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Evolving efficacy of managerial capital, contesting managerial practices, and the process of strategic renewal

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Research Summary: This article examines the adaptation process of a large manufacturer in the Indian steel industry faced with radical sociopolitical shifts in the external ecosystem. It uses the Bower-Burgelman process model in combination with Bourdieu's praxis theory to explain the emergence of competing managerial initiatives and associated contests in the company's internal ecology of strategy-making in terms of socially acquired dispositions. It illuminates process–practice pathways through which top management's resource allocation supported changes in the efficacy of the different forms of capital of the contesting managerial classes, thereby legitimizing the daily "doings" of the rising class and institutionalizing a (re)defined adaptive rule structure.

Managerial Summary: How do managers' early influences, including family upbringing and schooling, bear upon organization's renewal strategy? Our study finds that during discontinuities imposed by socioeconomic upheavals, when organizational performance flounders, managerial initiatives are driven by deepest dispositions derived from early age socialization. Competing managerial fractions jostle to impose practices favorable to their longstanding preferences by putting their weight behind preferred product-market choices and seeking appropriate changes in the ineffective internal rule structure. Administration's challenge lies in leveraging internal contests to iteratively allocate resources in search of winning dispositions and configurations aligned with evolving social relations in the external environment. Internal availability of managerial groups from diverse social origins is crucial for the administration to reclaim organizational advantage by arbitrating between contesting practices and practitioner fortunes.

KEYWORDS

Bourdieu's practice theory, Bower-Burgelman process framework, habitus, organizational renewal, resource allocation

1 | INTRODUCTION

Organizational adaptation and renewal are research areas that have drawn sustained interest from strategy scholars (Agarwal & Helfat, 2009; Ben-Menahem et al., 2013). The Bower-Burgelman (B-B) model, a longstanding research framework in this area, provides an evolutionary process perspective proposing an internal ecology of the organization as the key to its successful adaptation to techno-economic dynamism in the external ecosystem (Burgelman, 1983, 1991, 2002). It shows that organizations retain fitness across environmental changes through a selection process on autonomous competing new initiatives that are allocated resources outside the tightly defined (and slowly changing) organizational rule structure by the administration, which concurrently ensures strict adherence to the rules for ongoing routine activities. Over time, the adaptation process triggers a retrospective legitimization of the few new initiatives that succeed and the administration incorporates them into corporate strategy, modifying the product-market scope of the organization, that is, the "what" of strategy.

Sudden and wholesale transitions involving radical sociopolitical shifts in the external ecosystem, however, pose problems for this extant conceptualization of the change process as the entire rule structure of the organization gets delegitimized rather abruptly, raising questions around how the administration of some organizations might still manage to effect renewal in periods when the guiding certainty of a rule structure is unavailable. Concomitantly, the sudden collapse of a longstanding rule structure ties the renewal process to a search for a new rule structure that would guide the organization, that is, the issue of "how things are done here," in addition to changes in the "what" of strategy that the literature has so far focused on. Specifically then, sudden and wholesale transitions point toward the need to supplement the B-B model to understand renewal in such cases. In this article, we address this question through an ethnographic investigation into the renewal process at Global Steel Company[1] (GSC), a large Indian steel manufacturer, following dramatic macro-level change precipitated by India's liberalization program.

The liberalization program effected steep shifts in competitive intensity (Krishna & Mitra, 1998), reducing tariff and nontariff barriers (Topalova & Khandelwal, 2011), making technology imports cheaper/easier (Kathuria, 2008), and diluting restrictions on raw material imports (Anderson & Lanen, 1999). It significantly impacted composition of FDI inflows (Kumar, 1998), the level of internationalization (D'Costa, 2000), and the focus on export markets (Dholakia & Kapur, 2001). Literature has documented that the challenge of renewal amid such change involves the modulation of the "what" or scope of organizational strategy in line with the evolving

[1]GSC (a pseudonym) is an integrated steel manufacturer established before India gained independence from the British. Operating its own iron ore and coal mines, it manufactures various grades of steel, serving key sectors like automotive, construction, infrastructure, engineering, and so on. We study an initiative that originated in the steel rebar department after the liberalization of the Indian economy.

technological and economic conditions (Madsen & Leiblein, 2015; Tripsas, 2008). Additionally though, liberalization recalibrated societal relations and power equations as well through abolition of state control on industrial development, shifts in political consciousness (Kohli, 1989), and the shifting viewpoint of policy elite, accounting for a changing social matrix (Pedersen, 2000). It announced a new consumer culture (Parameswaran, 2004) and the emergence of a new "class" of consciously cosmopolitan professionals, a new politics of identity, production, and (culture) consumption (Toor, 2000). It thus presented a context of sudden wholesale change, where the old "rules of the game" (North, 1990) have been dismantled, with new rules yet to emerge. Organizations are then left with internal capabilities that are not valuable anymore and cause–effect relationships that seem increasingly ambiguous, all manifested in a preponderance of ineffectual organizational change (Newman, 2000). Indeed, while changes in technological (Usselman, 1993), regulatory (Smits & Groeneveld, 2001), and competitive arenas (Segelod et al., 2011) have been studied as triggers of adaptation, there is a dearth of studies concerning organizational response to sudden wholesale changes in the macro-institutional context involving radical sociopolitical shifts.

In a seeming response to the sudden institutional transition and accompanying loss in fitness, data from GSC showed that renewal involved not only targeting a hitherto unaddressed market, the rural retail consumers with a branded product, but it also entailed dramatic shifts in distribution practices. The practice of selling steel in bulk deals to large independent city based traders, who in turn accessed buyers across the country through brokers, was replaced by the practice of selling frequently and in small lots to "formally appointed exclusive" district town–level intermediaries, who accessed small retailers in delimited territories bound by contractually imposed vertical restraints (Figure 1). Simultaneously there was a stark reorientation of power equations between practitioners. A previously insignificant managerial class, characterized by modest parental background and strong technical education, superseded another hailing from the liberal arts educated societal elite that had been in control of steel allocation before liberalization (Figure 2). Again, a class of sidelined distribution intermediary located in district towns with small town sensibilities wrested access to steel, upstaging the erstwhile affluent and dominant trader class bred in the city culture (Figure 1). The challenge of renewal amid such wholesale change transcended modulating the "what," that is, the scope of organizational strategy, to also establishing a new rule structure, that is, (re)defining "how

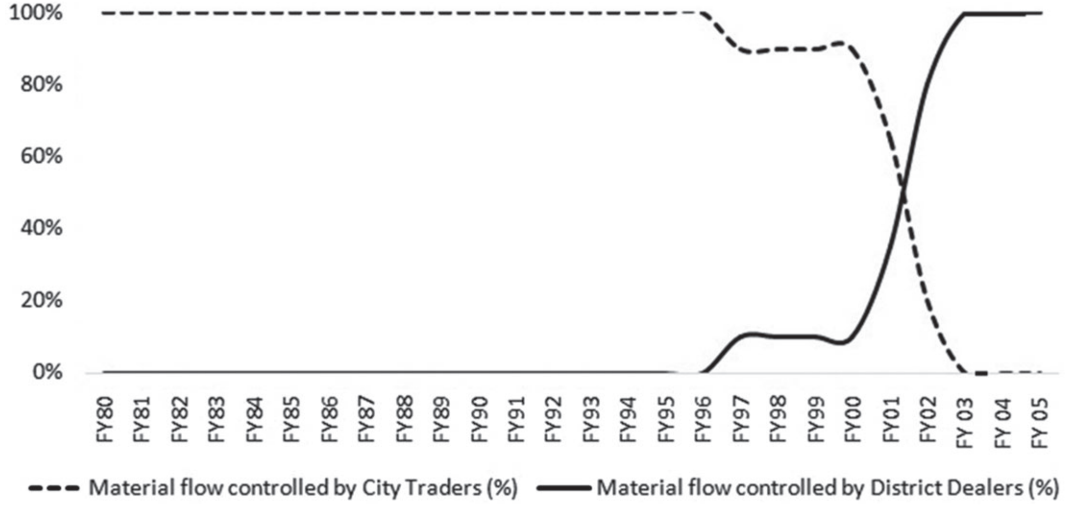

FIGURE 1 Shift in material flow pattern through intermediaries at GSC

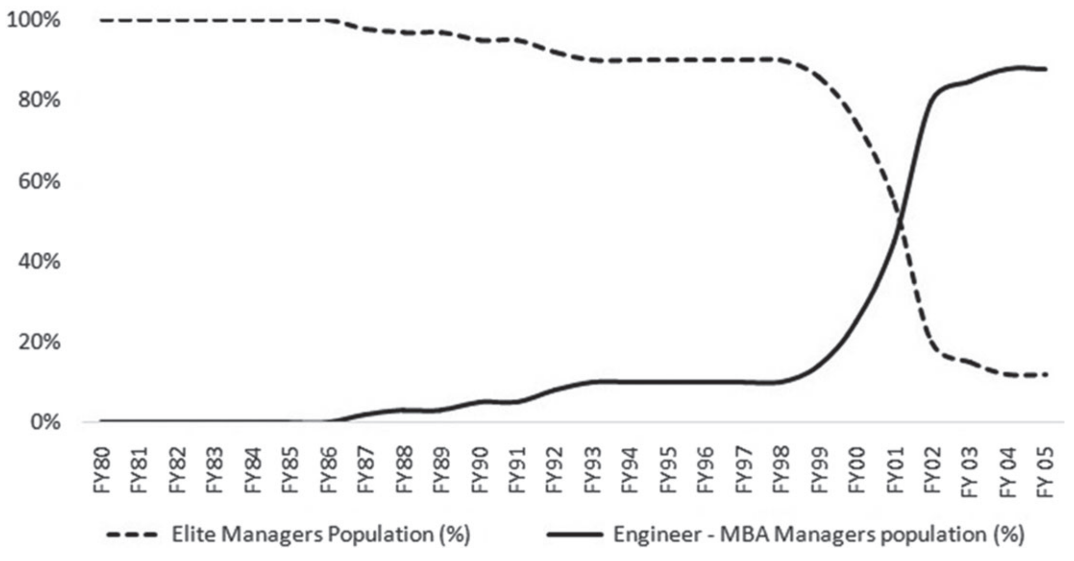

FIGURE 2 Shift in managerial population at GSC

things are done here." The renewal trajectory also appeared to be tightly linked to the question of "who" benefited from such changes, in addition to the original question of the organization's fitness, providing new evidence on the nature of renewal process.

1.1 | Centrality of rule structure in the B-B model

In the B-B model of intraorganizational ecology, the rule structure is central to the administration's ability to guide the renewal process. Variations initially negotiate time and resources outside the rule structure to subsequently seek integration within its bounds. When rule structures themselves lose legitimacy, the administration's decision-making anchor is disturbed and organizational actors can only rely upon their preexisting dispositions as a guide of action. The organization's renewal process then gets tightly linked to the initiatives derived from practitioner's dispositions, and the success of an initiative also begins legitimizing a particular way of doing things. In the face of sudden and wholesale transition, we found an intense contest between varying streams of work practices, themselves representing (interests of) different classes of actors, becoming central to the renewal process. Indeed, the administration depended on this competitive jostling to "select" the initiative and practices for the future, in the process adopting a new rule structure and implicating in the renewal process an entire class of practitioners who shared the underlying dispositional characteristics.

1.2 | Practitioner motivations in renewal

In decoding organization's strategic response, the background characteristics of practitioners have been considered (e.g., nationality by Kwee, Van Den Bosch, & Volberda, 2011, education by Carpenter, Geletkanycz, & Sanders, 2004), but only as proxies for actual behavior and practices. Indeed, firms are known to react to crisis by privileging new sets of executives who can bring in new skills and work practices (Pettigrew, 1985; Ludescher & Burgelman, 2012), but the process of such intraorganizational power shifts has been left unaddressed, particularly the motivated maneuverings by managers themselves (Armstrong, 1987). Our context, where actors reveal their deepest natural selves in order to cope with all round uncertainty, provides the empirical opportunity to study the practices of managers. Bourdieu's (1984) practice theory provides us the grammar to interpret diverse practices coexisting in a social space, the role of actors' social histories in creation of such variance, and the opposition between actor classes arising from such practice level differences. In analyzing the contests between managerial fractions, our longitudinal study with focus on ethnographic methods allowed us to explore our actors beyond their proximal organizational identities revealing them as "historical artifacts" (Bourdieu, 1987, pp. 8–9) with influences from birth, upbringing, and education embedded far before their professional careers began. Such influences create preference for certain practices while fostering aversion toward certain others (Bourdieu, 1990). Actors' daily doings do not then adhere to the logic of (bounded) rationality, and are instead derived from their embodied dispositions (Gomez, 2010) and respective capital endowments, both being a product of long socialization and "historical labor" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 248).

