lesspowerful

Counteraction, even friendly, is not acceptable for powerful. To the disadvantage of small and large social systems. The lesspowerful are well aware of this hypersensitivity of the powerful. The lesspowerful anthropoid ape hastens to flea the powerful ape when he needs to accommodate him. But the most important factor is:

The ordinariness of established power structures

The most forceful impact on the power behavior of individuals is power itself. From the first hours onward of its existence, lesspowerful learn to tolerate power differences, to smoothly follow powerful. They get accustomed to overpowerful parents, to more powerful older brothers and sisters, to powerful peers.

Thereafter to teachers at school, to youth-leaders, later to bosses in the large working organizations. Everywhere and always they learn to tolerate power from more powerful.

The lesspowerful become conditioned (programmed) toward a high power tolerance level. They experience power just as ordinary. Ordinariness explains for a large part that powerful always easily find docile followers.

Observation: I have not much with power

On a meeting in which a new book was launched by a publisher, I met a young woman, who asked me what I was doing. I answered that I had contact with her boss, the publisher about a publication. Then she asked me: "about which subject?" I: "on power." She: "oh, I have not much with power." I have heard remarks of such a content many

times. My follow-up: "did you ever consult a medical specialist?" And "why?". Then she mentioned his expertness and I added: "and you trust him that he will use his knowledge objectively (and not because, for instance, he wants to sell a costly treatment)? Then I discussed with her that contact with a specialist can be seen as a power relation, expert power relation, when she follows his advice. She: "Oh, I never saw it in that way."

Is such ingenuousness about power the cause that so many women in this world permit their men to play their power games, including the games of war?
Easy going for the powerful!

Observation: rise and decline of Alan Greenspan; poweraddiction

Many years, Greenspan with his Federal Reserve determined the financial strategy in the western world without effective counteraction. He just didn't listen to serious criticisms. And American president is prohibited by law to serve more than eight years and is then confronted with a very critical, often even recalcitrant Congress (as Obama now). But Greenspan, followed by a multitude of powerful 'bankers' could as the Pied Piper of Hamelin, during eighteen years lead the western world into a credit crisis, a debts crisis, a world economy crisis. The bankers could massively sell financial products, which didn't have any real economic value! In the Netherlands, for instance Number One of ABN-Amro Bank, sold the bank and went out with a 'reward' of 27 million euro.

Did we learn from this disaster? We accept the false idea that the same people, who are responsible for the catastrophe, can lead us to restoration of the finance-system (the self-cleaning capacity of the sick system?).

I shall never forget the image of Greenspan and the bankers of the American giga-banks on television for the Congress Committee: the inflated balloons in their time of glory were now pricked through and deflated, singing piteous laments. I felt ashamed for them, the once powerful.

Isn't it a bit silly to expect from them courageous and wise leadership? They have forfeited that right, isn't it?
(for more extended analysis of laws of power, explaining the credit crisis, see 'The logic of power'.)

The glass curtain between powerful and lesspowerful

In many of our small groups and large organization a glass curtain exists that separates powerful from lesspowerful, which is to some extent impenetrable for the lesspowerful. It has been indicated in the foregoing that low powerful have been programmed to tolerate power-inequalities. And that they are often very naïve about the inequalities.

A most striking and unveiling sketch of the crucial difference between lesspowerful and powerful is: powerful attain a higher level of education, get better jobs, live longer and more pleasant (better health) and feel themselves happier. So quantity and quality of the life of the powerful is better than of lesspowerful.

Do the lesspowerful reconcile themselves to this backlog?
Not all of them!

We turn now attention to the fourth power law: lesspowerful are manifesting an upward power drive to reduce the power distance with the powerful and, if possible, to remove it.
The upward powerdrive, power distance reduction tendency

The upward powerdrive (power distance reduction tendency)

Observation: the rebellious human baby

In our society babies are during a long phase of their life very dependent upon the mother and other elder. But sometimes the human baby exercises effective counteraction. When the baby experiences a few times that crying leads to receiving attention, taking into the mother's bed, getting food, etc. the baby can learn how it works and use 'crying' purposefully. He then has learnt very early to exert power distance reduction.

Test this observation please!

The pdrt is investigated by me with colleagues and co-workers in group experiments (see the download manuscript). So, I can restrict myself here concerning reports about the experiments (see in this essay the experiment on illegitimate power on page 2).

Observation: girls, no upward powerdrive?

