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Challenging the Conventional Wisdom on 'Enterprise': Control and Autonomy in a Direct Selling Organisation[**]

Entrepreneurialism within organisations has been praised for serving employees and employers alike, but it has also been criticised as exercising power over employees in an unobtrusive, yet effective way. Within the literature from both advocates and critics, two dichotomies prevail. First, 'enterprise' is considered as a monolithic concept that is either 'liberating' or governing employees; second, it tends to be viewed as strongly opposed to 'bureaucracy'. Recent studies have started to challenge these hitherto often one-sided characterisations by showing that individuals react and respond differently to entrepreneurialism and that bureaucratic elements can co-exist within entrepreneurial companies. However, by drawing on empirical evidence from an entrepreneurial company, we demonstrate that enterprise within an organisation *itself* is a complex and paradoxical instrument of power and governance in organisations. We suppose that enterprise cannot stand on its own but is instead based upon organisational practices that are at the same time liberating and controlling, entrepreneurial and bureaucratic. Such a view not only allows one to pay attention to the fractions that are caused when the ideal of the individual self-made man is transferred to organisations, but also to question the enterprise discourse itself.

Key words: **enterprise, power, normative control, bureaucracy, direct selling**

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1. Introduction

In an 'age of enterprise' (Courpasson/Reed 2004), bureaucratically organised companies are regarded as a dying breed (du Gay 2000). Since the 1980s, 'enterprise within organisations' has been propagated (Peters/Waterman 1982) as the better choice of governing organisations – or even as a cure-all (Nicholson/Anderson 2005) –, particularly with regard to the public sector (e.g. du Gay 1996a; du Gay 2004; Osborne/ Gaebler 1997). The double promise inherent in the notion of an entrepreneurial organisation is that companies will profit from proactive, responsible, and flexible employees while the latter achieve freedom and self-determination (Peters/Waterman 1982; Purser/Cabana 1998).

In contrast, others regard enterprise within organisations as a dangerous institutionalisation of 'new norms and techniques of conduct' (du Gay 1996b: 152). Thus, like other forms of 'culturism' (Willmott 1993), the promise of autonomy, self-responsibility, or even democracy is regarded as an instrument of power and control which leads to a specific identity of individuals (Burchell 1993; Deetz 1994; Miller/ Rose 1990; Rose 1990) while at the same time obscures the influence of companies on their employees (du Gay/Salaman 1992; Storey et al. 2005).

When one takes a closer look at both advocates' and critics' perceptions of enterprise in organisations, two strong dichotomies emerge in the literature. First, entrepreneurial companies are regarded as diametrically opposed to formal rules and the notion of bureaucracy – here critics and advocates do agree (du Gay 1994; Peters/Waterman 1982). Secondly, enterprise is either considered as bringing solely advantages for employees, such as more self-determination, empowerment and self-fulfilment (Ouchi 1981; Peters/Waterman 1982), or it is regarded as a development that in the end merely allows organisations to control its members in a more powerful, sophisticated and intrusive way than bureaucracies do (Burchell 1993; Deetz 1994; Miller/Rose 1990; Rose 1990).

Both dichotomies have recently been criticised for being too one-sided (Fournier/Grey 1999; Salaman/Storey 2008), leading to a more differentiated view conceptually (du Gay 2004), and empirically: First, it has been shown how an enterprise discourse is intertwined with other, non-entrepreneurial and also bureaucratic discourses inside organisations (Courpasson/Dany 2003; Korczynski 2004; Salaman/ Storey 2008). Secondly, the dichotomy between enterprise as a mere form of control or liberation has been questioned by examining how employees respond in different ways to – and even actively take advantage of – the notion of enterprise (Cohen/ Musson 2000; Halford/Leonard 2006; McDonald et al. 2008).

Yet, in these critiques, enterprise on an *organisational* level seems mainly to be a clear-cut, unambiguous way of organising and governing an organisation. It is, for example, characterised by flexible structures, autonomy and self-regulation which can serve as powerful control strategies (du Gay 1994; du Gay 1996b). In cases where individuals interpret these strategies differently or where bureaucratic elements still remain, enterprise seems to be not 'fully working' or not fully implemented yet.

In our paper, we want to provide an alternative and complementary argument against an excessively one-sided view of enterprise within organisations. We want to

show that enterprise within a company is *in itself* an ambiguous organisational phenomenon. Organisational practices and processes tied to enterprise within firms themselves, we argue, are (and must always be) complex. They can be liberating *and* controlling, entrepreneurial *and* based on formal rules. This not only allows the rethinking of the 'epochal bureaucracy/enterprise' dualism'' (du Gay 2004: 38), but also helps the understanding of enterprise within firms as complex, not only due to diverse individual reactions but due to the organisational mechanisms and practices connected with it. It allows attention to be paid to the fractures that are caused by bringing the ideal of the 'individual self-made man' (Schumpeter 1942) into an organisational setting and the results this may have for employee's responses, the distribution of power and the issue of enterprise as a form of governance itself.

Our analysis is inspired by Foucault's later notion that power unfolds in a *complex interplay of a range of practices* that span from pure 'discipline' and technologies of coercion to self-technologies, and is not only *repressive* but also *productive* (Foucault 2005). 'Power consists in complex relations' (Foucault 1993: 204), – it always leaves room for different reactions and interpretations of individuals. Foucault's view thereby implies that it is important to focus on *the practices and processes* of organising (or individualising) themselves rather than on entities such as 'individuals' or 'organisations' only (Foucault 2005; see also Haunschild 2003; Weiskopf 2005).

Our empirical case study is a German branch of the Amway Corporation which operates worldwide. Amway is an *entrepreneurial company* par excellence which, when taking a closer look at the organisational practices and processes, allows reflection of the dichotomies mentioned above: On the one hand, Amway presents itself as a company of entrepreneurs where members are not employees but legally independent distributors and therefore business owners. This formal independence is also supported with strong entrepreneurial ideals, such as autonomy and self-responsibility (Schwarz/Schwarz 2002: 74). On the other hand, Amway is said to be *controlling* its members to such an extent that some former members of the company regard it as a cult-like and even repressive organisation (Butterfield 1985; Groß 2008; Scheibeler 2004). How these issues are interlinked and how not only entrepreneurial ideals but also formal rules come into play when creating a company of entrepreneurs will be shown in our analysis, providing the basis for demonstrating the complexity of enterprise within organisations.

In the next section, we start with an outline of the concept of enterprise and its connected discourses. The following section presents background information about the Amway Corporation and the method used in our case study, after which we move on to a description of the entrepreneurial elements within Amway and of how these are connected with self-determination and control at the same time. After that, we show how 'entrepreneurial' and bureaucratic practices are intertwined under the roof of enterprise. The paper concludes with a discussion of how the different mechanisms and processes that we have identified interlink entrepreneurial, bureaucratic, liberating, and controlling aspects and of the implications this entails for future research.