To account for the simultaneous shift in organizational strategy, fortunes of classes of actors, and micro-practices, we open the edifice of the B-B process framework (Burgelman, 1983), employing Bourdieu's practice perspective to understand autonomous initiatives and associated daily work practices as an expression of actors' dispositions (Bourdieu, 1984). Further, by focusing on the interregnum when the process of upstaging of a managerial class was underway, we examine the iterative interplay between intraorganizational process of adaptation and the agency of wider social practices embodied variously in managerial fractions. We show that the relational oppositions between the practices of different classes of actors, as also their labor to improve the conversion rates of their capital endowments, are central to explaining the wholesale change in the rule structure, and the related organizational renewal that the administration oversees. In other words, this study investigates the iterative interplay between the labor of individual actors derived from their dispositions and the conscious resource allocation activity of administration, which together impacted individual and organizational fortunes introducing the role of extraorganizational "social" influences firmly into the understanding of intraorganizational ecology of strategy making.

Derived from the special case of wholesale transitions that we study, we contribute by supplementing the lessons that the B-B process framework affords about organizational adaptation. Firstly, renewal involved rapid and wholesale changes in the structural context (rule structure) in contrast to the retrospective change in the strategic context that earlier studies had identified. The routinization of the new structural context and thus the securing of renewal further depended on painstaking daily, often mundane labor of an expanding actor class, quite unlike the discursive political and strategy work that, as literature highlights, enabled a change in the strategic context. Secondly, actors coped with deep uncertainty by implicating their personal dispositions, derived from their family and educational backgrounds, in the organizational renewal process, giving it a "social" character, going beyond the technical–economic rationality highlighted in past studies. Thirdly, we introduced theoretical concepts of "style," "logic" and "routines," all derived from actors' dispositions but acting at different levels to illuminate the process–practice pathway through which the personal "*style*" of a class of managers reified into a coded "*routine*" defining new work practices and a new rule structure, thus renewing the organization in the face of radical sociopolitical shift in the external ecosystem. Finally, the administration mediated the contest in favor of a social configuration that helped the organization regain dominance. It did this by allocating material resources as well as pliant bodies whose subsequent labor formalized new rule structures while securing renewal. Lacking the certainty afforded by a longstanding rule structure, the administration depended on close involvement with the "contest" between managerial fractions to shape the internal ecology during the transition.

The article begins by establishing the utility of employing Bourdieu's practice theory to map actors' activities in the B-B process framework toward decoding renewal during dramatic transitions. The methodology section presents the analytical scheme we employed to trace the coevolving shifts in fortunes of classes of actors, distribution practices, the rule structures, and the organizational strategy. Next we characterize the actors operating in the field of steel distribution through a delineation of their daily doings. We then show how the dramatic transition in the environment interplayed with a combination of the "labor of actor classes" and "administrative allocation," leading to shifts in fortunes of actors as well as the organization. In the discussion section we enumerate the new insights that the combination of process and practice perspective afforded us about organizational adaptation. We conclude with lessons that our study holds for practitioners in an increasingly uncertain world, point toward future directions of research and list the study's limitations.

2 | THE "DOINGS" OF STRATEGIC RENEWAL

Processual studies of renewal have located practitioners essaying their organizational role as a CEO (Barr, Stimpert, & Huff, 1992), top management team (Siggelkow, 2001), middle management, and operational managers, and so on (Burgelman, 1996; Schwarz & Nandhakumar, 2002). While a common theme in processual investigation of change has been the alteration in mental maps of key practitioners, very little is known about how one belief system upstages another. Even in studies involving wholesale replacement of management, authors have bracketed out the "defeat" of existing managers and their ways of working, focusing instead on change-inducing activities of new managers. Notably though, the B-B process framework sees the upstaging of managerial beliefs and associated initiatives as linked to the resource allocation process in organizations (Burgelman, 1996).

2.1 | The B-B model: Administration and the renewal process

The B-B framework is the core of a long- running research stream that sees strategy as an iterated process of resource allocation, reinforcing a set of rules derived from past experiences of successful managers and initiatives. It is an intraorganizational perspective on strategy-making wherein the organization is seen as the site of autonomous variations in the form of strategic initiatives, which compete for organizational resources to increase their chances of getting selected and retained (Burgelman, 1991). Coherent and consistent application of the success formula requires management to enforce, often in a distant unwavering mode, the structural context comprising administrative mechanisms such as planning, control, and reward systems and other cultural mechanisms comprising rituals and norms (ibid.). Again, if the organization is not to get trapped in an outdated success formula, then the rules concerning resource allocation (Bower, 1970) need to reflect external environmental selection pressures at the same time (Burgelman, 1996). Promising initiatives that are brought alive through the *definition* process and gain support through the *impetus* process need to be provided space, even if the initiatives do not fit the immediate structural context, through the process of *strategic context determination* (Burgelman, 1983). Such processes provide an effective intraorganizational selection mechanism that reflects current external pressures and affords a window to future environments. While the B-B framework shows adaptation as involving modulation of the structural context by the top management to absorb managerial initiatives that promise alignment with the evolving future environment, the challenge after wholesale change is to establish an entirely new structural context aligned with the sharply altered, and still evolving, environment. In the confusion that ensues when institutional rules are dismantled, while the administration remains unsure of appropriate structural context for future fitness, it is only expected that managers would pursue daily work through practices derived from their deepest personal beliefs going beyond the techno-economic rationality that extant process literature highlights. It is thus in the specific context of wholesale change that the B-B process model could benefit by taking note of competing managerial practices, and how if at all the contests between managerial interests lead toward the establishment of a "future-fit" structural context and associated adaptation.

2.2 | Bourdieu's practice theory: Practitioners' dispositions and enabling capital

It is this requirement of decoding the renewal process through actors' practices that led us to Bourdieu's practice theory[2] (1990, pp.13–14), which proposes that an individual's predilection toward certain practices can be understood in terms of socially learned and embodied dispositions (*habitus*) and various forms of *capital* (social, cultural, economic) accumulated over time, which together determine the social structure of power relationships (*field*) between classes of actors. This theory is particularly relevant for our study because it accords a central place to the "social conditions" under which inter- and intraorganizational contests find articulation (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008, p. 1).

Habitus is the practical wisdom that agents acquire on account of their history, "the social inscribed in the body…the source of most practices" (Bourdieu, 1962, p. 111), which finds more or less expression in the field of steel distribution, revealing the hugely divergent and yet natural "fish in water" ways of different actors (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 127). For example, we have a class of managers with an unhurried princely style alien to calculations and documentation in allocating steel, acquired from their privileged families and anglicized education; another class of managers hailing from modest families that was comfortable with sustained hard work involving calculations, deep analysis, and formal documentation while distributing steel, exemplifying the stark opposition in their daily "doings" derived from their equally divergent histories and varied labor that shaped them. "Capital" on the other hand exists in various forms such as money, material objects of value, and positions that assure high levels of income (economic capital); in relationships with important members of the society, such as the associations a set of managers at GSC had with judicial, political. and bureaucratic circles (social capital); in educational qualifications from coveted colleges as another class of managers had obtained (institutionalized cultural capital); the taste to appreciate art or a practiced ease toward a skill (embodied cultural capital); or collections of objects related to art and culture such as collections of curio objects (objectified cultural capital). Capital, however, does not exist and function except in relation to a field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 101), which is a socially structured space of conflict and competition among agents that operate in it. For example, the field of steel distribution comprises various types of actors such as steel manufacturing firms, traders, brokers, retailers, steel industry regulators, and so on, and is similar to a prism that treats those operating in it according to the logic of its internal structure. Thus the value of various types of capital forms of actors varies from one field to other, the same capital forms being valuable in some fields and irrelevant in another (Everett, 2002; Khanchel & Kahla, 2013).

The most valuable capital form in a field, termed symbolic capital, is one among economic, social, or cultural capital that is unanimously regarded as a legitimate source of prestige and authority in a field. Unchallenged in times of relative stability, the sociological phenomena of symbolic capital comes under threat during large field-level upheavals. While under stable conditions, actors labor to accumulate the valuable capital forms (Üstüner & Thompson, 2012), the foremost being

[2]Bourdieu (1984, p. 101) explains his theory through the formula: [(habitus) (capital)] + field = practice.

symbolic capital, when conditions change dramatically, dominated actors are presented with the opportunity of negotiating their positions by laboring to improve the conversion rate[3] of their existing capital endowments (Coskuner-Balli & Thompson, 2013). As actors labor, so the challenge for administration lies in accessing the new symbolic capital under construction, and regain the organization's lost advantage.

3 | METHODOLOGY

3.1 | Context

Our study is part of larger investigations into the dramatic shifts in the distribution practices in the Indian steel industry in the postliberalization era. Liberalization terminated the erstwhile regime of fixed steel prices integrating Indian markets with the volatility of global steel cycles. New manufacturing capacities could be established without government approval and import duties were relaxed, rapidly eliminating steel shortages. It is in this context that some steelmakers, who earlier sold only to large traders or institutional buyers, now began appointing regional distributors who were to sell to retailers in their respective delimited territories. Professional sales teams began operating in the retail markets and a range of vertical restraints were attempted by manufacturers. It is widely accepted in the industry that firms that managed this transition in sales and distribution practices were able to maintain profitable growth, while others grappled with volatility of steel commodity markets.

Our preliminary fieldwork involved long unstructured interviews with industry insiders, leading to identification of GSC as an exemplar that successfully adapted to the transition by making these shifts. Specifically in relation to GSC, we were alerted to the sharp shift in the characteristics of the managerial class that commanded authority in the pre- and postliberalization era. The former belonged to prominent and wealthy families that owed their allegiance to the pre-independence colonial power and announced their pedigree by emulating the English lifestyle (Naipaul, 1963; Rao, 2006). Postindependence, members from these families occupied powerful positions in bureaucracy, judiciary, and politics, affording their kith and kin in the corporate world the ability to navigate the bureaucratic maze of a planned economy. The latter class of managers, belonging to the larger modest populace, was drawn from the stock of professionals that developed after independence at government-funded institutes established to provide human resource support to the country's agenda of industrialization. This article originated from the shift in fortunes of the two managerial classes[4] as also of their respective extraorganizational allies that corresponded with dramatic shifts in distribution practices after liberalization.

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[3]A class of steel traders had a pan-India network of other intermediaries that allowed it to seek customers across several provinces. This form of social capital guaranteed it attractive prices and thus had a high "conversion rate" in the field. Postliberalization, as more and more steel companies shifted to a distribution model where the intermediary was allowed to sell only in a few allocated provinces, the "conversion rate" of their social capital (of national scope) reduced drastically as it was of little utility in the changed rule system.

[4]The two classes of managers had stark oppositions between their practices. This does not indicate, for example, that there did not exist a single manager of a class who did not behave like the manager of the other class. In fact, our data has examples of the latter class of managers who took to partying and drinking effortlessly. Again, there were managers of the former class who, upon the defeat of their group, renewed their career at GSC by acquiring a professional degree. Such overlaps though did not impact our analysis and findings in any substantive way for in a Bourdieusian analysis, one recognizes classes by density of distribution arrived at by clustering of characteristics of actors. A class of actors thus does not claim to have all its members as equals, but in probabilistic terms "most" respond in predictable, class-determined ways of creating patterns of regularity.