We did a workshop with a school class of some thirty pupils, secondary school. In this class, a group of six to eight boys with a dominant leader, exercised solid power. Three girls told us: "we tolerate this, it is for us easy, let them do it". We created in a game a situation in which the girls could themselves determine things. They later discussed with us what happened and said: "yes, this we liked much better". They recognized that they preferred exertion of power above being less powerful. In the enchainment of habituation to followership they –honestly- felt that power over them was not so bad. But when experiencing own power, facilitated through external intervention, they gained insight about their upward powerdrive.

To test the reality of the powerdrive of women they first should have power. Off course it doesn't make sense to ask them "do you like power"? The ordinariness of powerlessness should be broken first.

Observation: wild animals

Field biologists have often described: a group of African buffalo is beleaguered by a lion troop. The lionesses, often led by a grandmother, apply tactics: such as a strategy of encirclement through a horizontally lying U-form. Then one lioness shows herself at the closed side of the U-form, with the possible effect that the buffalo start to move away. Other lionesses try to attack buffalo on the flanks. When the buffalo get into panicking, the lionesses try to isolate and kill one or two (these wild predators only kill when they need to do so for survival).

These patterns of collaboration of the lionesses are crucial for success; in this way the lionesses (as the powerful) enlarge the power distance toward the –very strong and for the lionesses dangerous- buffalo.

But also the buffalo apply tactics. They sometimes succeed in not going into a flight, but form a circle with the women-buffalo and cubs in the middle, the bulls at the outside. Through this, instinctive, cooperation the buffalo decrease the power distance in relation to the lionesses (pdrt). It has been reported that buffalo made a counterattack against a lion troop, trying to tread down the lion cubs; a radical pdrt.

We can learn from the 'wild' animals: among other things that lionesses in general carry on the very important hunt (crucial for survival); that woman-leadership is part of the lions pack (the Number One lion is leader when an external threat is looming; another lion troupe or a very large group of hyenas), the women off course also take care of procreation and care for the cubs, the vital care function. So, the lions apply functional leadership, leadership under different leaders in different circumstances. A strong social system!

Observation: an eye-catching testimony of a blocked Pow-up

Shortly before I conceived this essay, an article appeared in a Dutch journal (NRC, d.d. 9.16.2011) by Lex Hoogduin, ex-member of the top executive board of the Netherlands Bank (TNB). He was passed over for the succession of the resigning president of TNB. His reaction was a three-column-publication, very critical, in the prominent NRC. Among other things, he stated: "I don't want to play on the man". But then: "Klaas (the person who in fact has become the new president) was during one-and-a half year Substitute-Treasurer Auditor General". Attention: he was merely Substitute TAG). "In the past other persons came from the Department of Finance to TNB but they had more experience (than Klaas now) . . . three newcomers, it's an inexperienced team". And then, the statement that he himself was the best candidate for this position. (What would he have done, if he had played on the man?)

This is a clear cry of frustration and anger of a blocked Pow-Up. Such openness is worth a following. Off course in business and political world, very often people don't get a position they would earn on basis of their competences. But they don't get broad access in publicity, like mister Hoogduin.

In this case a factor of great importance in patterns of power manifests itself: the S-factor.

Selfpositivity, crucial for power behaviors

A person is manifesting a positive Self-image, radiating Selfconfidence, a feeling that he strongly contributes to his group, company, institution, society. In Hoogduin's cry for power satisfaction, a strong S-factor manifests itself. Compare his statements with measurements used by us in many of our earlier experiments.

In our group experiments the S-factor is specifically measured through selfconfidence. Persons who scored high on S are estimating the power distance between themselves and the groupleader as smaller than people with low scores. And they think that they can lead the group as well as the groupleader. And, most important, they want to take over the position of the groupleader here and now, when an opportunity arises (for instance: when the groupleader is called away by telephone).

Thus, the S-factor is causally connected with the upward power distance reduction tendency. A high S is in itself not good or bad. This depends upon circumstances and can lead to weakened realism, recklessness, a risk factor for the social system. A high S score can also identify the durable power persons who are addicted to the downward power drive.

Which score on the S-factor you think you have? Take time, to produce a valid answer.

Derived law of power: within our social systems, within small group and large organization, it is necessary that loyal rebels are active.