2. An outline of enterprise in organisations

The prominence of enterprise started in the late 1970s and gained strength during the 1980s. As the Japanese economy was regarded as a threat to the West in terms of price, quality, and innovation, Japanese working practices in combination with entrepreneurial behaviour seemed to be the answer for economically struggling Western organisations (Miller/Rose 1995). Additionally, a change of political ideals took place, predominantly in the UK and the US, as the New Right discussed 'national life in terms of its neglect of the values of autonomy, entrepreneurship, and individual self-motivation' (Miller/Rose 1995: 453).

Since then, enterprise has become a new paradigmatic concept underpinning 'the rationale of new, alternative work forms and relationships' (Storey et al. 2005: 1033). Crucial to this new form of work is a specific understanding of personhood (du Gay 2004); the worker is regarded as an individual seeking self-fulfilment in all areas of life – both on and off the job. Even more, work is seen as the central place for self-realisation, having become 'a realm now construed as one in which we produce, discover, and experience our selves, rather than to be emancipated from work' (Miller/Rose 1995: 457). As a result, not only organisations, but rather every single employee is asked to be entrepreneurial (du Gay et al. 1996). This applies to any kind of organisation as well as to any kind of work done – by managers as well as by workers (Burchell 1993; Miller/Rose 1995). Accordingly, enterprise not only refers to a preferred form of organising, but also to a set of individual characteristics such as autonomy, initiative, proactive behaviour, self-regulation, self-reliance and a sense of responsibility for oneself, or even the necessity to establish oneself as a brand or business (du Gay 2004; Gordon 2001; Heelas/Morris 1992; Kets de Vries 1996; Storey et al. 2005).

The notion of such entrepreneurialism within organisations has produced quite diverse discourses and we identify, in particular, two dichotomies that have become associated with the notion of enterprise.

First, from the very beginning, enterprise has been positioned in absolute opposition to bureaucracy. Already in the 1980s, for example, the emerging 'excellence literature' (Willmott 1993) proclaimed that excellent and outstanding for-profit organisations display entrepreneurial characteristics that can overcome the manifold shortcomings of bureaucratic organisations (Peters/Waterman 1982). The latter was, and still is, often presented as including rigid structures, strict adherence to procedures and little room for manoeuvre for employees, a lack of innovativeness and missing individual enthusiasm for organisational goals (du Gay et al. 1996). In particular, in earlier academic discourse (du Gay/Salaman 1992; du Gay 1994; du Gay et al. 1996), this opposition is regarded as the central characteristic of enterprise (Fournier/Grey 1996).

The second dichotomy, which has attracted even more attention, is to some extent fed from this perceived contrast between enterprise and bureaucracy. Building on the difference of enterprise from rigid bureaucracies, advocates of entrepreneurialism promise that not only will organisations profit from outcomes such as higher flexibility, increased innovation, and higher level of commitment, but in an entrepreneurial company, the workforce is said to benefit from a workplace that supports individual

self-development and self-fulfilment (Peters/Waterman 1982). Such intriguing promises include self-determination and the opportunity to use one's own discretion instead of being constrained by centralised and bureaucratic regulations (Purser/Cabana 1998). Whereas traditional management thinking leaves no doubt that the interests of the owner of a business and its managers and the concerns of the workers are clearly opposed to each other, authors of the excellence literature suggest that both groups may now strive unanimously for the common success of the company (Ouchi 1981; Peters/Waterman 1982).

However, while advocates of an enterprise orientation inside organisations propagate the concept as a win-win situation for companies and employees, within critical management studies it is characterised as a form of intrusive management control (Burchell 1993; du Gay/Salaman 1992; Miller/Rose 1990; Rose 1990; Storey et al. 2005). Here, enterprise is regarded as a means to obtain power over employees: Individuals are influenced to act, think, and feel in accordance with the goals of the company and thus the very 'inside' of the individuals is formed (Kunda 1992: 12; Willmott 1993). Weber (1968) claims that 'we are placed in various orders of life, each of which is subject to different laws', which implies that there is not a single ethic that could claim universality for a person's identity. However, authors such as Peters/Waterman (1982) 'demand that all areas of life should be united, and that the individual overcomes the alienating distinction between the different social roles she is forced to inhabit' (du Gay 2000a: 10). While advocates see this as positive, critics point out that the integration of different roles into one, organisationally defined way of life implies the risk of constraining personal autonomy and individuality (Kunda 1992; Willmott 1993), thus leading to equally or even more powerful control over employees than earlier measures of discipline, direct control or authority (Rose 1990). The danger thus results from the far-reaching claim that individuals should constantly strive for self-fulfilment, becoming a creator of their own life, while the goal and the direction of this process is towards becoming the pre-defined, organisationally appropriate individual (Burchell 1993). Here, the notion of enterprise in particular supports the blurring of boundaries between individuals and organisation; as individual fulfilment is propagated, enterprise plays the 'role of relay between objectives that are economically desirable and those that are personally seductive' (Burchell 1993; du Gay et al. 1996; Garrick/Usher 2000; Miller/Rose 1990; Willmott 1992).

To summarise, the concept of enterprise and its associated discourses have often evolved around these two dualisms: first, enterprise as opposed to bureaucracy and second, enterprise as a liberating development versus an intrusive form of control. A small number of more recent studies, however, have started to give a richer view of enterprise by directly or indirectly challenging these two dichotomies.

One challenge regarding the first dualism – enterprise versus bureaucracy – is, for example, connected to how the discourse of enterprise is reproducing itself within academia (see also Fenwick 2008; Fournier/Grey 1999). In their analysis of academic literature on enterprise, Fournier and Grey (1999) claim that a large part of the popularity of enterprise is due to 'overlooking the bureaucratic elements which coexist with the logic of enterprise' (1999: 113), or to even denoting bureaucratic elements as entrepreneurial, e.g. in the case of TQM, which is based on a whole set of formal rules.

As, according to Fournier and Grey, the early discourse was based on evidence mainly drawn from management guru literature; there is some danger in reproducing the claims made there within academia, e.g. enterprise as a solution for the battle with red tape (see also Cohen 1992; Fournier/Grey 1999; Ogbor 2000).

A further point of critique regarding the dichotomy between enterprise and bureaucracy can be found within Courpasson's (2000) work (see also Fournier/Grey 1999). Based on two case studies, the author points out that 'soft', e.g. normative control and coordination, go hand in hand with hierarchical and formal bureaucratic practices. Some post-bureaucratic logic and mechanisms, such as decentralisation, seem to support rather than contradict a bureaucratic and hierarchical logic (Courpasson 2000; see also McDonald et al. 2008; Salaman/Storey 2008). Tracing the organisational as well as societal developments that have been described by organisation theorists, Courpasson and Dany (2003) develop this argument further on a conceptual level. As managers nowadays are confronted with an empowered workforce, they need to seek sources of authority and obedience that are different from the ones connected with bureaucracy. Therefore, bureaucratic rules are not substituted, but rather supplemented with democratic, entrepreneurial, and self-controlling aspects; 'to allow the company to be what some want it to be (a world of initiative, participation, creativity, and commitment), it has also to be a world of rules, structures, control and morality, which allows the checking of acts and which distinguishes between understandable, acceptable and unacceptable errors and conducts as well as between normal and exceptional successes.' (Courpasson/Dany 2003: 1253; see also Korczynski 2004). According to the authors, post-bureaucratic organisations are not non-bureaucratic, but 'hybrids' that allow managers to gain obedience that is legitimised by administrative, rational, and moral bases.