TABLE 1 Site, method, and number of interviews

Site of work	Sites of access	Methods of access	Number of interviews
Managers	Office space, smoke rooms, home, company programs with distributors, clubs, restaurants, work-related travel to distributor/retailer, family function	Nonparticipant observation, internal documents, interviews, participation in informal discussion, shadowing	25
Secretaries, office boys	Office space, home	Interviews, participation in informal discussion	6
Dealers	Office, home, organizations program with steel company/retailers, work-related travel, family function	Nonparticipant observation, internal documents, interviews, participation in informal discussion,	17
Trade Community	Office, community temple, marriage ceremony	Nonparticipant observation, interviews	14
Sales boys of dealers	Office space, home, work- related travel, family function	Interviews, participation in informal discussion, internal documents, shadowing	15
Brokers	Office	Interviews	4
Retailers	Retail counter	Interviews, shadowing	8

3.2 | Method

Our ethnographic enquiry was aimed at immersion in the everyday chaos of the postliberalization era and we accessed our actors in their own cultures (Geertz, 1973), separated by organizational and cartographic boundaries. Additionally, the deep effects of India's colonial past and the subsequent period of planned economic development saw the actors implicated in the present–future–past relationality, making it necessary for us to maintain a dialogue with the past (Gadamer, 1989), which we achieved by engaging with items of history. Through a multisite ethnographic enquiry, while ensuring hermeneutic situatedness (Ericson & Melin, 2010), we were able to take our gaze beyond cultural rules to the strategic contests between socialized and historicized bodies (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 37).

Our interest was in the regularities of daily "doings" (Orlikowski, 2010), which "belie an immanent strategy that has been historically and culturally transmitted through everyday practice" (Chia & Mackay, 2007). Actors cannot faithfully articulate their "inherited understanding and embodied tendencies" (Wacquant, 2004) and to capture these, we accessed a variety of work and life situations of our respondents. At GSC, we accessed two different classes of managers. At Kolkata's commercial hub, we accessed steel traders and brokers, while in rural markets we accessed retailers, steel distributors, and sales boys. Simultaneously, we authored multiple case studies featuring the journey of GSC and intermediaries over a 25 year period. Showing our informants their place in case studies helped personalize our research, in a manner similar to Bourdieu's use of photographs to establish trust and gain entry (ibid.). Over time, we established a level of rapport that allowed us to conduct ethnographic interviews with a range of respondents (Table 1), fulfilling our analytical need to access actors' broader social identities beyond the organizational. We also accessed retired managers, secretaries, and old inactive traders to piece together a forgotten way of life. In the initial stages, we employed purposive sampling to interact with a range of actors and construct the boundaries of the field. Subsequently, through a process of snowballing, we accessed various actors in the field, observing and conducting interviews at worksites, between meetings or en-route to the markets. This approach allowed us to discuss the nuances of actors' work practices in an informal manner. In structured interviews we focused on the individual's personal history, background, and professional journey. In later stages, we followed theoretical sampling to meet specific data needs.

3.3 | Data

At the time of our investigation, the distribution practices at GSC had stabilized and were being followed across the country in multiple product categories. The variation that initiated the practice shift was located in the steel rebar product category in West Bengal province, making it the appropriate site of enquiry. Our base in Kolkata, the provincial capital, was particularly convenient as it was also GSC's commercial headquarters and the regional trading hub. Our knowledge of the local language helped us access the rural steel markets that lay within a day's travel by local trains.

At the GSC office, the first author had been allocated a seat and his status as a researcher was communicated to employees. This allowed him to observe managers' daily doings and join them in their informal discussions. He was offered controlled access to internal documents and was occasionally invited to observe internal meetings. At GSC, functionaries across the hierarchy were accessed. At the distributor organizations, we studied internal documents, interviewed the proprietor, and shadowed (McDonald, 2005) their sales boys during retail market visits. The actors in the trade markets shared anecdotes and insights freely but were guarded about sharing internal documents. Field notes were generated from our workplace observations, participation, and shadowing in retail markets. We accessed history through novels, movies, and popular articles of the time apart from personal memoirs, remembered accounts, academic writings, and Internet sources as also more than 6,000 proprietary documents and artefacts. Our fieldwork spread over 20 months (2012–2014), and included interviews of 89 respondents transcribed in about 600 pages of data. We also prepared a chronological list of events and associated context (Table 2) for the period of our interest (1991–2002), which we subsequently refer to (e.g., E3 refers to an event of May '92 and C3 to its underlying context).

3.4 | Analysis

In the first phase of our analysis, we mapped the field of steel distribution of the pre-liberalization era and characterized the key actors in terms of their capital endowments (Bourdieu, 1986). Details like practices, lifestyle and taste, network, education, and so on, were coded as indictors of various capital forms (Table 3) and we use these codes (e.g., sc-1 for a variant of social capital) to report employment as well as development of the capital form. Next, through the study of how the game was being played and domination reproduced, we understood how prevalent practices were simultaneously backed by and resulted in accumulation of various forms of capital (Figure 3), ultimately effecting organizational outcomes related to steel distribution (allocation, purchase, sale, inventory levels, etc.). This helped us ascertain the relative efficacy of capital forms of the actors operating in the field (Stage 1, Figure 4). In the second phase (i.e., after liberalization when existing organizing templates were rendered ineffective), we studied the struggles in the field as contests between actors' divergent practices, indicative of their relational oppositions—and their attempts—to renegotiate conversion rates of their capital forms. These contests were understood through aggregate dimensions of actors' daily doings revealed as categories of "style," "logic," and "routines," all derived from habitus but operating at levels ranging from the personal to the organizational (Table 4). "Style" is a particular manner of activity or appearance that actors employ in daily work and interactions at the individual level. "Logic" operates at the firm level, and serves as an organizational justification of "styles" in operation. "Routines" are the sequence of actions that can transport a "Logic" across time and space in an organization. By mapping the contests in the B-B framework (Table 4), we delineated different stages of the renewal process in terms of the underlying practices derived from the habitus of actors involved. We mapped the relative influence of various actors in the field across the period under consideration (Figure 5), and the evolving value of their capital forms

TABLE 2 Events in the period 1991–2002

E1 (July, 1991): New Industrial Policy announced. Iron & Steel removed from provisions of compulsory licensing.
C1 (1947–1991): Establishment of modern industry was a nationalist agenda aimed at achieving socioeconomic progress. Thus came into being the idea of state-exercised control, in the form of licenses, on the limited resources that were available for industrialization.

E2 (January, 1992): Price and distribution regulation on iron & steel abolished.
C2 (1945–1991): State controls on steel prices were first introduced by the British during WW-II, which was maintained in independent India. A Tariff Board was made responsible for fixing prices with the idea that the prices should not promote inflation and, at the same time, allow profits for industry's growth. Companies protested the inadequate surplus but the controls continued.

E3 (May, 1992): Automatic approval for foreign equity investment of up to 51% in iron & steel industry.
C3 (1947–1992): Foreign investment proposals were to be cleared by the government in advance. Wherever allowed, foreign equity share was kept very low so that majority of ownership control remained with Indians.

E4 (1992): Management consultants McKinsey establishes office in India and begins recruiting from Indian MBA schools.
C4 (1985–1990): Global consulting firms had noted the opportunity buildup in the process of shrinking state involvement in India that had begun in the 1980s. Functionaries of McKinsey made a formal recce and met cabinet ministers, bureaucrats, and businessmen.

E5 (1991 onward): Import duties on steel products progressively lowered. Import duty on capital goods reduced as also duties on raw material for steel production, reducing capital costs and production costs.
C5 (1947–1991): Policymakers felt that the Indian economy needed to be protected from global competition to allow them the time and space to build indigenous capabilities. Custom duties had risen to an average of 100%.

E6 (1992 onward): Multiple greenfield and brownfield steel manufacturing projects announced by various companies including GSC. Financial institutions committed over Rs 30,000 Cr (~$8 Bn in prevailing exchange rate) for 19 projects to double the steelmaking capacity of the country in the immediate decade after liberalization.

E7 (1995): Booz Allen, BCG enter Indian market and recruit talent from Indian B–Schools.

E8 (1995): Traders begin getting new options for steel supply. Instances of refusing to lift material when steel prices sliding.

E9 (1996 onward): Top management of GSC is continually approached by partners of a range of global consulting firms.

E 10 (1996): Engineer-MBA managers get to manage the distribution of rebar, the sidelined category of steel product in GSC.

E 11 (Early 1997): Engineer-MBA managers experiment with new distribution practices for rebar in the province of W. Bengal.

E 12 (July, 1997): Asian financial crisis. Domestic steel market suffers weakening export markets and dumping by foreign players.

E 13 (1997–2000): Concerns at GSC around financial performance and ability to sell increasing quantities in profitable manner.

E 14 (Early 1998): Top management takes note of the rebar distribution system, which was delivering relative stability in throughput and pricing, and makes preliminary enquiry.

E 15 (Mid-1998): Top management appoints MC to optimize distribution structure with focus on rebar distribution experiment.

E 16 (Mid-1998): MC selects Engineer-MBA Managers from commercial function for project task force. No Elite Manager selected.

E 17 (1999): Task force comprising members drawn from MC and GSC travels across India studying various distribution networks, mostly of FMCG majors like P&G, Unilever, and Asian Paints.

E 18 (Early 2000): MC submits report with suggested distribution structure and distributor selection criteria.

E 19 (February 2000): Advertisement for distributorship put in national dailies.

E 20 (Mid-2000): Due diligence of shortlisted candidates by visiting their premises, making enquiries in line with selection criteria.

E 21 (Late 2000): Formal appointment of distributors for rebar product group across provinces. Rebar supply to Traders stopped.
C 21 (Late 2000): Final interviews by Top Management and MC representative for distributor selection in line with MC report.

E 22 (2001): New department (retail department) focused on steel retailing established within the commercial department. New structure and new job roles created within GSC and in distributor organizations to support the distribution system

E 23 (2001): Recruitment of Engineer-MBA Managers from GSC's production departments to populate the new Retail Department.
E 23-a (2001): First instance of middle management role for Engineer-MBA Manager as one of them appointed to lead Retail dept.

E 24 (2002 onward): GSC implements new distribution structure across multiple product categories growing retail department.
C 24 (2001–2002): Retail department comprising rebar product group delivers superior performance compared to other groups.

E 25 (2002 onward): Engineer-MBA Managers recruited from B–Schools for retail department. Elite Managers leave GSC.

E 26 (2002 onward): Appointment of additional exclusive distributors for new product groups. Supplies to Traders stopped.

Note. E - Events; C – Context.

TABLE 3 Capital forms indicative of and leading to observable practices

Code	Practices/Taste/Resources/Skills and abilities	Indicative "Capital Form"
cc-e1	Having a taste for and knowledge/appreciation of fine arts (painting, theater) and linguistics	cultural capital (embodied)
cc-e2	Possessing imperious walking and speaking style, decision-making	cultural capital (embodied)
cc-e3	Felicity in exclusive sports like Golf, Billiards	cultural capital (embodied)
sc-1	Close association/relation/contact with powerful authorities	social capital
cc-o1	Collection of art, antique items	Cultural capital (objectified)
cc-o2	Possessing exotic pens, watches	Cultural capital (objectified)
ec-1	Can afford exotic vacations / foreign cars, hosts grand parties	economic capital
ec-2	Belongs to family with landed property; lives in exclusive parts of the city	economic capital
ec-3	Donations for social causes	economic capital
ec-4	Ability to purchase large volumes, hold inventory, offer credit	economic capital
sc-2	Consummates deals far and wide	social capital (national scope)
cc-e4	Transacting from a distance, without effort	cultural capital (embodied)
cc-i1	Securing admissions in prestigious engineering/management colleges	Cultural capital (institutionalized)
cc-i2	Adept at use of theoretical frameworks, models, calculations	Cultural capital (institutionalized)
cc-e5	Ability to work for long hours and in difficult physical conditions involving laborious detailing	cultural capital (embodied)
sc-3	Regular and intimate contact with local intermediaries	social capital (provincial scope)
cc-e6	Transacting in person, effortfully	cultural capital (embodied)

(Figure 4). Together these revealed the confluence of the administration's allocative role and managerial labor in arriving at renegotiated conversion rates of capital forms and, relatedly, the newly legitimized practices in the field. The authors coded the data independently and engaged in interpretive dialogue to resolve differences. Findings were presented to GSC in the form of case studies introduced in a meeting attended by their top management, managers, and distributors.