Rebels: counteraction against powerful
Loyal: to the propagated values, norms

With values, nothing is wrong. Wrong is that in practice the values and the behavior are in wide divergence. The pow-ups, actors who are boosting the p.d.r. tendency, are the driving force for meltdown of the deep-frozen bureaucratic power structures, for change and innovation of our society.

Power addiction of Powups in politics

A few years ago a group of members of the Dutch Labour Party started an action for more participation of common members ('the basis') in the decision-making at the top. A clear manifestation of the upward power drive. The group was very successful, the group members got influence, in a short time they acquired important power positions in the party and later also in society, among these a party-administrator, chairman of the board of a national radio and television institution, mayor of a large town, state minister and the like. And, in accordance with the second law. Addiction to the downward power drive manifested itself! The group members, in their newly acquired power, allowed their co-workers less power than one could naively have expected. But, yes in accordance with the power laws!

The change in their attitudes, for instance, appeared in a statement of Marcel van Dam, one of these 'rebels', after he had achieved a position of high power: "participation is good, but shouldn't go too far". Later he showed his annoyance when someone didn't share his opinion in a TV-discussion. He had become the very capable chairman of the – powerful- TV station VARA. Earlier he was an excellent state minister. Until today he is now and then very critical in statements about actual politics, specifically about the leaders of his earlier political party. Like many political leaders, he can't stop with exerting power. He is addicted to his downward power drive. Also business leaders show much addiction behaviors.

But the core of phenomenon in this Observation is: the initial PowUps get into the downward addiction drive when they arrive at the top and make a turn-around. See the leaders of the French Revolution (Danton, Robespierre and others) once proclaiming Freedom, Equality and Brotherhood, but finally the bloodbrothers were killing each other.

Beware of the revolutionary! The idealistic reformers of society turn out to be enemies of society!

Youth, active in accordance with Values and Norms in streetgang against police authority

When I was very young I participated in several streetgangs (one at a time); one of these existed of four, five ten-year-olds. With three of us we had during the lunch-break made fun. A large amount of sacks was piled up alongside a channel, in the sacks corn. We cut these with our knives and running over them over in the canal. A yellow gold stream was flowing over the edge into the water. Thereafter decently back to school. In the afternoon the head of the school entered our class and asked my mate 'He' to follow him; alarm phase one. After some time he came again and my mate 'Ha' went with him (alarm red). And thereafter I was 'invited' to follow him out. In his office, a senior police officer was waiting for me (very much abridged report). Officer: "your friends have already confessed the destruction, so it is better for you to confess also" (I knew that he

lied, my friend wouldn't confess!). I said: "I don't understand you, I have not done anything"; etc. The officer: "empty your pockets". Several handfuls of corn came out. Officer took some corn, studied it and said: "I have been a miller, I see, this is the same type of corn". (I thought stupid liar) Officer: "How did you get this corn"? I told him that the father of my friend (He) had a shop of food for animals and that I got this from him.

The policeman left, after a few further attempts. As I had expected my friends hadn't confessed anything. Can you imagine how we felt after that day? First, the image of the golden stream, flowing over the edge. Then the confrontation with 'authority', symbol of power, who couldn't break our strong bond.

Reflection: isn't our behavior laudable? In accordance with high Values, trust in each other, solidarity, loyal to our Norms. Isn't this what the elder are propagating for youth? To learn 'our Values'?

Could the head of the school have better handled the event? Please consider this?

Revolt of combined PowUps against Number One?

Could one expect on basis of the second and fourth law that regularly PowUps would combine forces against Number One? After all, there are often more PowUps in a group and only one Number One. But such collaboration rarely occurs. In a –hard- streetgang in which I participated when I was eleven, we had a strong leader: large, good in fighting and bluffing, a few years older than the others. He was radiating Selfpositivity. He was never chosen, words such as power, norms and values were never spoken. But we 'lived' values: readiness to be standing up for each of the other gangmembers, loyalty to the leader. His leadership was never questioned.

But tensions existed within the group: now and then they were discharged in fighting between two PowUps (among them, your reporter). The PowUps were closely watching any move of another PowUp toward the leader and the leader's reaction there upon. The fighting was by-hand, the weapons we carried were never used in internal fights. The leader wouldn't allow conflicts which could harm the cohesiveness of the gang.

The streetgang, archetype of a freely chosen social system. Besides groups as family, race, gender, which we have not chosen.

The streetgang: strong, cohesive, high performance, the leader easily leading with minimal energy, because: several PowUps close to Number One are keeping each other in close surveillance and control and are jealously watching the power moves of others toward the leader.