The second dichotomy of enterprise being *either* a means of control *or* a way to self-determination has also been questioned. While acknowledging that there are "preferred' readings of the [enterprise] discourse' (p. 46), Cohen and Musson (2000), for example, point out that the effects of the discourse and associated organisational efforts are not monolithic and that individuals may to some extent respond and react differently to entrepreneurial ideas and mechanisms (see also Bröckling 2007; Doolin 2002; Storey et al. 2005). Independent from the notion of enterprise, Musson and Duberley (2007) further emphasise the complexity of the relationship between any discourse and identity, with their data suggesting that the 'attempt at managerial control is mediated by other factors, not least the existence of competing and contradictory managerial discourses' (p. 157). Halford and Leonard (2006) even point out that individuals actively draw on diverse and also competing discourses to construct their subjectivity and McDonald et al. (2008) demonstrate how employees can actively take benefit from a change programme inspired by the notion of enterprise.

These more recent studies show that enterprise within organisations is a more complex phenomenon than it had been portrayed in the beginning: Individuals can act and react differently in relation to entrepreneurial discourses (Halford/Leonard 2006; McDonald et al. 2008; Musson/Duberley 2007) and entrepreneurial as well as non-entrepreneurial discourses can co-exist within one and the same company (Courpasson/Dany 2003; Korczynski 2004).

In the following analysis, we want to take the argument one step further and suggest an extended understanding of enterprise within firms *itself*. Though the aforementioned recent studies deepen the view of enterprise to a large extent, the perspective is still narrow. First, by still taking the opposition between enterprise and bureaucracy (at least implicitly) for granted, the linkage between enterprise and bureaucracy on the level of the organisation is mainly regarded as contradictory. Second, while it has been highlighted that individuals can react differently towards enterprise, the complex organisational practices on which these reactions are based have not gained attention. Therefore we want to show that enterprise within organisations is a *complex organisational* phenomenon, i.e. it unfolds through practices that are both liberating and controlling and it can be based not only on entrepreneurial ideals but also on bureaucratic rules, which can either restrict or support enterprise.

Our attempt to analyse the complexity of enterprise as a way of governing an organisation is inspired by Foucault's later ideas of government and power (1993, 2005). He describes power relations as complex and focuses not only on the 'what' and 'why' of power, but first of all on the 'how' (see also Haunschild 2003; Weiskopf 2005). For Foucault (2005: 256), power is 'an ensemble of acts. *These acts comply with possible acts and proceed in an area of possibilities for the behaviour of acting subjects.* Power persuades, tempts, offers incentives, simplifies or complicates matters; power expands or reduces the opportunities of action, it increases or decreases the possibility of action.'[1] Thus, when reflecting on the issue of control and governance within organisations, one should be aware that power can only be practiced over *free* subjects, with power and freedom thus not necessarily excluding each other (Foucault 2005: 257). And the organisational act of governing itself, the processes and practices of power are already intricate (Foucault 1993, 2005), allowing us to understand enterprise within organisations as an entanglement of bureaucratic and non-bureaucratic elements (first dualism) as well as controlling and liberating elements (second dualism).

Our empirical evidence is based on research in the Amway Corporation that reflects these two dualisms. Amway's particular characteristics are presented in the next section.

3.   The Amway Corporation

With more than three million sales representatives in over 80 countries and regions all over the world and a turnover of 6.4 billion US-Dollars (in 2005),[2] Amway is one of the biggest direct selling companies world-wide.[3] Like other direct selling organisa-

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[1]   This and all other quotes were translated by the authors.

[2]   Source: www.amway.com/en/BusOpp/business-profile-10065.aspx,
         accessed on 11/21/2007.

[3]   The label 'Amway' is usually used for the whole corporate group; the official name of the holding, however, is Alticor (www.alticor.com). It has four subsidiaries: Amway Corporation, Quixtar Inc., Access Business Group LLC, and Pyxis Innovations Inc. Unless otherwise noted, information about the Amway corporation originates from www.amway.de/default.asp?zone=Ueber%20Amway&lan=de&num=2&sub=19, accessed on 12/27/2005.

tions, such as Tupperware or Mary Kay Cosmetics, it relies solely on distributing goods directly to consumers, mostly in their homes by door-to-door or party selling. Established in 1959, the company now produces approximately 450 products,[4] with a portfolio covering cosmetics, nutritional supplements and health and cleaning products.[5] The German affiliate of the Amway Corporation, Amway GmbH, was established in 1975. Today, more than 85,000 salespeople and over 200 administrative employees work for the company in Germany, which generated a turnover of 119 million Euros in the business year of 2003/2004.[6]

An important aspect of authority structures is that distributors are self-employed and not subject to any formal authority; no one is legally subordinate to another (Biggart 1989; Sparks/Schenk 2001). Moreover, Amway is a so-called multi-level marketing organisation,[7] allowing – or rather encouraging – its distributors to recruit and coach new salespeople. The new distributors become the 'Downline' of the recruiting member, who is consequently called 'Upline' by the new recruit. The Upline earns money by selling products, but also by having a share in the profits of its Downline (Brodie et al. 2002).

To become a distributor, no formal qualifications are required. People from all backgrounds, all educational levels, and personal characteristics (Brodie et al. 2002) can join the organisation. With the help of their Downline's sales, distributors can climb a job ladder with more than 30 levels. The first step is becoming a '3%er', progressing to a '21%er'. From there, the levels go over to metals such as 'Silver', 'Gold', and 'Platinum' to still more precious materials such as 'Ruby', 'Emerald', and 'Diamond' until the 'Crown-Ambassador' is reached (Amway GmbH (Ed.) 2007). Each level implies a higher status and more recognition in the company as well as additional commissions. In official material, for example, the level of 'Diamond' is presented in an exemplary way with a monthly revenue of 506,000 Euro of one's whole group and a monthly commission of about 17,705 Euro for the head of the group (Schwarz/ Schwarz 2001).

Although members are self-employed, successful distributors are regarded as 'managers' inside the company and the mentioned labels show their rank in a status hierarchy. Additionally, the company offers its own educational system to its self-employed distributors with seminars, success manuals, weekly meetings etc. in order to train and motivate its members (Schwarz/Schwarz 2001, 2002, 2005).

Official records about leaving the company are missing, and information about turnover rates in direct selling organisations is generally hard to find. Many distribu-

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[4]   Additionally, Amway cooperates with numerous firms via internet (www.amivo.de), offering their products and services with special conditions for Amway distributors. These additional products range from wines to electronic devices by companies such as Philips, Kenwood or Kärcher (Amway Europe Ltd (Ed) 1999).

[5]   Source: www.amway.de/default.asp?zone=products&lan=de&num=2&sub=87, accessed on 12/21/2006.

[6]   Source: www.amivo.de/press_room01.html, accessed on 11/21/2007.

