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The Ideational Dynamics of Cultural Interaction and Actor Bonds

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Abstract:

This paper provides a critique of IMP modeling and other schools of network analysis as captive of logocentric thought and colonized by modernist discourse, which relies upon the unchallenged assumptions of reason, rationalism and anthropocentric progress through scientism. IMP modeling is a welcome relief from narrower forms of economic rationalism in its attempted integration of social influences involving trust, social interaction and relationships. IMP modeling has, however, failed to escape from the colonization of Western ethnocentric rationalism because it remains unconsciously wedded to the central tenets of reason, which manifest themselves in the unquestioned primacy of 'modeling' as an outcome of 'superior' positivist epistemology and nomothetic methodology. The principal outcome of this failure is a latent incapability of taking culture seriously and of treating culture, at best, as merely another variable or dimension to be added on as a marginalized supplement to economy within an econocentric variance modeling approach.

IMP modeling avoids the worst excesses of economic determinism and mechanistic reductionism of neo-classical Structural-Functionalist worldviews and, as such, assists in the monumental task of overcoming the hegemony of this orthodoxy in Marketing and Management. IMP modeling, however, because of its immanent rationalism cannot adequately challenge the manifestations and consequences of this hegemony. These include the metanarrative of scientism and its accompanying scientific assumptions of metaphysical truth, bivalence and atomised explanation. The argument is that this is embedded within an ethnocentric, rationalist, 'culture-bound' Western view dominating management academia. IMP modeling ends up being a naïve attempt at alternatively challenging ethnocentric orthodoxy that results in furthering the dominance of the latter because of its unconscious theoretical capitulation to rationalism.

Other alternatives are identified as eclectic resources suitable for the development of an approach more relevant to local rather than universal conditions. These are discussed in the context of Overseas Chinese networks, which, it is argued, are not understandable outside of a discourse, which both accept culture as a network concept and networks as a cultural phenomena. This it is argued requires a fundamental critical evaluation within the IMP group of its unconscious modernist, Western assumptions and a willingness to accept ideas from outside this modernist 'psychic prison', principally from what has become to be termed 'postmodernism'.

The Ideational Dynamics of Cultural Interaction and Actor Bonds

Most marketing research methodologies, including business-to-business research, are modernist in nature (Gómez Arias and Acebrón 2001). Modernist discourse emphasises the potential for human advancement through adoption of rational thought, reason and progress. The dominant form of modernism is 'systems' modernism (Cooper and Burell 1988,p. 95), which institutionalises reason through the development of the functional demands of universal systems. Modernism rests on a conception of information and knowledge as referential or representational, as a means of expressing something real and foundational outside of itself. It is founded upon assumptions of realist ontology and lends itself to logical positivism and universalising nomothetic 'model building' methodology. It is 'structural' in that it involves reducing complexity to atomised measurable, foundational certainties and largely adopts mechanistic metaphors and linear explanation to describe the world, which it assumes, is controllable by human kind as the central agent of reason.

The IMP approach (and, to a large extent, the entire network episteme including Social Network Analysis) is a modernist, objectivist alternative to the dominant orthodoxy of neo-classical marketing theory. All types of network theory have their antecedence in social anthropology (Araujo and Easton 1996,p.64). Social anthropology has an underlying predisposition to structural-functional, structuralist and foundationalist principles through the influence of its principal proponents from Edward Tylor, through Bronislaw Malinowsy and A.R. Radcliffe-Browm, to Franz Boas, Margaret Mead and Claude Levi-Strauss. Despite the disparity in their foci, these principal social anthropologists share a predilection for structural explanations of social phenomena. Within network theory this is translated into a schema where social network theory is privileged. Social network theory is the most highly cross-referenced field within Industrial Network studies and the majority of other forms of network analysis (Araujo and Easton 1996,p.68). Social network theory rejects explanations of behaviour from cultural and

processual perspectives (Araujo and Easton 1996,p.72). Thus social network theory, the privileged source of network analysis, is also the field which is most highly oriented to analysis of structure and is the most dedicated adherent of the positivist epistemology of sociometric and 'block modeling' techniques along with other objectivist assumptions.

