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Leda McIntyre Hall and Melvin F. Hall — *Dispute Domains and Conflict Process*

Peter A. Rettender — *Detroit's Urban Regime: Composition and Consequence?*

Research Note: Impersonal Decision-Making as a Fraudulent Ideology

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DISPUTING IN ORGANIZATIONS
DISPUTE DOMAINS AND INTERACTIONAL PROCESS

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This paper offers an interactional perspective on the emergence and organization of disputes in organizations. Organizations are analyzed as interrelated dispute domains which consist of standardized and recurring argumentation practices and constraints, orientations to interactions and relationships, and role formats. The paper considers how organization members orient to and treat disputes as disruptions of preferred organizational routines and realities, and attempt to sustain the routines and realities in the face of ongoing disputes. Two additional implications of the perspective are also considered: how disputes are transformed when they are reconsidered within different dispute domains, and how the rhetorical resources available to disputants vary within and across dispute domains.

All social interactions and relationships hold the potential for arguments and disputes. This is especially true of formal organizations and street-level bureaucracies (Lipsky, 1980; Miller, 1991) which are characterized by diverse perspectives and agendas, and fraught with major and minor conflicts. This paper develops a sociological approach to the emergence and resolution of everyday disagreements by treating them as normal and routine aspects of the organizational interaction. Specifically, we treat disputing as one way in which organization members formulate, express and justify their positions on practical issues. Disputes are embedded in and emerge from ongoing organizational interactions and relationships which disputants define and redefine as they formulate, express, and negotiate their arguments. They may emerge within otherwise mundane and unremarkable interactions, or may take place in settings explicitly organized for disputing, such as administrative hearings, court proceedings, or mediation sessions.

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