[7]   This is also called 'network marketing'.

tors seem to leave the company without prolonging their membership agreement for a second year (Biggart 1989), and a study during the 1990s for Amway Japan reported a turnover rate between 60% and 70% (Croft/Woodruffe 1996). According to participant observation, most distributors start working for Amway as a sideline to a regular job or while taking care of their family (see also Brodie/Stanworth 1998). Instead of leaving the company, distributors can also just stop recruiting and selling products while remaining in Amway as so-called 'passive members', who every now and then buy products for personal use. Thus, Amway members split into three groups: a large group of members that are passive; a large group conducting their business on a part-time basis; and a few highly involved, full-time entrepreneurs.

4. Method

4.1 Data collection

The case of Amway forms part of a wider study on direct selling companies in Germany which was conducted over one and a half years in three companies (Groß 2008). The field work for Amway was conducted over a period of six months and was based on data triangulation (Stake 2005) including participant observation (Girtler 2001), qualitative interviews (Rubin/Rubin 1995) and documentary analysis (Bryman/Bell 2003).

The first author took part in 16 weekly meetings, with each meeting lasting around one and a half hours. During these evenings, further invitations to smaller, privately organised meetings were received and accepted. Additionally, a big semi-annual rally in Austria with approximately 1,500 people was attended. These events are designed for distributors, but (paying) guests are also welcome. Observations from the mentioned events were logged in a research journal.

Parallel to the participant observation, twelve semi-structured face-to-face interviews with 19 members including seven couples were conducted. Potential interview partners were met at local meetings, taking a snowballing approach. Additionally, members were interested themselves in bringing the first author into contact with other successful members or up-climbers – an approach that was openly described as guaranteeing that she would talk to the 'right people' in Amway. Interview partners ranged in age from their early twenties to their mid-fifties. One fifth of them had an academic background, mainly in medicine and biology. Three-quarters had a vocational training, ranging from automotive electrical mechanic to driving instructor to industrial clerk. One third of the interview partners had been self-employed before they started their Amway business or was still self-employed in addition to it. Most interview partners had been a member of Amway for more than five years, up to 24 years. Two of them re-entered the company after pausing for a while because they had gotten divorced from their earlier partners with whom they had built up their Amway business.

The focus on these rather successful and ambitious members helped us to identify the organisational arrangements within Amway. As the goal of our paper is to show the complexity of enterprise within an organisation, it was important to consider alternative views on the company. These were gained on the basis of six interviews with seven non-members, six of whom were former distributors (one couple) and one

an external observer, whose friends had joined the Amway Corporation. These interviews where held face to face, via phone, via e-mail or two of the above.

Table 1:   Interview partners

Interview partners (partly married couples)	Seniority	Quoted as …
Active members		
1 x 18%er	5 years	'18%er'
1 x 21%er	1,5 years	'21%er'
4 x Platinum	From 8 to 14 years	'Platinum 1', 'Platinum 2' …
4 x Ruby	From 6 to 14 years	'Ruby 1', 'Ruby 2' …
2 x Emerald	15 and 24 years	'Emerald 1', 'Emerald 2'
Former members	Up to 4 years	'Former member without level of success' 'Former 3%er' 'Former 15%er' 'Former 18%er' 'Former Ruby'
External observer without membership		'External observer'

Interviews with both active members and former members lasted between one and two hours on average and were recorded as well as fully transcribed. In our analysis, distributors are quoted according to the labels they currently have inside the company, e.g. as an '18%er', '21%er', 'Platinum' or 'Ruby' (active distributors) or the level they had held (former distributors), e.g. 'former 18%er' (see table 1).

In addition to participant observation and interviews, our research is based on the analysis of official company documents such as websites,[8] self-help manuals (Schwarz/Schwarz 2001, 2002, 2005), the monthly German in-house magazine 'Amagram' (Amway GmbH (Ed.) 2004d), and international publications by the Amway founders Jay Van Andel (1998) and Rich de Vos (1994). Further documentary research includes critical websites such as 'Amway: the untold story' or 'MLM watch'.[9] These offer personal reports by former distributors and their perception of the Amway Corporation. Some former distributors have also published their own books about their experiences as Amway members (Andrews 2001; Bloch 1996; Dean 1996; Scheibeler 2004).

4.2 Data analysis

For our analysis we used an inductive approach (Miles/Huberman 1994), iteratively defining and developing our codes by recursive analysis of the data. As we could also refer to and build upon the broader data generated by the wider empirical study and thus information on other direct selling companies, we could better understand the very specific ideals and organisational arrangements of Amway (Yin 2003). In addi-

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[8]   Source: www.schwarz-diamond-connection.de, www.amway.de, www.amway.com.

[9]   Source: www.cs.cmu.edu/%7Edst/Amway/AUS/ and http://www.mlmwatch.org/.

tion, the different kinds of sources, namely interviews and observations made on the local level and international publications by the Amway Corporation (Van Andel 1998; de Vos 1994), enabled us to go back and forth between the different data and refine our understanding and our codes (Yin 2003).

The Amway organisation can be characterised by a paradoxical situation: on the one hand, distributors are self-employed and consequently they are entrepreneurs; on the other hand, distributors are members and therefore part of a corporation. The first step was to find out how members and former members perceive themselves and the company, especially in which respects they regard the company as entrepreneurial and in which respects controlling. Crucial for the entrepreneurial side were also central beliefs and values displayed and transferred in the company, i.e. 'freedom', 'self-responsibility' and the 'chance to fulfil one's own dreams'. The restrictive elements were mainly mentioned by the former members who reported a lack of freedom, the need to comply with rules and social pressure from the Upline. The complexity – and ambiguity – of enterprise within the company also became obvious by analysing the documents of supporters and critics of Amway and by comparing the field notes of the participant observation with reports from former members (Scheibeler 2004; Sonnabend 1998).

The second step was to have a closer look at the unusual organisational structure of the company. On the one hand, some central characteristics of bureaucracy are missing, starting with a work contract and a formal authority; on the other hand, many formal aspects are still present, e.g. a highly elaborated commission system with Amway's 'ladder of success' (Schwarz/Schwarz 2001). Here, the document analysis of Amway's regulation (Amway 2004a, 2004b, 2004d, 2004e) helped to understand the complexity and the scope of formal rules within the company.

These different aspects together, i.e. liberating and controlling based on enterprise, and the lack- as well as the existence of bureaucratic rules, led to a complex and partially contradictory picture of the organisational arrangements within Amway. Building on this diversity, in the following we will challenge the two dichotomies prevalent in the literature.

5.   Enterprise within Amway

The preceding sections have made it clear that the notion of enterprise as a monolithic concept is obsolete (Fournier/Grey 1999; Musson/Duberley 2007; Salaman/Storey 2008; Storey et al. 2005). In the next section we want to provide empirical evidence for the idea that not only individual reactions to entrepreneurial discourses are manifold, ambivalent, or even contradictory, but that the concept of enterprise within companies as such is an ambiguous organisational phenomenon. We thus want to challenge both the idea of enterprise within organisations as either liberating or an instrument of (repressive) control as well as the idea of enterprise being counterfactual to bureaucracy.