4 | THE FIELD OF STEEL DISTRIBUTION

Bourdieu (1984) conceptualized "field" as a social space of relations between actors. The field of steel distribution of the pre-liberalization era was characterized by a deep relational opposition between two classes of managers and two classes of intermediaries. In that era, GSC was represented in the field by two classes of commercial managers. One was drawn from distinguished families whom Naipaul (1963) described as the "new Indian elite" (Elite Managers). The other class of managers had obtained professional education in engineering/management and belonged to modest families (Engineer-MBA Managers). The intermediaries in this field included city-based traders (City Traders), who were allocated steel by the Elite Managers. Steel moved to the hinterland through a web of intermediaries, including the district town–based intermediary (District Dealers). Independent steel brokers acted as information agents and brokered transactions between steel intermediaries.

4.1 | Managers

Elite Managers belonged to families tracing their ascendancy to the colonial times, counting their members in the civil services, politics, armed forces, and the judiciary.

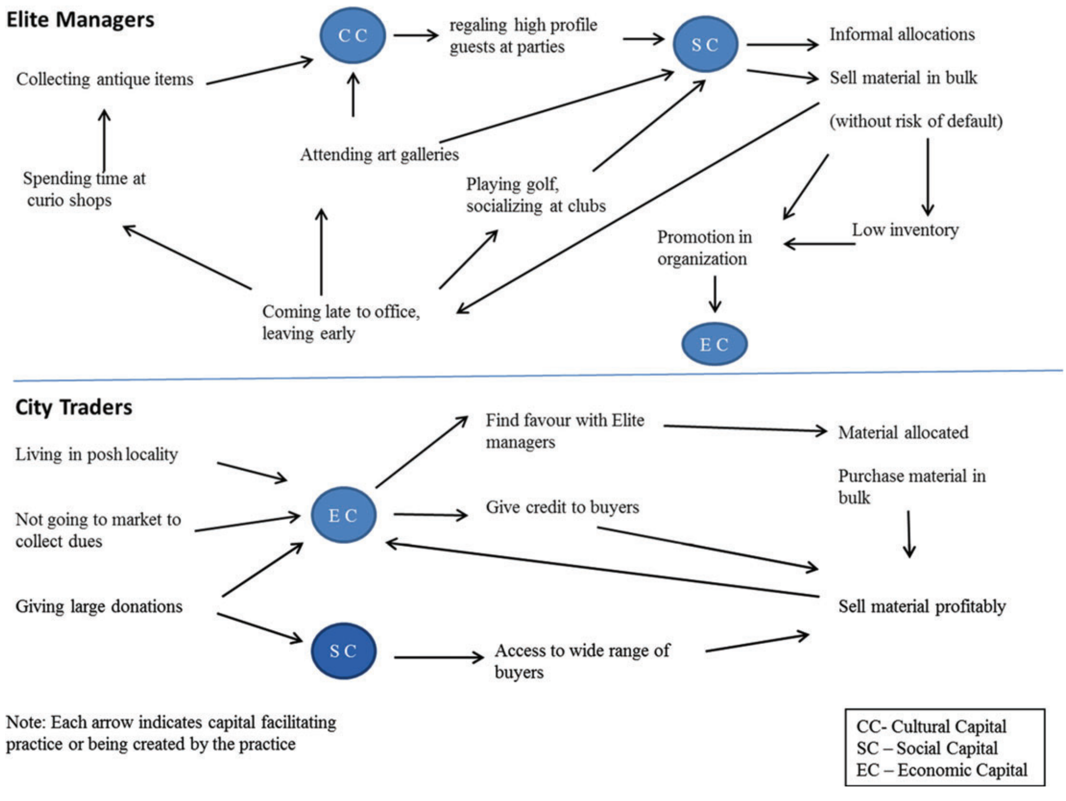

FIGURE 3 Practices leading to organization outcomes

> *We were having an inter-department badminton tournament—the office lawn was converted into a court with measurements, lights and all. One evening, the matches couldn't proceed due to heavy winds. We waited for around half an hour and then Mr [] took the entire group to the indoor court at Governor House—the governor was his uncle!* (Secretary at GSC)

The Elite Manager was schooled by British and Anglo-Indian teachers. Higher education was in the area of humanities and social sciences, often in foreign universities. Their formative years included exposure to horse riding, Western music, tennis, and some foreign language in addition to English. Adept at public speaking, they carried a foreign accent (Naipaul, 1963). Swimming at clubs and the customary round of golf comprised "the London prescribed mixture of business and pleasure" (ibid.). They were connoisseurs of food, dining at premium restaurants and hosting parties where they served liquor from their personal collection. A sartorial delight, comfortable in bowtie, jackets, and cufflinks, they frequented the best clubs in town and attended horse races. In stark contrast, the Engineer-MBA Manager was drawn from modest families whose collective aspiration and effort revolved around securing admission to national engineering[5] colleges for their wards. Focused singularly on natural sciences, studying social sciences or a hint of appreciation for art and music was considered as an invitation to failure. In the 1980s and 1990s, a subsequent management degree started becoming equally coveted to facilitate movement from technical to management roles. With unyielding focus on examinations testing quantitative and analytical skills, students engaged deeply

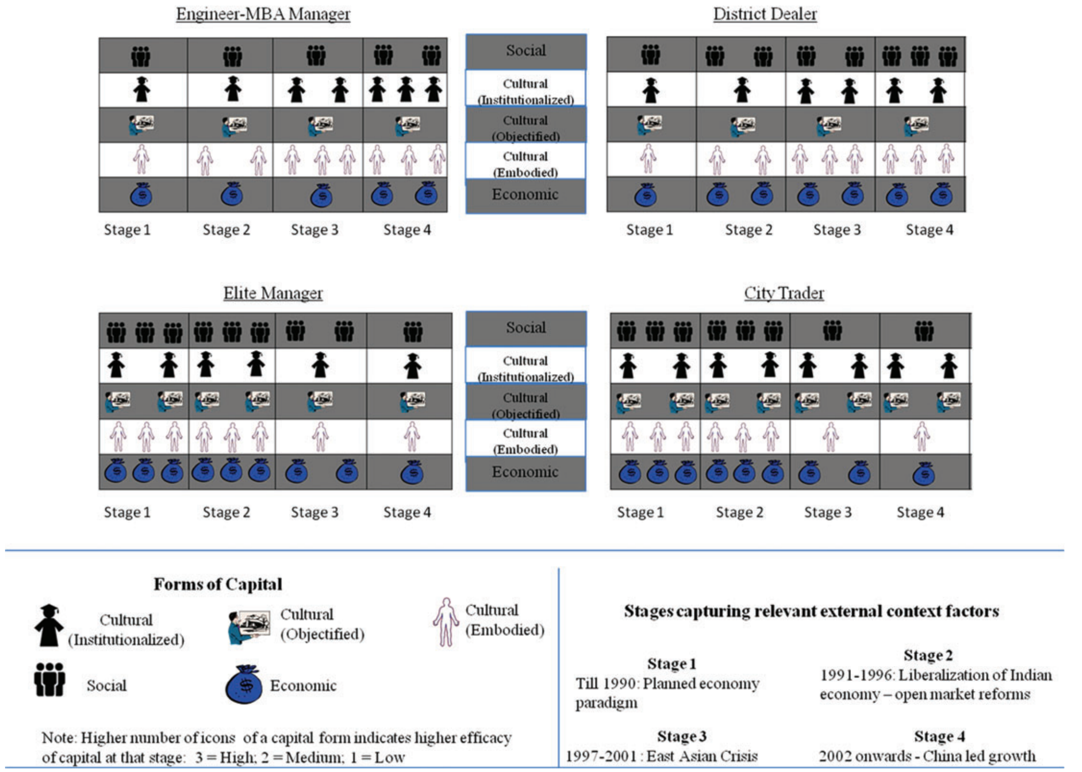

FIGURE 4 Evolving efficacy of capital forms

with numerical analysis. For such families, social functions were a distraction and skipping them in favor of a ward's class tests at school was common:

> *we never went out to eat in a restaurant. Once, we had gone and had Chinese when father got a big promotion….. for us sports was cricket or football and that too strictly between 4 – 6 pm. We had to get back before the evening lights were switched on. Participation in elocution was allowed, but music and drama was a no no.* (Engineer-MBA Manager on his family life)

While Elite Managers reached their offices in foreign cars and lunched at restaurants, Engineer-MBA Managers brought "home-cooked food" in their two-wheelers. Their focus on quantitative analysis and textbook frameworks for decision-making contrasted with Elite Managers' reliance on sensibility and information drawn from their social networks:

> *we were called the baba log [trans.babies]to indicate our supposed naiveté. There was very little use for our hard work in their scheme of things…..The top management was in their left pocket, the customers were in their right pocket and the regulators in some secret pocket—we were helpless.* (Engineer-MBA Manager on Elite Manager's attitude toward them)

[5]IITs were recognized as "institutes of national importance" in 1956. Additionally, regional engineering colleges were established in collaboration with provincial governments. Admission was through national- and provincial-level examinations, comprising conceptual/numerical questions in subjects of Physics, Chemistry, and Math.

TABLE 4 Contests around doings and process-–practice pathways to renewal

Contesting Actors	Contests around "Doings"	Second order code	Mapping with B-B framework	Contest outcomes: Addition/removal/ creation of dispositional resources (bodies and material objects) aiding the new initiative	Process–Practice pathway to renewal
M1vs. M2	Allocating steel with abandon and informally vs. Supplying material tentatively and after multiple checks and record-keeping	Assured abandon vs. Cautious labor	Definition	#Experiment by small number of M2 and D2 localized and hidden in one province	A new **Style** of work emerges
M1 vs. M2	Minimal time at work vs. Long hours at work	Assured abandon vs. Cautious labor			
D1 vs. D2	Material sold on phone vs. Daily travel to sell	Assured abandon vs. Cautious labor			
M1-D1 vs. M2-D2	Discussions in private parties vs. Explanations in open meetings	Exclusive deals vs. Open negotiations			
M1-D1 vs. M2-D2	Broad unarticulated arrangements vs. Detailed and technical negotiations	Exclusive deals vs. Open negotiations			
M1 vs. M2-MC	Employing native knowledge vs. Relying on industry best practices	Personal assessment vs. Generalized evaluation	Impetus, strategic context determination	#Appointment of MC #Project Team formed with additional M2 (recruited from commercial function) #Project Report accepted #Appointment of D2 in all provinces for distributing rebar and removal of D1 from rebar #Formation of Retail Department and appointment of an M2 as senior manager to lead it #Additional M2 (source: production departments) recruited for the growing Retail Department	The new **Logic** of work is legitimized
M1-D1 vs. M2-D2-MC	Avoiding discussion on profit numbers vs. Explicit calculation of investment and ROI with every intermediary	Generous provisions vs. Formal agreements	strategic context determination		
M1-D1 VS M2-D2-MC-TM	Material allocation based on subjective and private factors vs. Supplies based on pre-defined agreement and quantitative calculations	Generous provisions vs. Formal agreements	Impetus, strategic context determination, structural context articulation		
M1 VS. M2-MC-TM	Recruitment based on private knowledge vs. Evaluation through standard scoring mechanisms and documented process	Personal assessment vs. Generalized evaluation	Impetus, structural context articulation		
D1 vs. D2	Accessing national markets from a distance vs. Intimate access to local markets	Sites: Broad base to Deep dive		# Market visit reports, web interface #Excel sheets with daily-level retail data	The new work practices are **routinized**
M1-D1 vs. M2-D2	Secondhand information vs. Continued engagement with the context	Sites: Broad base to Deep dive	structural context determination		

TABLE 4 (Continued)

Contesting Actors	Contests around "Doings"	Second order code	Mapping with B-B framework	Contest outcomes: Addition/removal/creation of dispositional resources (bodies and material objects) aiding the new initiative	Process–Practice pathway to renewal
M1-D1 vs. M2-D2	No travel to market vs. Regular market travel	Sites: Broad base to Deep dive		#External recruitment of M2 from Business Schools to populate Retail Department	
M1 vs. M2	Abstract and aggregate data vs. Large volume of micro-data	Data: Quick closure to Continual scrutiny		#Appointment of additional D2 in all provinces for various product groups	
M1 Vs. M2	Freedom to choose customer / sales timing vs. Monitoring daily transactions	Data: Quick closure to Continual scrutiny		#Removal of D1 from various product groups #Departure of large number of M1	

Note. M1 = Elite Manager; M2 = Engineer-MBA Manager; D1 = City Trader; D2 = District Dealer; TM = Top Management; MC = Management Consultant.