The main problem with all forms of network analysis has been is their employment of Western rationalist repertoires to 'analyse' through the logocentric delusion of objectivity. The outcome is consequently culturally embedded in its own Western, rationalist cognitive style and its methodological, epistemological and ontological assumptions. Network analysis has tended to focus upon economic 'interests' and not cultural 'ideas' in analysis of the human condition, using quantitative, logically empirical analysis to determine the structure of relationships. The domain of 'ideas', particularly morality, and analysis sensitive to the subjective interpretations of cultural actors and the hermeneutics of their ideas, is largely absent from network theory. IMP literature is captive of this modernist, logocentric thinking because of its adherence to structural-functionalist assumptions of ontological realism and nomothetic methodology. As a consequence, IMP fails to take culture seriously. This denigration of the construct of culture means that it is either ignored or abused.

Ignoring Culture

Ignoring culture is not uncommon. For example in the text edited by Hakansson and Snehota (1995) 'developing relationships in networks' is explored without any direct reference to culture. This is despite the clearly cultural nature of interaction between actors in forming bonds involving ideas, 'learning' and socially constructed 'meaning' (Hakansson and Snehota 1995,p.202) as well as the development of trust and the construction of identities (Hakansson and Snehota 1995p.204). Meaning and ideas, however, have been denigrated or downplayed by IMP scholars (Hellgren, et al. 1993; Welch and Wilkinson 2001). Culture as systems of meaning and ideas has been similarly ignored generally in network analysis, which has adopted an emphasis upon relational structures (DiMaggio 1992).

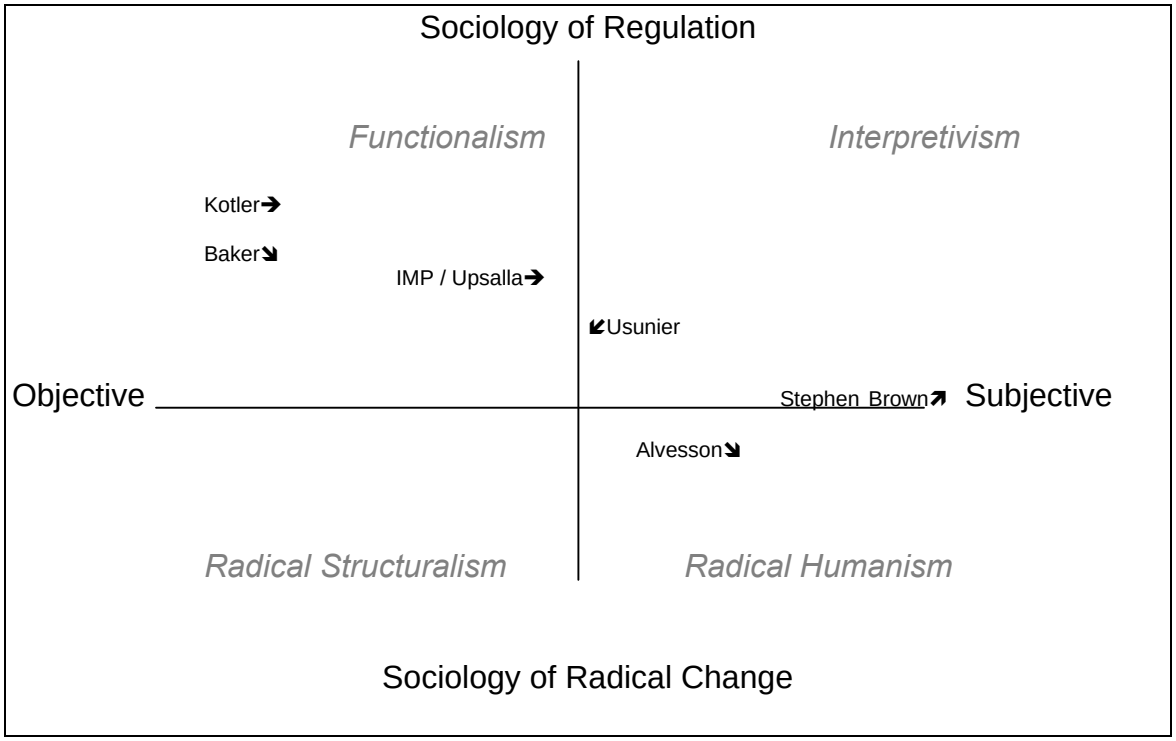
The central problem facing a conceptualisation of culture as one domain co-evolving with a parallel domain of interests is ‘Nadel’s Paradox’. This concerns the problem of accommodating these dual domains of ‘interests’ and ‘ideas’ in analysis of the human condition. ‘Interests’ appears compatible with quantitative, logically empirical analysis of the structure of relationships but ‘ideas’ appears more compatible with qualitative analysis that is sensitive to the subjective interpretations of cultural actors. The paradox is that progress towards better explanation and understanding relies upon the simultaneous application of two apparently incommensurable approaches (DiMaggio 1992).