Based on Foucault's (Foucault 1993, 2005) idea of the complexity of power and governance and the importance of the practices and processes tied to these issues, in the following we first point out how organisational entrepreneurial elements in Amway foster self-determination, while at the same time serving as a means of control

(5.1). Subsequently, we will show that entrepreneurial processes include bureaucratic rules and norms (5.2).

5.1 Enterprise within Amway – self-determination and control

How entrepreneurial ideals support freedom and self-determination

As already described above, Amway is an entrepreneurial company and a company of entrepreneurs in many respects. Indeed, seen from an organisational level and irrespective of the concrete perception on the part of the company's members, those characteristics that advocates of 'enterprise within organisations' usually associate with the concept are present, such as autonomy in determining one's way of working, self-responsibility, and following one's own dreams (Peters/Waterman 1982).

First of all, members are *legally self-employed* business people. Officially, distributors are called 'business owners' or even 'IBOs' (independent business owners) who do not sign a work-contract,[10] but a membership agreement (Amway 2004d). This neither specifies how much time a member has to invest nor how many products one has to buy or sell (see also Wotruba et al. 2005). According to the membership agreement, distributors can work wherever and whenever they want because, unlike in most bureaucratic organisations (Weber 1968), no common offices and office hours exist (except for the employees of the headquarters and the production plants). Amway offers 'freedom, spare time and arranging the day as I like' (Ruby 3). The status of legal independence is supported by the fact that there is no automatic renewal of membership. Instead, each year distributors have to *sign an agreement* to remain members (Amway 2004d). Therefore, they not only have to be willing to pay their membership fee, but also have to make an active decision to go ahead with their Amway business.

The formal independence is tightly connected with several entrepreneurial ideals. First, as Amway distributors own their business, *they are their own bosses* and as no distributor is legally subordinate to another, high-level distributors are not in 'the privileged position to give orders, to command – that won't work' (Ruby 4; Sparks/Schenk 2001). Second, as entrepreneurs, distributors are not only able to decide how they work, but they are also *self-responsible for their success and failure*. 'And of course, nobody has to tell me what I have to do…because it is my business, and that's also part of it. If something doesn't work, I take it on the chin!' (Emerald 2). Third, having an Amway business is connected with the entrepreneurial ideal of *following one's own dreams*. As suggested by advocates of enterprise (Peters/Waterman 1982), the task of the company is to provide members with the opportunity to find their individual fulfilment. In the line of this argument, an Emerald explained that he has to coach the members of his Downline so that they find their individual goals. 'As most people…have no goals, have no aims…[I help them to] reflect: 'What kind of goals could I have…?' (Emerald 1).

Considering the formal independence as well as the entrepreneurial ideals within Amway, distributors contrasted their status with ordinary, salaried positions in bureaucracy and the predetermined and over-directed working environments of the latter

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[10]   Source: www.amway.com/en/globalcomm/united-states-canada-information.aspx, accessed on 4/21/2006.

– as is described in most of the literature on enterprise (du Gay 2004; Fournier/Grey 1999). One distributor stated that in bureaucratic jobs, one 'directs one's energy on the achievement of objectives: someone else's objectives' (Platinum 2; see also popular accounts of (Bartlett 1994; Clothier 1992; Conn 1977). Or, as his spouse puts it: 'when I imagine that there are people who work at machines, who spend eight hours a day on the shop floor, working alone, and who do this for 30-40 years; that's a jail-house…that's torture, it's unbelievable!' (Platinum 2).

In contrast to employees in a bureaucratic company, Amway distributors have their own businesses – and their own interests. The latter may also be disconnected from the Amway Corporation. This independence of members becomes clear when taking a look at distributors' selling and recruiting activities, their seminar attendance, and their turnover rate. Considering that the individual average purchase is (only) around € 113 per month (including purchase for own use and for selling to non-members),[11] the average distributor seems unperturbed by the corporation's interest in a high sales volume. Also the second core activity – recruiting new members – does not give the impression of being enforceable to a great extent. In local meetings all distributors who had recruited a new member the week before were honoured – which turned out to be only a small number of the regularly attending members. Even seminar attendance as such did not seem to be very high. Official data is missing, but participant observation showed that out of the 100-150 distributors who attended weekly meetings only a smaller proportion of approximately 20% were regulars. Last but not least, the aforementioned high fluctuation rate of distributors (Biggart 1989) indicates that the majority of members do not stay within Amway for a second year.

While entrepreneurial characteristics and ideals offer Amway distributors opportunities for self-determination and autonomy, in the following section we will show that such a view of enterprise within Amway is too narrow. The entrepreneurial ideals within Amway also allow the company to control its members (Miller/Rose 1995) and thus, enterprise both contains self-determining and regulating aspects.

How entrepreneurial ideals are connected with organisational control

As we have seen above, Amway's sales representatives are called '(independent) business owners' (Amway 2004d) in corporate language. The only prerequisites to becoming an entrepreneur in Amway are a minimum age of 18 years, signing the membership agreement, and paying a fee. Therefore, many people who have never worked in the field or run a business suddenly turn into 'businessmen and -women' – at least they receive this label by the company (Alvesson/Willmott 2002). Becoming a business owner virtually 'overnight' implies that most of the distributors need some advice on how to run their Amway business and also on how to become an entrepreneur in general. Consequently, new members seek advice from their Upline and their so-called 'Sponsor', i.e. the one who has recruited them. As implied in this latter label, this

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[11]   The calculation includes 85,000 self-employed members in Germany with a total turnover of 119 Mio. € in 2003/2004 (source: www.amivo.de/press_room01.html, accessed on 11/27/2006). Considering that members pay an annual fee (estimated 4 Mio. €/year), the purchase of products per member is on average € 113 per month.

should be someone who is supportive and protective, helping people to advance both personally and in their job. Indeed, a good Sponsor in Amway is regarded as an 'all in one teacher, priest, business partner, spouse, and friend' (Platinum 4).

Additionally, Amway offers an extensive educational system to support its distributors. It consists of weekly meetings, national rallies, and a broad variety of literature on 'how to become successful' (Schwarz/Schwarz 2001; Schwarz/Schwarz 2002). In line with the independent status of the distributors, educational material and seminars are called 'advice' – recommendations that cannot be enforced, but are 'offers' for success (Schwarz/Schwarz 2002; see also Alvesson/Willmott 2002). The content of this voluntary 'advice' is far-reaching as members are told how to behave, feel, and think as a good and appropriate entrepreneur, or more generally, as a 'good worker' (Sewell 1998: 405). A business support book titled 'The way to success', for example, suggests to 'make sure you have a tidy flat, and, of course that you yourself give a neat impression, too. You represent a business. Dress yourself appropriately…Important: look motivated and cheerful because this is a cheerful business' (Schwarz/Schwarz 2002: 71). These recommendations reach right into distributors' private lives. Being an – independent – business owner is thus connected with implicit 'rules of the game' (Alvesson/Willmott 2002) that help to control the Amway members normatively.