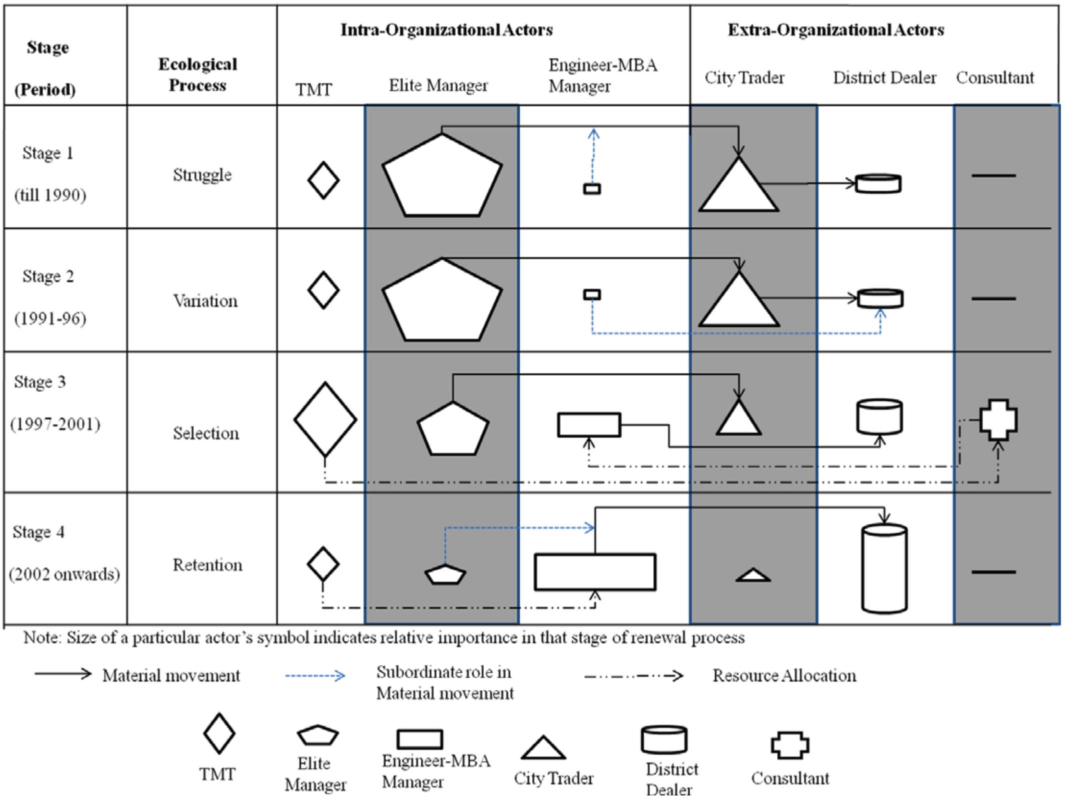

FIGURE 5 Evolving importance of actors in field of steel distribution

4.2 | Steel intermediaries

The City Trader was a relative of the trader of colonial times who had been granted a steel distribution license by the government, his forefathers having facilitated British commerce (Timberg, 1978). Having entrenched themselves in the steel trade through ethnic and familial ties of intermediaries across the country, their privileged position in this network and direct access to manufacturers allowed them to purchase steel at government fixed prices and then seek the best price in country-wide trade markets. Through studying at city colleges, they could converse in English. They wore shirts and fitting trousers stitched by premium tailors, with closed shoes and belt. Spending time at clubs and traveling to tourist spots with family, at times even outside India, was customary. They traveled in chauffeur-driven cars and, although their offices were located in congested trade markets, they resided in posh localities. They contributed to social initiatives in their ancestral towns and patronized social/religious causes in the local market, but avoided socialization at the marketplace:

> *you would never find sethji [trans.rich trader] or his sons doing takada [trans. Pursuing recovery of dues]—all their deals were on phone. They would occupy the centre stage in the local temples during baithaki[trans. meeting] but otherwise it was straight into the car.* (a Broker commenting on City Trader)

The District Dealer combined the function of a wholesaler and a large retailer. They were either natives of the district or related to the more prosperous City Traders who had deputed them to the hinterland. Having received their education in vernacular languages, they faltered in English. Their attire included the *dhoti-kurta* (traditional Indian dress), though some wore a shirt over loose trousers and leather slippers. Constrained in direct access to manufacturers, they depended on City Traders for steel supplies, subsequently laboring to sell to local retailers, collecting orders and payments by daily travel on cheap local transport.

5 | SHIFTING BASES OF DOMINATION IN THE FIELD OF STEEL DISTRIBUTION

In the pre-liberalization economy of production and price controls (C1, C2), steel was in short supply. The Elite Managers had the authority to allocate material, which they exercised through quick, informal, and bulk deals with a small group of City Traders, keeping inventory and selling costs of GSC at low levels. This arrangement, where the practices of Elite Managers secured GSC's profitability, was disturbed following the economy's liberalization (E1). The subsequent rapid expansion of domestic capacities (E6) combined with the threat of imports on account of sharply falling duties (E5) brought an end to shortage of supply. The bargaining power of City Traders (E8) increased significantly as they had access to national trade networks on which GSC had to depend. Mounting demands for trade discounts and disruption of the throughput of outbound logistics started affecting GSC's profit parameters. Meanwhile, GSC was also expanding its capacity (E6), with a nationwide enhancement of warehouse and sales office infrastructure being implemented to sell its increased produce. In this period of growth, some Engineer-MBA Managers were given independent responsibility of the sales of steel rebar (E10), a low prestige product at GSC, in the province of West Bengal. Even as City Traders' newfound bargaining power (E8) negatively affected GSC's material movement and price realizations, the Elite Managers used their past relation and influence to maintain a semblance of control; but the Engineer-MBA managers had no such leverage over City Traders and failed to secure any stability in prices and material movement. It was in this period of confusion that the Engineer-MBA managers began supplying material to District Dealers in small towns bypassing the trade markets (E11). These supplies were made in small quantities to a large number of District Dealers following formal agreements. It involved detailed analysis of demand-supply dynamics, profit calculation for parties involved, and regular market visits. The Engineer-MBA managers were able to consistently secure better prices and material movement became more predictable, though this initiative remained limited to the rebar product group in West Bengal.

In the course of time, information about this initiative reached the senior management through monthly reports (E14). At this time, GSC's administration was struggling with the newfound negotiating power of City Traders following liberalization reforms, the Asian financial crisis (E12), and its own capacity-expansion projects. The top management was being regularly approached by global consultants with proposals to solve its problems (E9). A series of consultant-driven projects were launched at this time, one of them being to decide an appropriate outbound-logistics strategy for the fast-expanding company (E15). The project brief to the consultant included a reference to the success achieved by the rebar product group in West Bengal. A project team comprising consultants and Engineer-MBA Managers was formed (E16) that toured the country to study distribution strategies of various organizations (E17).

The project report, drawing inputs from the practices of fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) companies and the principles that were originally employed in the rebar product group in West Bengal (E18), advocated a new strategy of targeting retail markets through a distribution model comprising regional distributor–retailer networks. It recommended distributor selection criteria that included elements like the extent of the retail network that favored District Dealers. It also mandated various vertical controls on territory and pricing and demanded exclusivity from distributors. In the selection process that followed (E19-21), City Traders who were used to supplying across the country were automatically disqualified. The report also suggested formation of a retail-distribution focused department with positions like channel manager and product manager, operated by professionals with business management degrees (E22). Implemented initially in the rebar product category across the country, the new distribution model delivered a higher and more stable price realization and smoother material movement for GSC.

6 | FINDINGS

6.1 | Pre-Liberalization era: Capital and habitus in action

Elite Managers arrived at work much beyond the beginning of office hours, after a round of golf and an English breakfast at an exclusive club (cc-e3), to a group of waiting City Traders. Never appearing to get into details (cc-e2), they allocated steel over informal and brief discussions. Each allocation was an act of largesse to the buyer, given the steel shortages and the spread between manufacturer and wholesale prices. The Elite Managers' social capital (sc-1) enabled them to allocate freely using informal intuitive arrangements that kept inventory carrying costs and sales administration costs at a minimum without risking payment realizations:

> *Their deals never failed and traders always paid on time.….they were so well connected that nobody could browbeat them into allocations.* (Secretary on Elite Manager's clout)

Stepping out from the office for lunch at premium restaurants was an opportunity for Elite Managers to socialize and discuss business, often with distinguished City Traders. Here they gathered varied stories of the marketplace, and modulated their subsequent allocation decisions. They also had the valuable ability to secure sales even when market prices were falling or when a particular lot of produce was of poor quality, for they inspired the confidence that they could compensate traders through future preferential allocations. While Elite Managers adeptly managed allocations, the Engineer-MBA Manager's habitus was misaligned to the field. Their training had prepared them for analytical decision-making (cc-i2), but they had to submit to the Elite Managers who made quick decisions (cc-e2) using information gleaned from informal sources and socially cultivated relationships (sc-1):

> *Their decision on allocations was final and they were true to their word……They were like kings—many households depended on their largesse.* (City Trader on Elite Managers)

Elite Managers occupied a dominant position in the field, not only as the prevailing managerial class at GSC but also in exercising control in their partnership with City Traders. City Traders' economic capital allowed them to finance the bulk deals (ec-4) offered by Elite Managers, while their social capital allowed them to seek attractive deals among buyers across the country (sc-2). Together, these capital forms afforded them privileged access to steel and helped them dominate the other intermediaries like the District Dealers:

> *Traders had the connection and hence material. We depended on them….bulk of profit was kept by them. We did all the hard work in getting the material sold at the consumption centers but they were enjoying in the city.* (District Dealer on dominance by City Traders)

Stage 1 of Figure 4 depicts the "value" of capital that various actors possessed before liberalization. The dominance exercised by Elite Manager-City Trader (Stage 1, Figure 5) indicates the appropriateness of their capital forms, as also the ineffectiveness of capital forms of Engineer-MBA Manager and District Dealer in the field. In particular, the reputation of Elite Managers was attributed to their ability to intuitively allocate steel, benefiting the trader community and GSC simultaneously. This princely flair that is their embodied cultural capital in action was the symbolic capital, recognized as a legitimate and rare competence (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 246), putting their actions beyond question and allowing continued dominance. Yet this symbolic capital was but a misrecognized form of Elite Manager's social capital because it is the access to network of influential people that allowed them to allocate imperiously without risk of nonlifting of steel or payment default.

6.2 | Postliberalization: Contests around capital conversion rate

Liberalization unsettled the existing bases of domination, triggering contests between actors to renegotiate their positions in the fast evolving field (E1, E2, E3, E5). Stage 1 of Figure 5 captures different actors' positions in the field in the pre-liberalization era and, in the evolution of their relative authority postliberalization (Stages 2, 3, & 4), we find a decade of contests effected through their daily doings. These contested "doings," which we explore under aggregates of "Style," "Logic" and "Routines" (Table 4), impact the conversion rates of actors' capital forms. In theoretical terms, our analysis of the managerial contests (Table 4) located strategic renewal at the intersection of the B-B process framework of organizational adaptation and Bourdieu's practice theory of field-level domination.

The definition subprocess of the B-B framework comprises contests between *styles*, leading to the introduction of the distribution model at the business level. The impetus subprocess maps to contests between logics, which allowed the distribution model to gain broader support. The strategic context determination subprocess maps those contests between logics that initiated an organization-level reconsideration of the utility of the existing trading model while creating a case for the distribution model. Finally, the structural context determination subprocess maps contests between competing logics and routines leading to a dramatic abandonment of old rules and formal acceptance of a new rules and their entrenchment at GSC.

6.2.1 | Definition

The GSC case indicated that the definition of the renewal process was not driven by a planned corporate response to liberalization; instead it lay in the contrasting "style" of daily doings that the Engineer-MBA Manager and District Dealer combination displayed in relation to the dominant combination of Elite Managers and City Traders.