The IMP group may be characterised, in Burrell and Morgan’s (1979) terms as structural-functionalist. They proposed that social theory can be seen in terms of four key paradigms based on differing assumptions about the philosophy of (social) science as one dimension and about the nature of society as another. The four paradigms are seen as each identifying a distinct problem and as incommensurable and mutually exclusive perspectives or ‘hermetic’ theoretical systems. Different assumptions about the philosophy of science are constituted by different sets of assumptions related to ontology, epistemology, human nature and methodology, which determine a continuum from ‘subjectivist’ to ‘objectivist’ approaches. Similarly, contrasting notions of ‘regulation’ or order from those concerning ‘radical change’ or conflict constitute different assumptions about the nature of society. The outcome is the four paradigms of ‘Radical humanist’, Radical Structuralist’, ‘Interpretivist’ and ‘Functionalist’ sociology. These paradigms, and the position of the IMP approach within this schema are shown in Fig.1.

IMP modeling ends up being a naïve attempt at challenging functionalist orthodoxy. This results in furthering the dominance of the latter because of its unconscious theoretical capitulation to rationalism and scientism. The IMP group has always put relationships as a central focus. To not, at the same time, adopt culture as a central construct makes little sense. Relationships are cultural. Managing people is deeply embedded in cultural assumptions about human nature, relationships with people, and peer relations. “Assumptions about human nature determine the willingness to

delegate and the nature of control systems" and these "assumptions relate to the nature of relationships" (Schneider and Barsoux 1997,p.36). The propensity of a relationship-oriented culture is to afford greater importance to relationships than tasks, with emphasis upon trust and particularism (Schneider and Barsoux 1997,p.37). This emphasis is, for example, manifest in 'neo-Confucian' cultures like Hong Kong in ubiquitous *Guanxi* or 'connections' as the principle currency of co-ordination. The importance afforded to relationships in such cultures is related to the extent to which hierarchy is revered, the way in which leadership is perceived, and how peers interact and construct their own identity (Schneider and Barsoux 1997,p.38).

Figure 1 : Marketing Approaches and Social Science Paradigms



Abusing Culture

Abusing culture involves applying scientific rationalist reductionism to the complex phenomenon of culture. The principal outcome of this failure is a latent incapability of taking culture seriously and of treating culture, at best, as merely another variable or dimension to be added on as a marginalized supplement to economy within an econocentric variance modeling approach. Sekaran and Snodgrass (1990) have provided the only substantive empirical attempt so far of understanding negotiation aspects of culture in networks. They have recognised three co-ordinative mechanisms of markets, hierarchies and network forms (Sekaran and Snodgrass 1990,p.96) as 'dependent' variables. They also recognise three underlying premises, central to the network approach. These 'network dimensions' of motivation for entry, positioning, and linkages are processes hypothesised as subject to cultural influences. From these network dimensions eight items were identified as independent variables hypothesised to influence the three 'negotiating mechanisms' significantly differently in different cultures. Sekaran and Snodgrass (1990) found support for their principal and supplementary hypotheses. It provides a rough indication how Southeast Asian cultural values, in terms of Hofstede's (1980) dimensions, could influence negotiation aspects of the motivational, positioning and linkage processes of networks and networking in the Asian Pacific region.