One of these rules refers to the above mentioned *self-responsibility for success and failure* (Storey et al. 2005). Members are business owners and as such cannot blame others for lacking success – neither their Upline nor the company. Therefore, the entrepreneurial ideal of self-responsibility absolves the company from its own responsibility for any failure, as an official handbook explains, 'every willing and hardworking person can be successful in this business…we, as people, are subject to different influences…thus, we do not function equally well all the time. However, a good system always works!' (Schwarz/Schwarz 2001: 2). Consequently, it is up to the individual to prove him- or herself worthy of being an entrepreneur. While a signature on the membership agreement makes distributors into business owners by label, in practice becoming an entrepreneur involves hard work, namely developing one's own personality (Biggart 1983). As the co-founder Van Andel once said, the Amwaynian 'kind of freedom is only granted to a few humans. Everybody has to earn this freedom first by his never-ending quest and his personal vision' (Schwarz/Schwarz 2005: 35). In accordance with critics of the ideal of enterprise (Burchell 1993; Rose 1990), within Amway the legally self-employed members have to be 'continuously engaged in a project to shape his or her life as an autonomous, choosing individual driven by the desire to optimise the worth of his or her own existence' (du Gay et al. 1996: 269). Being self-responsible is part of this project and, as critics of the notion of enterprise point out, internalising control while regarding oneself as the master of one's own life (Burchell 1993; Rose 1990; Sewell 1998; Willmott 1993). 'Nowadays, I am laughing 80 percent of the time. Even when I'm sitting in my car, I always make sure that the corners of my mouth are stretched because you have no reason to be sad! You pull all the strings yourself!' (18%er).

Distributors who successfully engage in the process of self-development are not only promised higher sales and recruiting numbers, but they are also honoured with a whole set of labels that show their status within the company. Labels (Alves-

son/Willmott 2002) such as 'Platinum' or 'Diamond' not only show a level of success at work, but also one's value as a person. They imply that one has been – to use the words of a distributor – 'honed' by one's team, bit by bit, from a raw stone to a glittering diamond because 'this [Diamond-]label does not exist without a reason, does it?' (21%er). The one who has passed through this process also acquires authority; not in a formal sense, but 'authority by success' (Courpasson/Dany 2003) as a Double-Diamond puts it in a speech at a 1,500-people rally, 'If the Sponsor says: 'Jump!' Don't ask, 'why?' Ask, 'how high?'. Thus, although distributors are legally not subordinate to another (Biggart 1989; Sparks/Schenk 2001), being a successful entrepreneur within the Amway system grants the *moral right to tell others what to do* and as such to be an archetype for other members.

The possibilities for archetypes to tell how they work and what made them successful are many. While in local weekly meetings, one product presentation of three to five minutes was scheduled,[12] during the semi-annual seminar the products of the company were not relevant. The seminar consisted mainly of the following three elements: (1) videos with luxurious journeys, big cars, and other signs of opulence; (2) tributes to distributors who have climbed up the career-ladder; and (3) speeches from successful members. These are idolised by the audience, as a former distributor joked about a seminar, 'once, there came a big shot to the [name] seminar….You'd think Jesus himself was turning up.…He was more admired and adored than Beckham and Ronaldo together' (Former 3%er). To give another example, one speaker in a weekly meeting explained that he always had some journals about luxurious vacations and dream houses on hand for recruitment talks. Showing these journals to his guests, but also having them lying around 'coincidentally', helped him to activate the 'individual' dreams of potential new members.

The formal right to *follow one's own dreams* through the Amway business is here connected with the aforementioned need to learn how to be (and become) a business person as well as with the presentation of successful members as archetypes and counsellors. As within any company, Amway cannot enforce compliance with the propagated ideals (Gabriel 1999; Spicer/Böhm 2007), but the company uses meetings, taped speeches, and written manuals to influence these 'individual' dreams in line with the 'Am-way' of doing business. According to Pratt (Pratt 2000b), individual aspirations and organisational interests are aligned in two steps. First, individual meaning is broken down with 'sensebreaking practices', e.g. with a practice called 'dream building'. 'By reminding an individual of what one *can have* (e.g., a new car, a better family) and/or what one *can become* (e.g., wealthy)…it creates a type of identity deficit or a misfit between who one is and who one wants to become' (Pratt 2000b: 467, original emphasis). In a second step, new meaning and new wishes – basically a 'better self' (Willmott 1993) – are provided via 'sensegiving' practices (Pratt 2000b). Thus, although ideals such as 'self-fulfilment' refer to individual developments, *the concrete*

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[12]   Source:
         www.schwarz-diamond-connection.de/neu/german/content/schulungszentren.html, accessed on 1/24/2007.

meaning of what exactly makes up an Amway business owner and his or her successful life *is propagated by the company* (Koehn 2001).

Not all members want to follow Amway's understanding of autonomy and self-responsibility. In the above section we pointed out that the high fluctuation rates of distributors show that many Amway members do indeed follow their individual goals within Amway and many even leave the company. This high turnover of distributors leads to a kind of 'self-selection'. As one distributor puts it, 'people find Amway. He who fits, understands it [the business]…but others would not feel comfortable here and they will not come again' (Ruby 2). The legal self-employment and the need to actively prolong the membership each year facilitate the company exit but also support the homogeneity within Amway; many members leave, but the ones who remain seem to form an even more like-minded community (Pratt 2000a), the community of 'Amwaynians' – as several interview partners labelled themselves. For them, outside connections may become unnecessary or even problematic – a reason why direct selling organisations are sometimes denoted as cult-like organisations (Scheibeler 2004). 'Yes, today we have other friends than we had before. And these friends simply come from the Amway-business because here you somehow have the same interests. Of course we have another circle of friends and acquaintances…but, well, this is not the kind of environment in which we want to be' (Emerald 1).

To sum up, Amway members are self-determined and autonomous business owners in many respects, and at the same time they are embedded in normative control mechanisms based on enterprise (Pratt 2000a; Pratt 2000b). As a result, enterprise within Amway is neither liberating nor restrictive, but is rather a more complex *organisational* concept than has been suggested by the literature so far. In the following section we will challenge the second dichotomy linked with the concept of enterprise by showing how bureaucratic rules coexist with the identified entrepreneurial aspects.

5.2 Bureaucratic elements in an entrepreneurial organisation

As we have just seen, freedom and control on the basis of entrepreneurial elements coexist in Amway and enterprise within the company contains both enabling and restricting aspects. Taking a closer look at Amway's approaches, one can also detect that in spite of the deliberate contrasting of Amway with bureaucratic environments, bureaucratic elements are quite prominent and exist in parallel with the entrepreneurial aspects. Entrepreneurs in Amway are embedded in a system of clear structures and impersonal, stable rules, although members are self-employed and the most obvious elements commonly associated with bureaucracy – e.g. a formal work contract and a formal authority structure (Weber 1968) – do not exist.

First, the 'membership agreement' (Amway 2004d), 'Amway rights and duties' (Amway 2004a) and further regulations (Amway 2004b, 2004e) govern the relationship between the distributors and the company. They define that distributors are business owners and demarcate the scope and the limits of their independence. For example, Amway's rules do not define working hours or a minimum sale and they reserve the right to cancel the membership agreement at any time (Amway 2004d). Moreover, they include a 'principle of equality', 'the option to become an Amway business partner is open to all persons, regardless of their sex, race, nationality and political and re-

ligious affiliation' (Amway 2004a: 6). Then again, they also make clear that the content delivered in trainings for members and materials used in such trainings have to meet the requirements of the company and therefore the head office has to inspect and authorise them (Amway 2004b). Additionally, the duties of the Upline and the relationship between Upline and Downline are stipulated; those who recruit new members should instruct, train, and motivate them so that they gain an 'understanding for their duties as a business partner' (Amway 2004a: 10).

