

‘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, functionalism.
 - 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

Factor	Process Detail
❖ Intentionality & provenance	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?
❖ Travel efficacy	Did transporting move enthymeme faithfully? Did transporter & enthymeme interact?
❖ Post-enunciation engagement	How clear are rules to open/close clarification mechanisms? How strongly affiliated is the enunciator with the enthymeme ?
❖ Enthymeme diagnosis	Where is the implicature located? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implicated <i>premise</i>. • Implicated <i>conclusion</i> .. What is the effect of background theory & common knowledge? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge beyond reasonable doubt . • Performative propositions on how key objects should perform. What loading effects can be attributed to expertise?

Enthymematic 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 enthymematic uncertainty concerns whole-enterprises in future of permanent crisis.