A number of problems with the Sekaran and Snodgrass (1990) study mean that, although the study is a welcome contribution, its uni-level, logical empirical reductionism disappoints in the ambition to explore culture seriously. In the first instance the reduction of complexity to a set of variables enabling positivistic analysis detracts from the requirement to examine cultural economy more holistically. The Sekaran and Snodgrass (1990) study, in this regard may be adopted as a simplification of a whole requiring a complementary focus upon a more complex, qualitative, subjectivist approach that does not ignore the moral considerations. Progress toward 'understanding' culture requires more than Sekaran and Snodgrass (1990) provide. In particular, it is assumed that validation of a complex, multi-level, holistic conceptualisation of culture

embedded in real-life contexts requires methodological or analytical generalisation rather than statistical generalisation. In this view, Sekaran and Snodgrass (1990) provide more specialised, secondary and less complex ‘description’ of aspects of the whole rather than any progress towards a more holistic ‘understanding’ and, consequently, their model is limited by failure to avoid the Myth of Cultural Integration (Archer 1996), whereby different levels of culture are conflated, leading to the assumption that one form is held to be the determinant influence and the other the epiphenomenal dependent variable.

Sekaran and Snograss apply a ‘cross-cultural’ or ‘comparative management’ theme to the problem, involving the intersection of functionalist anthropology and neo-classical management theory (Smircich 1983). This approach adherence to assumptions dedicated towards concern for the problem of social order and adherence to objectivism. It results in treating culture as an independent variable imported into organizations and revealed through the patterns of actions and attitudes of organizational members (Smircich 1983,p.343). It adheres to organismic metaphors in conceptualising organized behaviour. It seeks to identify general and contingent causality in the relationship between the cultural variable and organizational variables. Identifying the deterministic causality of culture is, therefore, seen as critical in the search for predictable, modernist means of organizational management and control (Smircich 1983,p.347).

The modernist tone of network analysis is most evident in the treatment of the central question of trust. Trust is generally seen as a feature of networks, which is less prominent in market or bureaucracy forms of organising. It is a process that builds over time within relationships and as a consequence of episodinal experience. Trust, however is often structurally reduced to a transactional property, a variable appending to *homos economicus*, a fulfilment of promises of implicit or explicit transactional obligations (Thorelli 1990). All this, for example, fails to capture the personalistic, emotional, cultural and moral context of trust within Chinese business networks. Trust in the context of *guanxi* networks is more than an exchange of promises (Gronroos 1989) and is not reducible to contractual explanation or divisible from reciprocity, face, reputation,

loyalty, integrity and friendships with implying continual exchange of favours within Chinese business systems. Trust is an element of *form*, which facilitates relationships between people within systems. It involves emotion and non-rational thought as much, if not more, than economic rational thought. It is made through imagination processes, as an invention of minds. It is an aspect of the whole and not *substance* of the parts. It is the logic of a relational system and the whole is greater than the sum of the parts because of it. As a result it is not reducible analytically to a measurable variable, as a substance whose reality exists for empirical discovery.

Accommodating Culture

Welch and Wilkinson (2001) seek to explain how systems of ideas shape and are shaped by the ongoing process of interaction within and between organisations in networks; how systems of ideas or 'idea logics', interrelate to the dimensions of actor bonds, resource ties and activity links. Networks of relationships are cultural because they are central to organising human systems that learn symbolically, invent ideas, truths and ideologies through language and communication. Ideas are the primary units of knowledge systems and knowledge systems are networks of interrelated ideas (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995; Welch and Wilkinson 2001).

Welch and Wilkinson (2001) propose that knowledge systems operate on three levels corresponding to the "effect parameters" (Håkansson & Snehota 1995) of activity links, resource ties and actor bonds within the AAR model. At the level of the organisation is the concept of a schema. This roughly corresponds to the popularised notion of 'organisational culture' in that it emphasises ideational, interactional processes of agency (attitudes, attributes, categories, scripts, social representations, behaviours) commonly found in the literature concerning organisational culture (Deal and Kennedy 1988; Schein 1985,1991; Hofstede 1991; Johnson 1992). It is heavily dependent upon development of 'ethnomethodology' within cognitive anthropology, which regards culture as a system of shared cognitions that determine a finite set of rules (Smircich 1983,p.342). Organisational cognition is drawn from the intersection of cognitive anthropology (ethnoscience) and cognitive organisation theory, which leads researchers to view organisations

"as networks of subjective meanings and shared frames of reference" (Smircich 1983,p.349). This is "strikingly similar to the notion of paradigm" (Smircich 1983p.350). The underlying assumptions of this approach reflect attention to the epistemological basis of social action and emphasis upon 'mind' and 'thought' as critical influences.