Second, the range of products distributors can choose from for their selling activities is given: Amway produces and sells a certain number of products; asks for fixed and non negotiable retail prices; recommends the price of sale; and offers flyers for advertisement (Amway 2004c). Hence, Biggart (1989) believes that 'distributors are not entrepreneurs. They perform highly routinised selling and recruiting behaviours. Innovation is neither necessary nor welcome' (Biggart 1989: 163).

Third, Amway possesses a considerable commission and reward system (Schwarz/Schwarz 2001). This defines clearly and in an impersonal way (Weber 1968) how one can (and also cannot) work one's way up and how each of the more than 30 steps of the career ladder can be climbed. A higher level entails additional commissions according to a prefixed scheme effective and offers several rights, e.g. to wear pins that show one's level of success and to speak on meetings and big rallies (Schwarz/Schwarz 2001).

Thus, clear rules like the ones described in this section exist in parallel to entrepreneurial elements, questioning the second dichotomy between enterprise and bureaucracy. In the following, we will show that the entrepreneurial, bureaucratic, controlling and liberating elements not only coexist, but are intertwined in multiple ways.

6. Discussing the complexity of enterprise within companies

In interviews, small meetings, and big seminars, Amway's high-level distributors presented themselves as being enthusiastic about the opportunities for becoming a personally free entrepreneur within Amway. But we also found that many people did not come to weekly meetings, only bought products for private consumption, and did not seem interested in following the entrepreneurial ideals of the company. Moreover, most former members appeared to be dismissive of the company as they felt restricted by the abundance of implicit and explicit rules about how to think, act, and feel as an ideal 'Amwaynian' entrepreneur, 'they put a noose around my neck, and – at one point – I realised it was slowly and definitely becoming too tight' (Former 18%er). These reactions show how differently *individuals* can experience an entrepreneurial discourse within their organisations (Courpasson/Dany 2003; Musson/Duberley 2007).

We suppose that this variety of individual reactions is not only based on organisational members' individuality and agency (Storey et al. 2005) but on the complexity of *enterprise* as a means of governing organisations *itself* and the *organisational* processes and practices (unavoidably) tied to exercising power via enterprise in larger corporations. Our data demonstrate that entrepreneurial aspects support individual liberation as well as organisational control (section 5.1). Moreover, enterprise not only co-exists with bureaucratic rules but is itself partially based on formal rules (section 5.2). It is, there-

fore, no surprise that bureaucratic elements are 'alive and well' (Korczynski 2004:111) in entrepreneurial companies.

Table 2:   The parallel existence of entrepreneurial, bureaucratic, liberating and regulating aspects within Amway

|	**Freedom** ⟷	**Control**
Enterprise		
	- being a legally independent business owner - no regulations about how many products to buy or sell - freedom to choose time, place, and amount of work as well as approach to work - need to actively renew membership - entrepreneurial ideals of autonomy, self-responsibility, and following one's own dreams are propagated within the company - entrepreneurial self-perception is supported by comparisons with ordinary 'salaried', 'bureau-cratic' positions	- the precise meaning of 'enterprise' and associated values is defined according to company interests with the help of an educational system (books, manuals, speeches, seminars) as well as control mechanisms such as sensebreaking and sensegiving - implicit and explicit rules transferred via the educational system are labeled 'advice' - becoming an independent business owner virtually over night leads to the seeking of such advice - business success within Amway leads to a status hierarchy that grants high-level distributors the moral right to tell others what to do - entrepreneurial ideal of self-responsibility is used to absolve company from responsibility for failure - easiness to exit company leads to self-selection of members. The remaining ones share a greater coherence of perceptions, attitudes, and world-views

Bureaucracy	- membership agreement
	  o guarantees legal independence
	  o guarantees free choice of how, where, when, and how much to work
	- commission and reward systems define possibilities of earning money
		- membership agreement
		  o defines duties of members and of Uplines
		- commission and reward systems define career path and limits of earning money
		- range of products and retail prices are given by company
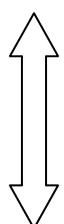
Table two gives an overview of our findings thus far. First, the left part of the first row lists the various *entrepreneurial* elements within the company that support individual autonomy: the formal independence of distributors; the entrepreneurial ideals within the company; and the mechanisms supporting these ideals. Second, the right part of the first row summarises *the control mechanisms that are connected with such entrepreneurial elements:* an educational system, for example, that defines how the ideal 'Amwaynian' business owner should think, act, and feel; or the labelling of implicit and explicit rules as 'advice' for self-employed distributors who want to become successful. Third, the second row names the *bureaucratic elements* within Amway such as the membership agreement or the commission system. Here, the left part summarises formal rules that allow organisational members to act as entrepreneurs, while the right part shows rules that restrict distributors' entrepreneurial autonomy.

As may have already become obvious in some parts of our descriptions, the elements we identified do not only exist in parallel with each other; rather they are tightly interwoven. In the following, we want to exemplify how these different facets of the entrepreneurial company Amway are interlinked. Thereby, it should become apparent that the following combinations are also connected with each other.

First, enterprise can be liberating and controlling at the same time (first row of table 2). Even one and the same entrepreneurial element can support individual autonomy and be used as a mechanism of control at the same time, e.g. because language, even if it is meant to produce a certain outcome/trigger a certain reaction, has different meanings and implies different 'options' of action. On the one hand, being an 'independent business owner' might convey and reinforce the notion of freedom and encourage people to design their business according to their own ideals and goals. This can include joining meetings without actually selling or recruiting others or choosing a life outside Amway (Scheibeler 2004). On the other hand, the explicit self-responsibility connected to being an IBO might cause new and inexperienced members to fall back on the rules and support of the company and their Upline. This support is labelled 'advice' within the company and is, of course, voluntary for the formally independent members. As distributors can 'actively' choose to follow the company recommendations, the advice becomes credible and tempting. Following the 'advice' also implies that loyal members develop according to organisational norms – as has been noted by critics of the notion of enterprise (Burchell 1993; Rose 1990; Willmott 1993). Thus, the ideal of enterprise simultaneously contains both individual autonomy as an entrepreneur and following the advice of others.

Second, bureaucratic rules can restrict but also enable enterprise within organisations (second row of table 2) and sometimes seem to be a necessary part of it. The self-employed status of Amway distributors is based on a contractual arrangement (du Gay 2004), i.e. the membership agreement (Amway GmbH (Ed.) 2004d). This agreement also states that distributors are free to choose where and how much they work. Formal rules make the claim of Amway credible, namely offering autonomy, self-responsibility as well as the chance to fulfil one's own dreams. At the same time, bureaucratic rules can also foil these ideals. Thus, the same or other regulations also indicate clearly that the content delivered in seminars and so-called 'business support materials' such as manuals has to be authorised by the company (Amway GmbH (Ed.) 2004b). As a result, our data give empirical evidence for how bureaucratic rules support as well as restrict liberating entrepreneurial ideas (Courpasson/Dany 2003).