The handing over of the responsibility of the organizationally insignificant product category of steel rebar in the West Bengal province to Engineer-MBA Managers (E10), during the busy phase of GSC's expansion (E6), was a reflection of their dominated status. Increasing steel supplies in the economy (E6, E9) had allowed the City Traders to assert their autonomy (E9), and negotiate regular discounts from Engineer-MBA Managers. It was during this struggle that Engineer-MBA Managers initiated a collaboration with District Dealers giving birth to a variation in steel distribution:

had gone for a smoke and met one of these dealers standing outside tentatively. We thought why not supply to these guys—they will be more amenable than the traders who were exploiting us royally. (Engineer-MBA Manager working on rebar sales in 1990s)

Assured abandon vs. Cautious labour

The economic capital of City Traders was useful (Stage 1, Figure 4) in purchasing steel in bulk (Figure 3) and offering credit to buyers (ec-4), while their reputation in the trading community (sc-2) afforded them the capacity to seek customers far and wide (Figure 3). They transacted over phone, with brokers as their intermediary, avoiding the rigor of face-to-face negotiation with buyers (cc-e4). Bulk deals were themselves consummated quickly and effortlessly at GSC with the wave of a hand by the Elite Managers (cc-e2). This indicated the distaste of Elite Managers for numbers and commercial details, affording them time to spend outside office socializing, on sports, at curio shops, and at art galleries. The risk of nonconsummation that informal bulk deals would otherwise entail did not deter Elite Managers given the strength of their social capital (Stage 1, Figure 4):

How do you argue with someone who has contacts in income tax, police and judiciary. Every few days there used to be cars with lalbatti [trans. Red light on cars of senior government officers]near their flats. (HR Manager on Elite Managers)

In contrast, the Engineer-MBA Manager was low on social capital and hedged the risk of payment defaults through detailed paperwork (cc-e5) and collecting advance payments:

We never supplied without getting a demand draft. What if they did not return? ..... one failed deal would have been the end of our career. (Engineer-MBA Manager)

Predisposed to spending extensive time and labor at the workplace, Engineer-MBA Managers supplied to District Dealers in small quantities, typically one truckload at a time. This style demanded much time and effort from the actors involved (cc-e5). For each transaction, contract terms had to be formalized and recorded, delivery order released and collected, loading and unloading supervised, orders and payments secured by traveling to retail outlets, and so on. This transaction size also suited District Dealers who were low on economic capital (Stage 1, Figure 4) and could only purchase in small quantities. This arrangement required strenuous travel, including face–to-face negotiations with a large number of retailers (cc-e6), which was natural for District Dealers, it being a part of their existing daily work practice:

I used to take the early morning local train and get back by the last train....by the time I returned, my face would be black with dust. (District Dealer on his daily routine)

Exclusive deals vs. open negotiations

Elite Managers hosted grand parties recounting tales of glorious family history, exotic holidays, weekend races, and art possessions (cc-o1, ec-1):

I had been to some parties—every invitee was a dignitary of some sort. Booze was flowing freely. My mother was not happy when she heard about it. I first tasted pigeon meat and canned fruit at Mr [] birthday party. (Engineer-MBA Manager's experience of party)

Apart from being a site for display, the occasions also served the purpose of expanding and cultivating their social network (Figure 3), and discussing business deals. In stark opposition, Engineer-MBA Managers hosted small gatherings outside the city involving District Dealers and retailers. Held at cheap community halls, local delicacies and soft drinks were offered in plastic plates and glasses. Discussion on the consistency of steel supply, territory violations by retailers, and price fluctuations were held. Engineer-MBA Managers used their felicity with price calculations to demonstrate the economic benefit of selling GSC rebar (cc-i2). Their engineering education also afforded them the ability to talk credibly about the superiority of the manufacturing process and metallurgical properties of GSC rebar (cc-i1).

By the end of 1996 (Stage 2, Figure 5), an insignificant volume of steel rebar was being sold in small lots, at frequent intervals, and was targeting rural retail space, a market hitherto unexplored by GSC. This autonomous variation was a coming together of homologous interests of the Engineer-MBA Managers and District Dealers. In processual terms, it linked internal and external knowledge to solve a problem technically and then linked it to an underserved market need (Burgelman, 1983). The initiative afforded covert relief to the two classes of actors from their longstanding domination (Stage 2 & 1, Figure 5), and yet, by dealing only with a devalorized product category, it could remain hidden from the larger organization. The variation comprised long hours of office work, which suited Engineer-MBA Managers' disposition derived from childhood training. Their modest social capital was not suited to enforcing large informal deals as Elite Managers could (Stage 1, -Figure 4), making the choice of frequent small deals a natural one (cc-e5). Again, the variation required District Dealers to supply to retailers in a delimited territory, suiting their social capital (sc-3). Through the definition process emerged a new "style" in the form of novel practices, its clandestine nature and limited scope reflecting the power deficit of its progenitors. Nonetheless, the expression of this "style" put their capital forms in circulation, carried physically by their dominated bodies as also were the numerous documents they generated for record-keeping. Though restricted by the small number of bodies involved and a limited geographical scope (E11), the variation seeded the vague possibility of a new way of doing things at GSC, which suited a dominated class of managers, also allowing the organization to overcome the loss of control over intermediaries that it was facing post liberalization.

6.2.2 | Impetus

The impetus subprocess of strategic renewal was not driven by clear corporate- or business-level strategic intent. Instead, we found a series of contests between the opposing "logic" of daily doings that the two actor combinations employed in an attempt to legitimize them as the larger organizational logic. Initially a clandestine variation, the rebar distribution project was revealed to the GSC top management only through a monthly report accessed by them (E14):

> *the report format showed weekly inventory levels in various stockyards across the country. When [] saw that rebar was moving smoothly in W.Bengal, he was intrigued and called the sales manager. These were very junior guys but he talked to them for an hour.* (an Engineer-MBA manger about the discovery of project by top management)

The report and conversations detailing the initiative served as an *impetus* for the variation. Beset by macroeconomic slowdown (E12) and City Traders' newfound dominance in the field (E8), the administration appointed a consultant (Management Consultant) with a mandate to create systems to facilitate the smooth sale of its expanding produce (E6, E13).

We were not able to sell the existing volume reliably. What would happen when the volume increased by 50%. That was the idea for the logistics project. (Engineer-MBA Manager)

By alerting the Management Consultant to the rebar distribution initiative as a positive example (E15), the administration allocated valuable resources to the Engineer-MBA Managers. The Management Consultants were drawn from the same stock of populace as the Engineer-MBA Managers (E7), sharing their predisposition toward long working hours and data analysis (cc-e5) and thus standing in opposition to the Elite Manager (cc-e4):

Consultants work late hours. Even at client site, you will find them to be amongst the last to leave office. It was a known fact in GSC by that time that if you joined a consultant led project, they would make you work like a horse and if you acted smart, they always had a direct line to the top mgmt. (Engineer-MBA Manager on consultant working style)

The Elite Managers conspicuously stayed away from the project team, which was instead staffed by Engineer-MBA Managers. By thus constituting the project team, Management Consultants accorded coherence to the distribution initiative providing *impetus* to it.

Personal assessment vs. generalized evaluation

A range of considerations went into the Elite Manager's decision to allocate material to City Traders, including financial strength, market reputation, compliance to past allocations, strength of personal association, and so on, yet these factors and records related to the assessment of City Traders were undocumented, remaining private to the Elite Managers. The project team, on the other hand, began a concerted public search for "best practices" in distribution (E17) with members traveling across the country, meeting supply-chain professionals and distribution intermediaries. The labor put in by the project team members (cc-e5) to gather specific information from other industries about the profile of intermediaries, the volume of transactions in such networks, travel patterns of sales boys, supply chain challenges, and so on, made their stories related to the distribution model and suggested criteria for intermediary selection seem well-considered, rigorous, and believable when presented to the top management.

Generous provisions vs. formal agreements

In the steel-starved economy, every allocation was seen as an act of generosity by the Elite Manager whose material allocation logic avoided explicit calculations and favored a quick intuitive approach (cc-e2, sc-1). With steel shortages getting mitigated in the postliberalization era (E8), the conversion rate of Elite Manager's cultural capital (embodied) and social capital, which had characterized and allowed the generous allocations, began reducing.

The Engineer-MBA Managers focused instead on regularity of supplies that attracted the District Dealers and the retailers, this logic suiting their inherent preference for systematic documentation and laborious calculations (cc-e5). Such supplies reduced the value of City Traders' economic and social capital, which earlier had allowed them privileged access to material, thus mitigating their domination of District Dealers (Stage 3, Figure 5). In their communication to the top management, the project team highlighted the support for the distribution model at the "grassroots" level, and received further funds for retailer communication, sales promotions, and so on. GSC's finance department executives who were earlier required to follow up with buyers for payment realizations, were also supportive of the new arrangement where the Engineer-MBA Managers took responsibility for payment realization through their logic of formal supplies, which included detailed documentation and advance payments (cc-e5). Together, these activities of Engineer-MBA Managers were part of "Strategic Forcing." which afforded increased market penetration for the distribution model (Burgelman, 1983). Simultaneously, their daily doings increased the conversion rates of their embodied cultural capital (Stage 3, Figure 4) while mitigating their social capital deficiency.

During this stage, the variation was strengthened with the notable addition of bodies in the form of the Management Consultants who helped bridge the gap between Engineer-MBA Managers and the top management (E15). Subsequently, additional Engineer-MBA Managers were recruited from within the company as team members for the project (E16). Most crucially, the habitus (i.e., their preference of "how" things should be done) of these additional bodies coincided with that of the actors who had spawned the original variation. By itself, the variation did not have the resources to travel beyond the discredited department it originated in, but for the strategic thrust that it received by the Management Consultant who acted as the venture manager's manager and served to fill the void that the Engineer-MBA Managers faced on account of not having any representative at the middle management level. By using their wide access beyond the steel industry, they facilitated investigation, which presented details of the successful use of the distribution model in other (although unrelated) industries. They also credibly demonstrated the availability of appropriate intermediaries across the country through detailed fieldwork and thus established the utility and possibility of pursuing the original variation at a much wider scope and scale of operation (multiple product categories, in multiple regions) than originally thought possible (Burgelman, 1983. The detailed work, along with the expert status of consultants (Evers & Menkhoff, 2004), helped gather top management's support for the distribution model at the level of the corporation and as part of the "Strategic Building" activity, and afforded continued financing of the project. The broader impetus process was linked to the predisposition of the Engineer-MBA Managers toward laborious work involving quantitative data, analysis, and careful documentation, as also to the domination that the District Dealers experienced in the trading model. The existing "logic" of material allocation to intermediaries afforded informal yet risk-free disposal of material employing the strength of the Elite Manager's social capital and embodied cultural capital. The new "logic" of formal and calculated distribution of material relied, instead, on the Engineer-MBA Manager's variant of embodied cultural capital. Iterative allocation of resources in response to the impetus process afforded the new "logic," overt existence at the organizational level (Table 4), the underlying daily doings derived from habitus of its progenitors now becoming potential demonstration of "how" things could be alternatively done at GSC, and it thus initiated an explicit circulation of corresponding capital forms (Stage 3, Figure 4).

6.2.3 | Strategic context determination

As an organization used to selling material in hundreds of tons to City Traders, the logic of selling material in small lots to District Dealers and interacting with retailers who could sell one to three tons in a month was an alien concept:

> *People used to laugh at the project. They would say 'are you selling toffee or steel' and we had to stay quiet.* (Engineer-MBA Manager working on the distribution project)

Our data shows that the time and resources that the variation was provided by the administration, outside the structural context, was crucial for its logic to find an organizational form through the formation of a "retail" department (E22).

Personal assessment vs. generalized evaluation

To expand GSC's selling capacity, Elite Managers evaluated potential intermediaries based on recommendations and information from the large informal network that they accessed. This was in deep contrast to the intermediary evaluation and selection process developed by the project team (E18), which was an elaborate point-based criteria that included data on number of retailers in the network, quality and number of office staff, and so on, each with a specific scoring scheme. Through a detailed process involving open advertisements (E 19) and nationwide travel for assessments (E20), potential distribution partners were identified and the shortlisted candidates were interviewed by the top management for final selection (E21). This logic of intermediary selection was aligned to the habitus of the Engineer-MBA Manager that dictated quantification, laborious work, and documentation (cc-e5). The quantified characterization of the future intermediary as a solution for smooth steel movement aided the *strategic context determination* for the distribution project, as did the interview process, which introduced the top management to the proposed intermediary who would help GSC access retail markets.