Welch and Wilkinson (2001) extend this cognitive anthropology into the levels of dyadic relationships and networks. The ideational consequences of interaction between actors involve *schema couplings* involving mutual cultural adaptation through "relationship attractors" and other adaptive mechanisms. At the level of the network are *schema entanglements* which are configurations of co-adapted ideas characterising a network and which underlie its functioning. This latter concept appears closely related to the notion of industrial recipes (Spender 1989) and its contemporary equivalent, "industrial wisdom" (Hellgren, et al. 1993,p.93).

A principal problem with this approach is in its avoidance of Nadels Paradox. Interests and ideas are accommodated within the same nomothetic model. This demobilises culture as an epistemological device used to frame the study of organisation as social phenomenon. It reduces culture from its 'holographic' (Morgan 1997,p.151), non-physical and expressive character to a structural-functionalist worldview that adopts mechanistic and organismic metaphors leading to instrumentalist and reductionist conceptions. Within the 'organisational culture' literature, there is a dissonance and incommensurability between dominant 'popular' nomothetic, positivist approaches and ideographic, phenomenological approaches (Oswick et al. 1996). The latter are not inclined to adopt simplistic classification schemes, the assumption of culture as something an organisation 'has' and the unitarist conception of culture that offer time-constrained managers "quick-fix, off-the-shelf solutions" (Oswick et al. 1996,p.117) to complex cultural problems.

Culture when assumed as a variable can be measured by an outsider and assimilated into a nomothetic model. This denigrates an alternative, interpretivist assumption of culture as the lived experience of the insider. Culture in structural-functionalism is assumed to be a part of a structure itself constituted by sub-structures. This impoverishes culture, which loses its expressive,

interpretive characteristic as a ‘root’ metaphor and becomes a dependent or independent variable. Culture as a variable is assumed constituted by foundational elements or ‘memes’ by Welch and Wilkinson (2001). The inherently structural nature of the conceptualisation is complete by this foundationalism. Culture succumbs to the totalisation of reason and the modernist identification of the structure of foundational essences and real or certain truths that are immanent, knowable and discoverable by the rational human agent. Culture is assumed to be real, substantive, concrete, structured, measurable and capable of being modelled as a variable within such a nomothetic model. Such an approach is ripe for the same fate as ‘organisation culture’; namely colonisation by populist, unitarist, managerialist evangelism.

The focus of Welch and Wilkinson (2001) on ideas, meanings, logics, norms, theories, ideologies and rules within knowledge systems may succeed in description but fails to develop and understand culture within network theory. Because these ideational phenomena are forced in to the same instrumental domain as interests, ideas are treated as ‘real’ cultural artefacts or elements, rather than as nominal general processes of human imagination. This approach fails to overcome the problem that ideas have become confounded with the analysis of other dimensions. In treating culture within the same domain as interests of activity links, resource ties and actor bonds, this approach exacerbates the confounding of ideational with other, separate dimensions concerning interests. As a result, the approach of Welch and Wilkinson (2001) contributes considerably to helping to identify cultural patterns by the outside observer but cannot focus upon the experience of the cultural participant. Such an ‘emic’ understanding requires separate treatment of ideas from interests and the adoption of interpretivist assumptions of ontological nominalism and ideographic methods. It demands a parallel but separate journey into the *Geisteswissenschaften* or ‘cultural sciences’.