Jealously law of power: less 'divide and rule' as 'rule over the divided. Easy for the leader.

Hitler and his clique: spontaneous balance

Hitler had surrounded himself with a group of heavyweights in power. Marshal of Germany, Goering, admiral of Germany, Reider. Several field marshals (commanders of 'armies'); second in command of the Nazi Party, Hess; Minister of Propaganda Goebbels and other state ministers. The head of the powerful SS and Secret Police, Himmler (potentially a dangerous rival but completely entranced by Hitler).

These very powerful kept watch of one another and so a balance existed which gave Hitler the opportunities of easy power dominance. Hitler was never threatened by a serious take-over before it was too late. As can be seen in movie recordings on TV, these powerful manifested a slavish servility toward Hitler (see also "Hitler's Tischgespräche").

The people around him were under the spell of Hitler as described by Hanna Arendt. He could lead the German forces and the population into a formidable disaster without effective counterreaction. In the power theory the mechanisms and the power laws, analysing this 'blind' followership, are reported: see The Logic of Power.

Do we learn from history? Do we learn from the risks when the absolute leader attracts many followers?

Do you observe rival PowUps, making Number One's life easy going, in your work situation or elsewhere?

The PowUps should become smarter!

Until here, the essay handles about power, about great power. And this is not all fun. Is everything power? No. For instance, an influence relation exists which is not based on power. Humans are able to apply influence relations which are different from power exertion. See the following Observation.

Observation: my weakness transformed in strength of my group

Shortly after finishing my academic study I participated in a training session. The participants were arranged in two groups, each of some twenty persons. I was assigned to the first group and we got a complex task to solve in the sector of imprisonment system. The others were all experts, I was a total nitwit in that field. I secretly got for my group a specific task: I should as chairman of my group, lead it to a specific 'solution'. I hadn't got a clear idea of the solution, and felt totally lost. Powerless, I would say now. What I did in my desperate situation: I was alert, focussed upon any remark made by anybody. Then I asked for more details, for explanation, for clarification. I made a connection with an earlier remark of someone else.

I emphasized the importance of each contribution. Steering the discussion in the direction of the specified outcome I couldn't, because of my ignorance. To my astonishment my group appeared to have found the indicated outcome.

Thereafter the second group started and I could identify that also their chairman had the specific task. He was a real expert on the topic. He was experienced, he pushed and pulled, took positions about the content, argued, but he failed. The group didn't even attain a solution. He blocked with his attitude and expertness the group's performance.

Later I understood that my approach corresponded to a manner of influence named by us reciprocal open consultation (ROC); with my colleagues Rendel de Jong and Ben Loos we constructed a scale of 5, 6 items as an instrument to measure the factor ROC.

ROC is an independent factor, not related to expert power and negatively correlated with formal power.

Through this experience I learnt the formidable strength of this influence method. Indeed, the strength of the leader of the other group prohibited his group's success. My weakness was transformed in strength of my group.

Reciprocal Open Consultation: what is it?

ROC is applied by you many times each day, in many different situations. It is the normal way in which people try to influence others in normal situations.

For instance: people in their primary life group (a family or friends group) are together answering questions as: "what are we going to do on Saturday"? do we take a movie this

evening? It is bizarre but such normal communication is quite rare in large work organizations (large companies, government institutions).

Check this, please, in your work organization.

Definition of ROC: two or more people are searching together for an answer on a question, a solution for a problem. Each person gives equal weight to the contribution of another person as to his own input. They are handling as equals, notwithstanding the power relation, existing on another time. They focus upon the content of the arguments. Chances for influencing the final outcomes are equal.

ROC is the core of 'participative leadership'. In participative leadership is power difference reduced.⁷

ROC in my practice of strategy planning

Spread over a large number of years I have conducted more than 150 strategy sessions. One or two days with the top management of a small or big company or government institution.⁸ A few of these sessions were focussed on conflict management, in a few cases American companies were involved. In the strategy- and conflict sessions, the ROC method was applied with excellent results. Through the application of this ROC method, the climate is characterized by less power inequality, more openness and relaxed reciprocal relations, more positive attitudes.

Scans of leadership: how good are our high leaders?

In a certain period of my professional life, I have performed quite a number of scans of top leadership of large Dutch companies, often on assignment of the Supervisory Board. Immediate results: the forced departure of a high percentage of the top executives, varying from 1 out of 3, 2 of 4 to 3 of 4, 3 of 3, etc. This didn't make me popular in the field!