Generous provisions vs. formal agreements

The Elite Managers' logic of generous supplies did not delve into the subsequent movement of steel. In line with their distaste for explicit negotiations, minute details, and numbers (cc-e2), they did not encourage discussions of actual profit/loss made by the City Traders. This arrangement was challenged by the business school inspired logic of a minimum return on investment (ROI) (cc-i2) for intermediaries espoused by the project team. This new logic involved detailed calculations and analysis (cc-e5) to modulate material supply and pricing across the supply chain toward achieving the promised ROI. By showing that GSC's returns from the distribution model were related to the intermediary's ROI, the logic of formalized supplies aided *strategic context determination* for the initiative.

Proposing a process of distributor selection and material allocation was part of organizational championing activity, attempting to convince the top management about the utility of the distribution model toward meeting their throughput and profitability concerns. Regular presentation of graphical analysis of profitability data (cc-i2) to the top management and their involvement in intermediary selection interviews was part of the political process that kept them engaged with the initiative and helped in retroactive rationalization. The logic of converting selection criteria into numbers is a reminder of the preexisting comfort of Engineer-MBA Managers toward hard labor and quantitative analysis (cc-e5). Again, the ROI logic suited the Engineer-MBA Managers' felicity with calculations (cc-i2) as also the District Dealers limited capacity to absorb economic losses. The criteria of keeping regular contact with retailers in a delimited area suited the social capital (provincial) and embodied cultural capital of District Dealers (sc-3, cc-e6) just as it was opposed to City Traders' capital forms (sc-2, cc-e4). Agglomeration of these new logics in the form of a "retail department" (E 22) accorded legitimacy to the new practices, allowing concerted accumulation of labor of Engineer-MBA Managers and District Dealers, increasing the efficacy of their capital forms. This simultaneously disengaged the Elite Manager–City Traders from certain product–market combinations (Stage 3, Figure 5), reducing the circulation of their capital forms (Stage 3, Figure 4). With the formation of the retail department, the new "logic," and more fundamentally, the underlying daily doings derived from habitus and homologous interests of the Engineer-MBA Managers and District Dealers became a formally sanctioned alternative of "how" things could be done at GSC. The department became the nucleus for the variation and, while it automatically involved Elite Managers who were already part of the sales set up in different regions, it now included additional Engineer-MBA Managers recruited from other parts of the company (E23). Most crucially, upon management consultant's recommendation, the middle management role in this department was secured by an active member of the project team (E23-a), this being the first instance when such an influential position was accorded to an Engineer-MBA Manager, lending significant strength to their class.

6.2.4 | Structural context determination

External environment change had blunted the efficacy of social capital (sc-1) of Elite Managers, and the City Traders had gained dominance by employing their already valuable capital forms (ec-4, sc-2). We find the top management responding with an equally wholesale and swift shift in the structural context, which put the capital of the dominant City Traders out of circulation, thus reclaiming fitness for GSC. New rules that oversaw the renewal process were secured not by corporate planning but by a bottom-up process involving competition between mundane daily doings of two managerial fractions, with the top management supporting one through resource allocation. First, the administration accorded legitimacy to the new "logic" by accepting the project report. In the rule adoption phase, the routinized daily labor of Engineer-MBA Managers and District Dealers, and the circulation of materialized market reports, proliferated their "logic" across the organization.

Rule formation

Personal assessment vs. generalized evaluation. The quantification of the selection criteria of the distribution intermediary initiated dissolution (Burgelman, 1996) of the existing *structural context* in which the Elite Managers were thriving and simultaneously initiated the *structural context determination* process at GSC. Departing from the earlier practice of references and an informal evaluation process, the project team invited applications for distributorship through public advertisements (E19):

> *..ten thousand applications…whole room was full. We were very excited …took us two months to just do the sorting and list preparation.* (Engineer-MBA Manager)

For each tentative district territory, 5–10 applicants were shortlisted and evaluated through the 20-point criteria. This required the project team to visit the locations of the applicants' site of work (E20), traveling in the deep hinterland and staying in the cheap hotels that the district towns offered (cc-e5). From Elite Managers who operated from the comforts of their offices (cc-e2) to the Engineer-MBA Managers who were spending time at places with minimal amenities (cc-e5), the logic of partner selection witnessed a dramatic shift. To fulfil the 20-point scoring scheme, the task force recorded information on the intermediaries in an *Excel sheet* as opposed to the earlier practice of depending on memory and intuition. The printing of these sheets and handing it to top management for use in the interview process articulated a renewed *structural context.* Simultaneously, the Excel sheets materialized the logic of generalized evaluation and their usage for intermediary selection helped improve the conversion rate of capital forms of the Engineer-MBA Manager and District Dealer combination (Stage 4, Figure 4).

Generous provisions vs. formal agreements. City Traders who were granted appointment to meet the Elite Managers would discuss the weather, the local news, and political events before seeking allocations, which were made intuitively and quickly. Devoid of any explicit calculations, it conveyed the Elite Manager's distaste for laborious commercial activity (cc-e2):

> *These were not ordinary mortals—their demeanour was that of a man in control. One of them sat with his feet on the desk, smoking the pipe.* (Secretary on Elite Managers)

In contrast, the project report recommended fixing of the volume of supplies to a distributor based on quantitative calculation of sales capacity of retailers associated with the distributor (cc-e6, sc-3) and financial capacity of the intermediary. Devoid of certainty of material supplies in the previous regime (Stage 1, Figure 5), District Dealers reciprocated by welcoming a formal agreement that articulated related new rules such as territory delimitation, minimum monthly purchases, and so on, aiding *structural context determination.*

The logic of steel supply changed from being intuitive and informal to become an objective formula. The project team documented the terms related to appointment, supplies, and conduct and the top management approved the report legitimizing the new logic as rules for material distribution. Inscription of the rules through a legal document that the intermediaries and GSC representatives had to sign, articulated yet another facet of the new *structural context.*

Rule adoption

By early 2001 (Stage 3, Figure 5) when the consulting project ended, a new logic had been legitimized at GSC. The habitus of Engineer-MBA Managers and District Dealers found expression in the project report and shaped the new *structural context* registering improvement in their capital conversion rate (Stage 3, Figure 4). Yet as we show next, it was only the laborious routinization of work in the retail department through various contests (Table 4) that finally gave the alternate capital forms a high conversion rate (Stage 4, Figure 4). The retail department allowed cooperation among various actors, namely, distributors and their sales boys who toured the markets, and new channel managers and product managers who were part of the new structure that the project report had sanctioned.

Sites: Broad base to deep dive. The scope of the City Traders' network had earlier allowed them access to customers across the country (sc-2). In the new distribution model, this possibility was curtailed by formalization of the rule that limited the spatial extent of the intermediary's operations, dramatically reducing the value of the City Trader's social capital (Stage 3, Figure 4). The new rule suited the District Dealer's extant work routine, an exemplification of his provincial social capital (sc-3), consisting of daily travel to retailers in the confines of his district. The new rules also required that the distributors meet every retailer in their territory twice every month, going against the City Trader's distaste of visiting narrow market alleys and the practice of striking deals over the telephone (cc-e4). Web interfaces were created to help managers file market visit accounts in real time; documents with anecdotes and photographs drawn from deep retail markets became a cultural norm and a tool for managerial assessment. The Engineer-MBA Manager's comfort with laborious travel and cheap hotels found expression in the recurrent creation of market reports (cc-e5), increasing the value of their cultural capital (embodied) (Stage 4, Figure 4) while the Elite Manager's cultural capital (embodied), which favored comprehending markets through secondhand conversations (cc-e2, cc-e4), rapidly lost its value (Stage 4, Figure 4).

Data: Quick closure to continual scrutiny. The Elite Managers accessed market reports that captured inventory levels and grade and quantity of steel sold. The new report formats had far more specific and voluminous data, such as sales made in individual territories and unsold inventory at each retailer. Earlier, the City Traders spent time gathering information about the Elite Manager's interests and behavior from the secretaries. The District Dealers now spent time recording data about individual retailers that they collated from the sales boys who spent 5 days a week traveling and recording retail-level data (sc-3). The Elite Managers' distaste for quantitative data was in contrast to the new routines that collected data and produced a range of graphs (cc-i2). The focus on data was in line with the Engineer-MBA Managers' habitus derived from the labor of studying all through the night, solving quantitative problems as engineering students, and poring over numerical data of case studies at MBA schools (cc-i1, cc-i2), as it was suited to the District Dealer's practice of regularly visiting retailers to collect orders and payments (cc-e6).

From approving of a point-based system for distributor appointment, to a data-based formula for material allocation, to incentives for market visits, the GSC management consolidated the natural activity of Engineer-MBA Managers and District Dealers as part of the new corporate strategy (Burgelman, 1983). In particular, the administration's formal adoption of the project report (E18) gave "material" strength to the new "logic" and was significant to the structural context determination process, legitimizing practices derived from the disposition of the Engineer-MBA Managers and District Dealers, their capital forms (cc-i2, cc-e5,cc-e6, sc-3) now receiving formal administrative sanction. The legitimized distribution model spread by rapid recruitment of bodies (E25) that shared the disposition of Engineer-MBA Managers (fresh MBA graduates from business schools for the retail department) or had homologous interests (new distributors who met the criteria articulated in the project report) (E26). The recurrent and collective labor of these bodies, consistently producing material artefacts of a particular kind, negotiated a far higher conversion rate for their capital (Stage 4, Figure 4) than what they began with (Stage 1, Figure 4), allowing them to dominate the field (Stage 4, Figure 5). Such labor and materialization, in addition to the acceptance of the project report, gave the new routines normative strength and made the underlying daily doings derived from the habitus of Engineer-MBA Managers and District Dealers part of the rule structure at GSC. What also changed was the importance that the MBA degree now had in the field. With GSC recruiting managers only through the business schools in the country, the institutionalized cultural capital (cc-i1) recognized as a legitimate and rare competence (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 246) allowed Engineer-MBA Managers to dominate other actors. This new symbolic capital was but a misrecognized form of their embodied cultural capital (cc-e5), acquired primarily through training by strict parents, enabling them to put in hard labor, detailed calculations, and so on, which was required to execute the new strategy of selling through small retailers. The changed strategy stopped supplies to City Traders (E26; Stage 4, Figure 5) and Elite Managers started leaving the organization (E25), recognizing their changed status. Engineer-MBA Managers and the District Dealer combination had now gained dominance at GSC (Figures 1 and 2; Stage 4, Figure 5).

7 | DISCUSSION

Our study showed how organizational fortunes are deeply affected by practitioners' "predispositions" and capital endowments, both acquired far ahead of their organizational innings. Along the renewal process, these were expressed in practices of competing actors as personal "style" derived from early influences and background, justifiable "logic" promising organizational benefit, sanctioned "logic" as organizational rules and replicable "routines" as rules aimed at widespread implementation. Dramatic transitions had triggered a change in the value of capital forms in the field, creating a period of flux that saw contests among practitioners and between their preferred practices.

Each activity stream was an indication of the efficacy of the capital form supporting it and, simultaneously, its enactment accumulated further congealed and materialized "labor" to the particular capital form enhancing its efficacy. The administration, by allocating resources to initiatives of an actor class, effected the accumulation of materialized labor to the associated capital forms. It is only by mapping activities and resource allocations in the B-B process framework that we could show the Engineer-MBA Manager's covert "style" congealing into new rule structures even as the erstwhile rule structure that was favorable to the Elite Managers disintegrated into a discredited "style." This made the "structural context determination" the most crucial pillar of the renewal process in our case, quite unlike earlier studies where the renewal based on a techno-economic rationality worked mostly through negotiation of the strategic context to rework the scope of the business to be considered in the operating core of the organization. In our case, renewal based on a new "social" configuration could progress only through a wholesale change in the structural context wherein a new set of practices and practitioners (Figures 2 and 5) reconstituted the operating core of the organization. The B-B process framework allowed us to see this reconstitution comprising "natural" predispositions being "intentionally" promoted by interested practitioners and administration. The framework also afforded us the insight that renewal in the face of wholesale transition could involve adopting an entirely new rule structure. In particular, this highlighted the crucial role of the administration's resource allocation function in these times when large organizations are repositories of vast pools of societal wealth and command the chosen forms of work for large numbers of people in whom activities remain embodied.