Third, entrepreneurial autonomy is supported by entrepreneurial ideals but can also be based on bureaucratic rules (first column of table 2). As we have seen, Amway's distributors are motivated by the belief that they can act as 'independent business owners'. Considering their legal status as self-employed distributors they do indeed have the freedom to work according to their individual rhythm. That is to say, the rules and the formal status form the basis of (the ideal of) being an entrepreneur within Amway.

Fourth, the controlling side of enterprise within organisations can be based on entrepreneurial ideals but also on formal rules (second column of table 2). The entrepreneurial characteristic of self-responsibility functions as a normative control mecha-

nism to absolve the company from any responsibility for failure; whoever does not succeed did not work hard enough or worked in an incorrect way (Schwarz/Schwarz 2001). Thompson calls this process 'legitimation' (Thompson 1984: 131), i.e. a control mechanism employed by companies to gain credibility for their particular organisational point of view (see also Potterfield 1999). This kind of control is further 'legitimised' and supported by formal and impersonal rules (Kärreman/Alvesson 2004) that restrict entrepreneurial autonomy, such as the legal independence of distributors and the commission system, which also put the responsibility for failure in the hands of the employees.

These four combinations demonstrate that practices in an entrepreneurial organisation are a complex net of traditional entrepreneurial *and* bureaucratic, liberating *and* controlling elements.

7. Conclusion

We are said to live in an 'age of enterprise' where profit and non-profit organisations as well as individuals are pushed to become more entrepreneurial. While some authors and management gurus in particular have pointed out the liberating notion behind enterprise, critical management studies agree on enterprise within organisations being an instrument of power and governance – albeit one that individuals can respond to differently and that can co-exist with bureaucratic control.

Inspired by Foucault's (1993, 2005; see also Weiskopf 2005) understanding of power relations as complex, as productive and repressive, and as enabling and restricting human/individuals' actions, our analysis suggests a broader picture of enterprise within firms: it cannot be seen as a self-sufficient and clear-cut organisational concept, but organisational practices and processes connected with enterprise (sometimes necessarily) comprise different organisational values as well as bureaucratic structures and rules. Thus, our example empirically underlines the idea that enterprise within a company does not exist alone (see also Fournier/Grey 1999) – and cannot exist alone. In this sense, entrepreneurial practices or 'mechanisms' of transferring and implementing entrepreneurial ideas, such as language, contracts or motivation and systems of payment, which have played a major role in the issues identified in section 5 will not only evoke diverse reactions. Rather, they will always, within the framework of being entrepreneurial within a company, make use of or be based upon rules and structures normally excluded or even denied in the entrepreneurial discourse.

As the Amway Corporation has not only a strong entrepreneurial organisational culture but also self-employed distributors without fixed working hours or common offices, its members are close to being 'real' entrepreneurs. This facilitates the empirical demonstration of how entrepreneurial practices and ideals are entangled with non-entrepreneurial ones. In most other companies the different characteristics or dimensions may be more difficult to identify and may be less clear-cut. However, this does not imply that enterprise is less complex there. On the contrary, we suppose that 'normal' companies wishing to become entrepreneurial may actually display more complexity. Organisations where members are 'regularly' employed have an even higher need to bring together dual – and potentially contradicting – logics (Korczynski 2004). Professional service firms such as consultancies, for example, also propagate

and to some extent offer self-fulfilment and professional autonomy, having strong organisational cultures at the same time (Alvesson/Kärreman 2004; Kärreman/Alvesson 2004). It might be precisely this double promise that makes entrepreneurial companies so seductive for loyal members. And it might be the tight inter-linkage of entrepreneurial ideals with bureaucratic rules – in the case of a consultancy e.g. professional autonomy and self-realisation based on a clearly hierarchical job ladder – that allows organisations to suggest a sense of enterprise and self-fulfilment to its employees while at the same time predefining their path (Groß 2008). We suppose that understanding enterprise as a complex phenomenon facilitates the research of the manifold relationships between liberating and controlling aspects as well as between entrepreneurial ideals and formal rules, and the effects this has on employees and the distribution of power within a company.

Therefore, one implication of understanding enterprise as connected with manifold and partially contradictory organisational practices is that the discourses inspired by management are not as monolithic as they may seem from the outside (Cohen/Musson 2000). It has been shown that employees resist, comply with or even react differently towards managerially inspired enterprise discourses (Cohen/Musson 2000; Halford/Leonard 2006; McDonald et al. 2008). Regarding enterprise itself as a complex phenomenon, however, that is based on a broad variety of partially contradictory and partially re-enforcing *organisational* practices which do not only comprise typical entrepreneurial ideas and mechanism, offers broader/deeper insights and more starting points for future research: What contradictions and consistencies result from the inter-linkages on the organisational level? What messages does the organisation thereby (consciously or unconsciously) transmit? Which constraints or advantages – or even seductions – arise for the employees and how do they respond? And how do these issues affect the power and governance of the organisation? Last but not least, what does this mean for the phenomenon of enterprise within firms as such?

A second implication is that enterprise as a complex phenomenon allows the re-evaluation of the role of bureaucratic elements in organisation in particular and thereby overcoming the 'epochal bureaucracy/enterprise' dualism' (du Gay 2004: 38). Our empirical data show that enterprise and bureaucracy are not principally in opposition to each other but rather that they are two ways of organising and governing that can co-exist or even support each other – be it to liberate or to control. The strong dichotomy between the two thus seems to be less rooted in organisational reality than in the entrepreneurial discourse itself, in a highly stylized and normative approach (for the normative aspects of enterprise see also Bröckling 2007). Based on our observations, it becomes possible to (re-)consider the productive, potentially enabling or even liberating aspects of bureaucracy – a view that may have lost attraction because the ideal of enterprise has been in the spotlight in management but also in academia (du Gay 2000; Fournier/Grey 1999).

Thus, ultimately, we agree with Fournier and Grey (1999), who have claimed that it is necessary to specify more carefully what one means when drawing on this term and when analysing how others employ it. As the discourse according to Fournier and Grey some years ago was based on evidence mainly drawn from management guru literature, they point out the danger of reproducing the claims of guru literature in aca-

demia (see also Cohen 1992; Ogbor 2000). A shortcoming of a one-sided view on enterprise, a positive or a critical one, is that it does not take into account the paradoxical nature of enterprise within organisations. Enterprise within organisations requires that organisational members are *entrepreneurs and parts of a company at the same time*. This implies that they have some autonomy but are also controlled; it implies that they may be inspired by an entrepreneurial discourse which can be in opposition to formal rules or also be supported by them. Originally, the entrepreneur is the individual 'self made man' who takes initiative, is creative and autonomous and sets up his own business (Schumpeter 1942). Transferring this notion with its idealised characteristics into organisations will always cause fractures and contradicting answers to the question what enterprise is and how it affects organisational members.

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