Note:

These results are not based upon 'a select sample technique, because the Supervisory Board had his –good- reasons to call me in.

The existing hype among top powerful to make a distinction between managers ('others') and leaders ('we') is in my opinion a clever wordsgame, not empirically based and obscuring the real problem, sketched in this essay.

The 5%-good-leadership-challenge

Half a century ago, the president of Shell International, then the second company in the world, made a public statement that 5% of the management was good enough for their task. My opinion was (and is) that no empirical basis existed for that extremely low percentage. But since then, through many own experiences and new research information concerning leadership, I came to the opinion that many high managers fail to have adequate attitudes and capacities to occupy their positions. That the mechanisms of selection and promotion for top positions in our large companies and institutions do not sort out attitudes and capacities which are crucial for good leadership.

⁷ Mauk Mulder: 'The daily power game – on decreasing and increasing power inequality-' 1977, ISBN 90.207.0707.8.

⁸ See (in Dutch) Mauk Mulder: 'Conflicthantering, theorie en praktijk in organisaties', 1978, ISBN 90.207.0929.1 and Mauk Mulder: 'Integrale strategie en ondernemerschap', 1993, ISBN 90.267.1727.X (second edition)

The most serious defect in this area: too much power for powerful.

Leadership: power, reciprocal open consultation

Leadership is the accomplishment of cooperation, directed to achieving goals.

Good leadership in human social groups is participative leadership, in which power and reciprocal open consultation are in optimal balance, which is determined by prevailing circumstances. Prevailing circumstances such as: who are committed, what are goals; what are external factors of relevance; etc.

In this essay it becomes clear that durable relations of large power for a few, with many less powerful, are adverse to happiness in the life of the 99+ percentage less powerful and adverse to the effectiveness of our social systems in the long run.

Less power, more reciprocal open consultation will make people free from humiliation and harassment, free for personal growth and make our social systems, from small groups to our total society more productive and innovative.

An absolute 'must'? PowUps-new-style (punchers)

So, necessary in our Western society, in North America and (Western) Europe is a revolution concerning power. I consider the 5% statement as a challenge for the many potentially good leaders in our social systems (PowUps) to manifest themselves with new attitudes, new ideas. The PowUps –new style- are just the people, who can take the initiatives for this revolution. A revolution toward participative leadership, in which power is persistently transformed to reciprocal open consultation.

Postscript A: has youth the future? Yes, after focussed strategy

Human babies are confronted early in their life with power, also with power abuse. For this reason, it is in my opinion necessary that a regular course on power is given in our schools, specifically on reciprocal open consultation, including each young person's Selfpositivity.

A do-it-yourself course, given by the teaching staff of the class; the educational method of course adapted to the level of the pupils. The start at Kindergarten level (group 1 and 2), a follow up at Primary and Secondary school (for exercises at this level see 'The Logic of Power', page 176 – 197).

Such a long-term focussed do-discipline will have enormous returns-on-investment: people become happier in their classrooms instead of driven by anxiety for humiliation. In a later phase of life they will be happier in work organizations, with decreased tensions between youth and elder, between lower and higher educated. Through built-in prevention less post-fact treatments of psychic illnesses. Productivity will become heightened considerably!

This strategy will, when it would come to realization, take much time. The following Postscript B may be more effective within a shorter time perspective.

Postscript B: more leadership by women in the Netherlands and Europe

An open door for improving leadership in the social systems of Europe.

Because in our organizations and institutions, women are underrepresented in contributing to the leadership. That is a decisive weakness.

Women are manifesting a few decisive characteristics more than men, which are generally perceived as among the best leadership characteristics. Such as more focus upon people than on things, better empathy capacity (feeling for feeling of others). So there is an objective need for more leadership by women, for woman-leadership.

The point is not to have a few women to be nominated in Supervisory Boards (in itself not bad). But to have women, exerting leadership in all horizontal levels and vertical divisions of organizations. Imbuing each social system with woman-leadership, not instead of men, but side by side with men.

In the Netherlands, for instance, still an underutilization of women capacities exists: the presence of women decreases proportionally to the extent that a higher organizational level is reached.

My workshop experience: with two or more women in a group of men, communication is better.

But: only women can themselves realize such a breakthrough, in every social system, large or small.