Investigation of managerial contests also revealed the crucial role of extraorganizational actors in the renewal process, beyond the internal hierarchy of actors that the B-B framework considers in its analysis of adaptation. This is not surprising, since widespread institutional change, as our data shows, lands organizations in a socioeconomic crisis where a search for new allies, of whom the organization has no prior understanding, constitutes a key part of top management's renewal initiative. The role of the consultants can be best understood by noting the large overlap that they had with the habitus of Engineer-MBA Managers, for it is this overlap that explains their collective labor in the project team and the stark exclusion of Elite Managers. Again, the Engineer-MBA Managers' low social capital cohered with their preference for small lot supplies, also resonating with the District Dealer's low economic capital that obviated large purchases. Bourdieu's practice theory afforded us insight into how the long-held predispositions of practitioners and their homology of interests in the context of wholesale change led to the formulation of a coherent distribution initiative to which the administration could allocate resources.

The central theme in Bourdieu's work is the domination of actors in a field and the ongoing reproduction of structures of domination (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Domination perpetuates because the dominated actors themselves become socialized with the idea of legitimacy of class privileges and status hierarchies that dominate them (ibid.). At GSC though, the dominated (Engineer-MBA Managers and District Dealers) were able to counter the dominant (Elite Managers and City Traders), revealing the crucial role of the administration's resource allocation function. Bower (1970) had explained how economic capital was allocated to initiatives. Burgelman (1983) introduced the idea of allocating to certain autonomous initiatives, the opportunity to operate outside the structural context. At GSC, when coping with widespread social transformation, we found the administration succeeding in the renewal effort by allocating historicized and socialized "bodies" to certain initiatives as they strove to find a social configuration that could help them regain dominance. The appointment of Management Consultant, for example, was an "allocation" of bodies with dispositions matching those of the Engineer-MBA Managers toward the labor of fieldwork, analysis, and so, which finally materialized in the form of a project report. Again, by formalizing the 20-point selection criteria for distributors, and later by forming a retail department which would have professionals like channel manager, and so on, the administration was allocating pliant bodies whose labor would aid the improvement of conversion rates of capital forms of Engineer-MBA Managers. These allocations progressively created a population mix of certain kinds of bodies and hence embodied activities (Figure 2), coevolving with the consolidation of the distribution model (Figure 1), pointing toward renewal lying at the process–practice intersection centered around streams of activities (Whittington, 2017). Together, the B-B process framework and Bourdieu's practice theory shed light on how wider social practices and administrative processes in large organizations may co-constitute each other.

With various practitioners attempting to impose their preexisting dispositions in the field, it is a moot point whether their activities are deterministic or strategic. Liberalization of the economy was the contingency that altered field relations, allowing Engineer-MBA Managers and District Dealers to organically express their disposition through a new distribution model. But the actors also consciously hid this initiative from the larger organization. As part of the product-championing activity (Burgelman, 1983) linking the definition and impetus processes, actors allowed the variation to reach a stage where positive results could be demonstrated through strategic-forcing activities, while the possibility of its scaling up was established through strategic-building activities. The formulation of distributor selection criteria and its rigorous implementation is an expression of the disposition of the Engineer-MBA managers who favored hard work and dealing in quantitative data. But beyond these natural doings, the process of keeping the top management involved and excited by presenting favorable information about the new distribution model and regular updates on the project was an organizational championing activity (Burgelman, 1983) linking the impetus and strategic/structural context determination process. Even as we found the role of conscious acts in helping practices gain acceptance at the organizational level, we also saw the limits of such reasoned activity. Around the time the new distribution model was gaining acceptance and organizational resources, the Elite Managers attempted to join the activity; their habitus though was unsuited to the practices, exposing the limits of conscious activity:

> *A review was being conducted by the vice president (VP). Managers were reporting the state of the initiative in various districts. When ….turn came, he shared his experience of market visits and retailer meetings, and quoted certain figures related to competitor activity in his area. Actually he had not visited the market and a few questions by the VP exposed him….the officer soon left the organization.* (Engineer-MBA Manager recalling a meeting)

Again, in the new regime, managers were mandated to collate weekly sales data on Friday afternoon, tabulate it in Excel sheets, generate graphs, and propose the next week's plan in the Saturday morning meeting with top management. This required staying late at the office on Friday evening, making phone calls to distributors, and working on the computer:

> *Retail department was this strange unhealthy place. Work till late evening, come back early morning, working lunch. Like zombies, without life, work, work, work…. Saturday morning report ….created to destroy your Friday evening.* (Elite Manager on working atmosphere)

During the distributor selection process, City Traders realized that the evaluation criteria disfavored their characteristic practices such as securing deals from a distance, seeking customers across the country, and so on, leading to their not getting shortlisted for the final interview. A group of City

Traders formally approached the top management of GSC, protesting against the new arrangement that was being implemented:

> *We told the senior people that we had been loyal to the company through good and bad times. How could they remove us—it was unfair, but they were adamant. Suggesting that we should shift to smaller towns and markets was impractical. We had our family, our network, our way of life, we were national players—how could we abandon all that; we were convinced that the new model will fail.* (City Trader on why they did not become distributor)

At the individual level, the habitus of actors indeed set limits on what they could attempt but within those boundaries, conscious acts to secure support from the administration were a crucial determinant of their individual fortunes as also of the direction of renewal efforts. The administration on the other hand intentionally allocated resources to the configuration that it felt could help it regain dominance in the field, but was limited to choose from the variations present in the organization. Renewal lay at the intersection of intentional acts of the administration bound by the "dispositional" initiatives of social actors that it could access.

8 | IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The B-B framework codifies intraorganizational ecological processes through which some organizations operate a selection mechanism on internal initiatives, absorbing successful ones to modulate corporate strategy and relatedly their structural context, albeit incrementally and slowly, and its correspondence with external selection pressures determining continued fitness (Burgelman, 1991). Facing sudden external transition across technological, economic, social, and political dimensions that invalidated the entire structural context, we found GSC effect renewal through a coevolution of the "what" of its product–market strategy, the "hows" of daily doings in the organization, a rule structure which legitimized the new "hows," and the fortunes of different classes of managers as also of different classes of associated intermediaries. Independently, the B-B process model can explain how the top management takes cognizance of bottom-up initiatives and allocates resources iteratively to change its product–market strategy. The (shift in) power relations between classes of actors, actualized through the oppositions in their micro-practices, themselves derived from their variously socialized and historicized selves, can be illuminated by Bourdieu's practice theory. Applied together, the two perspectives provided an analytical framework to map the dialectic between class interests instigated by the flux of wholesale changes and organizational interests around renewal to cope with a sharply altered environment.

In less dramatic contexts comprising technical and economic upheavals, the administration could map the autonomous technical variations with the market need to identify the required changes in its strategy. It now needed to also map the new social configurations with the market need to devise a relevant structural context to suit the new sociopolitical realities. Our study of the novel phenomena identified the process–practice pathways comprising contests between varieties of "styles," "logics," and "routines," which allowed the altered sociopolitical realities to enter the organization in the form of valorized micro-practices (the "hows") and afforded a simultaneous benefit for their progenitors (the "whos") who formed the winning social configuration. While the "hows" and "whos" are but two sides of the same coin, we found that these were also intimately linked with the content of the autonomous initiatives, that is, the "whats" that altered the organizational strategy. As the administration allocated resources to an initiative, it also simultaneously allocated resources and legitimacy to the corresponding class of actors and their way of doings things, thus actively participating in the ongoing contests between actor classes. Given that the administration's resource allocation function weighed in not only on the contests between "whats," but between "hows" and "whos" as well, the nature of resource allocation was in terms of monetary resources as well as "bodies" which were themselves repository of certain dispositions or "hows." The process–practice pathways of organizational renewal were propelled by the changing conversion rate of the capital forms of competing actor classes, impacted by the continued labor of actors as well as the administration's allocation of bodies (with homologous interests), which provided further labor. We showed how the consequent changes in capital conversion rates allowed a particular idiosyncratic and personal *style* to establish itself as a legitimate organizational *logic* and, finally, how through *routines*, reified a new rule structure. Over time, the organization would lose memory that the rule structure was but an organizational representation of contested personal dispositions representing class interests. Till the next wholesale upheaval took place, it would continue as the selection mechanism of intraorganizational ecology, and the ongoing evolution of organizational strategy would be adequately explained by the B-B framework without needing to delve into Bourdieu's framework involving micro-practices and class interests.

Going beyond Bower's process model, which represented corporate-level concerns through capital allocation decisions to internal projects, the B-B framework identified the process of strategic context determination wherein the administration used resource allocation to make changes in the business portfolio itself and help the organization evolve continually with the environment. By combining Bourdieu's practice theory with the B-B process framework, we have shown how organizations may ride through dramatic wholesale changes by facilitating newly ascendant "social" configurations of a class of actors, who themselves act through their preferred micro-practices, to shape an entirely new structural context that can guide organizations toward "fitness." That a different class of actors and their preferred practices can be more useful at different times in the life of an organization (Ludescher & Burgelman, 2012) or change the trajectory of organizational strategy (Pettigrew, 1985) is recognized in the strategic management literature, but the mechanisms are not adequately focused upon. Indeed, the novel phenomena that we have studied might be more widespread than imagined. The recent example of the phenomena of T–20 cricket (Buchanan, 2010), which was adopted by the International Cricket Council in the face of declining viewership of traditional cricket formats, is another instance of how new product–market strategies (short duration matches in evenings) are linked intimately with the ascendancy of new practices (player auctions, pinch hitting, cheerleaders on field) and new kinds of actors (batsmen trained on smaller grounds). Strategic management would benefit from studies at the intersection of strategy process and strategy-as-practice (SAP) traditions, which would improve understanding of various actor classes, the source of their agency, their socialized and historicized interests, and how those interact with organizational structures and interests (Whittington, 2017). Such knowledge would be crucial in the new millennium, which is seeing dramatic sociopolitical reorientations as various geographies grapple with unanticipated discontinuities, wherein top management would need to search for the winning social configurations rather than focus only on the technical-economic frontier. For the SAP subdomain in particular, our study holds important directions of progress. Whittington (2006) has recognized practitioners as the "critical connection" between intraorganizational activity and the extraorganizational influence they bring as part of their socialized and historicized selves. By showing how practitioners' dispositions acquired in their early age interacted with and contributed to change processes in organizations much later in their lives, our study served as an empirical exposition into the gains that SAP can make by taking this "critical connection" across time and space seriously. Next, SAP has delved largely into what is explicitly "strategy" work, like ritualization of a strategy workshop (Johnson et al., 2010), strategy formation through PowerPoint presentations (Mirabeau & Maguire, 2014), and so on. By showing that functional work (in our particular case related to sales and distribution) of practitioners unrelated to the strategy department and strategy work can be tightly linked to strategic renewal, our study served to expand the definition of strategy work and hence the possibilities of enquiry for the SAP subdomain.

Our study has important implications for practitioners dealing with an increasingly uncertain world. The ability to identify and distinguish wholesale change involving sociopolitical shifts from other kinds of external environment change that are techno-economic in nature would be crucial for top management, for it would need to involve itself far more intensely in the former, where the organization's rule structure itself would be at stake. Faced with sudden wholesale change, they will need to recognize winning dispositions in the new context and quickly "retroactively rationalize" them to effect a change in the structural context and restore the organization's selection mechanism. They would also do well to consciously create a healthy variety among the managerial classes to be able to benefit from a range of autonomous initiatives when discontinuities arrive.

Our study has two key limitations. One, it considers a single large organization that has being successful over more than a century, except for brief periods of uncertainty. Further research involving comparative case studies of organizations that faced similar upheavals would be useful in determining certain unexplored aspects related to managerial contests and organizational adaptation. Two, our study did not have a negative case, such as one where the renewal effort did not succeed. Future work that explores negative cases under sharp institutional transitions can substantially strengthen or further refine the insights of our work. Indeed, the deep opposition between managerial classes at GSC was the source of the autonomous initiative that proved crucial for renewal. Future studies can investigate the source/nature of variations that lie within organizations and how these relate to organizational adaptation. Is an organization destined to fail in the face of dramatic transitions if there is little or no variation within its managerial class? Again, after securing renewal, how does an administration retain fitness on an ongoing basis when the social configuration that it is relying on involves extraorganizational actor(s) susceptible to other developments in the larger field? Is it important to have variation among extraorganizational allies as well?

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