‘Strategic Management in (a) Crisis?’
Uncertainty, Imprecision & the Incomplete as Axioms in Building Appropriate Theory

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Purpose of Research

- Research focus:
  - How do general crises speak to individual enterprises?
  - How does spread of crisis disrupt existing relationships?

- Three detailed questions:
  - How does uncertainty (embodied in incomplete statements or ‘enthymemes’) irrupt into enterprise planning systems?
  - How do enthymemes destabilise extant enterprise planning?
  - How do enterprises deal with incompleteness of enthymemes?

- Use STS concepts (unstable heterogeneous networks) to think these questions through.
Ubiquity of the Incomplete

- Proliferating incompleteness key means of generalising crisis:
  - Over 400 incomplete housing estates in Irish Republic.
  - Different levels of incompleteness (‘developer-abandoned developments’, eg).
  - What’s missing may be material, property rights or natural – built be heterogeneous engineering.
  - Gov’t plans involve Site Action Plans & Site Resolution Plans: resolution an intriguingly complete word.

- But completion not the only option for enthymemes like housing estates.
Comprehensive Rational Planning

- Hegemonic strategic planning model (aka. CRP) rational-empiricist in nature.
  - Widespread use of induction, deduction - linearity, problem factorisation, hierarchical decomposition.
  - Organising by institution, hierarchies, functional ism.
  - Separation of strategic planning from other corporate functions & vesting in dedicated teams.
  - Planning in discrete stages with start & end.
  - Reification of all-seeing corporate plan. Non-planned ‘off balance-sheet’.
  - Planning horizon linked to asset amortisation – artificial separation of (technology, knowledge) asset-bases.
The Unravelling

Three-part process of internalising crisis:

I. *Fragmentation within the enterprise:*
   - Enthymemes not readable by completists (planners) – but crisis demands they *are* read!
   - Enthymemes find those who can read them (boundary agents - BAs) & galvanise them through an anti-program.
   - Planning war ensues between planners & boundary agents.

II. *Use of special weapons:*
   - Both sides use special weapons. Planners use the networks of the Plan: BAs use slack resources & Boundary Objects illicitly.

III. *Coping with enthymematic challenge post-demise of CRP.*
## Tactics for Managing Enthymemes

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Process Detail</th>
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<tr>
<td>Intentionality &amp; provenance</td>
<td>Did enunciator mean to omit parts of syllogism? Did enthymeme represent whole enunciating institution or is there dissent? Did contextual implicatures impede enthymematic communication or cause it?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Travel efficacy</td>
<td>Did transporting move enthymeme faithfully? Did transporter &amp; enthymeme interact?</td>
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<td>Post-enunciation engagement</td>
<td>How clear are rules to open/close clarification mechanisms? How strongly affiliated is the enunciator with the enthymeme?</td>
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| Enthymeme diagnosis             | Where is the implicature located?  
   - Implicated *premise*.
   - Implicated *conclusion*.
What is the effect of background theory & common knowledge?  
   - Knowledge beyond reasonable doubt.
   - Performative propositions on how key objects should perform. What loading effects can be attributed to expertise? |
Enthymemematic Challenges

- Strategic mgmt theory beginning to address themes like ‘managing ambiguity’, but continuing emphasis on *certainty acts* make this hard.
- Open processes (abduction; enthymeme heuristics) based on flexible roles & pragmatism provide potentially superior alternative.
- Proper response a *strategic* concern, since enthymemematic uncertainty concerns whole-enterprises in future of permanent crisis.