Imagining Networks

Social reality within the interpretivist paradigm is regarded as a network of assumptions and intersubjectively shared meanings (Burrell and Morgan 1979,p.28). Interpretivist alternative conceptualisations of culture largely apply it as a 'root metaphor' and therefore not something that an organization *has* but what organization *is* (Smircich 1983,p.347). Culture as an epistemological device thus replaces mechanisic and organismic metaphors common within functionalism. Instrumentalist, econocentric conceptions of organization are displaced by interpretivist notions characterised by non-physical, social, more ambiguous, expressive, ideational and symbolic forms. In other words, the ontological status of culture assumes a more nominalist form. This stimulates a research agenda exploring organization "as subjective experience and to investigate the patterns that make organized action possible" (Smircich 1983,p.348). The adoption of a more nominalist ontology means that organization is conceived as a pattern of social relationships and meanings generated and sustained by language, symbols, myths, stories, rituals and other *processes* as forms of human imagination. These processes are no longer the realist, structural, cultural artefacts that the structural functionlists assume them to be. The focus upon the imaginative, subjective and ideational domain makes ideographic more relevant than nomothetic methodology and reduces the relevance a positivist epistemology.

Within the interpretivist paradigm, therefore culture and networks are conceived of quite differently than they are within functionalism. They are considered as root metaphors, forms of human expression and processual epistemes in themselves. Culture is no longer considered, as in functionalism, as a variable. It cannot be mapped onto physical, mechanistic or organismic domains. It is a device to explore organisation as a social phenomenon with a non-physical status and without purposeful instruments and adaptive mechanisms (Smircich 1983,p.353). In other words, it sees networks, culture and organisation as concomitants of human imagination and not as concrete realities.

Several metaphorical approaches have adopted conceptions of networks and/or culture within this social science paradigm. These include the organisational culture metaphor, the 'self-organised' neural network, the political systems metaphor, and the complexity and dialectic metaphors within contemporary systems theory (Morgan 1997). All of these metaphorical approaches share a conception of a network as an organised entity where everything is connected to everything else through process. Network *form* is not an intrinsic element of any of the parts in isolation and cannot be understood through mechanistic analysis of the parts. This requires a process epistemology that assumes our knowledge is also a patterned system of concepts and models without foundation. It requires an 'epistemic consciousness' in realising all knowledge as approximate and cultural. Take, for example, living systems metaphors.

Living, 'conscious systems' metaphors are unlike machine and other physical systems metaphors in that they use non-linear (networked) feedback to enable self-organised consciousness. The logic of any system rests in its network of relations, conceived of as living systems embedded in other networks. Focus upon the logic of the system *form* rather upon the manifestations of its parts as *substance*, which is the agenda of science, distinguishes the ambitions of contemporary, processual systems approaches from those of rationalism, objectivism and structural-functionalism. In this context, holistic systems cannot be understood through nomothetic method or an analytical search for unitary truth. These are symptoms of the problem of a modernist fixation within rationalism with generation of certain knowledge and nomothetic theory. Processual systems are, therefore, energetically open but organisationally closed. They have a 'mind', which processes qualitative, contextual, tacit and experiential knowledge facilitating learning, self-regulation and change. Mind and matter, organisation and structure, therefore, are mutually constituted but occupy different realms. New forms of order or higher levels of organisation are internally generated during instability through learning and integration of combined interaction of parts and not simply imported from the environment. The function of parts is to reproduce other components while maintaining the circularity of the network. This

involves transformations of structure and behaviour or 'self-organisation' which "is the spontaneous emergence of new structures and new forms of behaviour in open systems far from equilibrium, characterized by internal feedback loops" (Capra 1997,p.85). Living systems are cognitive and so can 'make themselves' through organisation and transformation. As such living systems are *autopoietic* and their perception specifies an invention of themselves, their relationships and their environment in the context of circular organisation.

Human systems have culture as an emergent property. Culture is organisation and organisation is cognition or 'mind', which has network characteristics. Mind enables change and transformation through learning processes that formulate and reformulate, most actively during periods of instability, images of self, relationships and environment. As a result, networks are central to human life because they are cultural. Culture as 'mind' is central to life because it is organised through networks. Networks are cultural and culture is an ideational network; a phenomenon best suited to the metaphor of mind and imagination. Such cognitive or 'conscious' systems theories focus upon networks as the principal organisational metaphor and this, for example, is consistent with the networked nature of the Chinese businessphere (Lowe 1998).

Understanding such a non-physical world of networks requires emphasis upon social construction. This involves understanding *verstehen* or meaning, interpretations of meanings and rules of interpretation. This represents a theory-of-knowledge or epistemic dimension of the concept of meaning wherein reality exists nominally only through meaning (Alasuutari 1995,p.27). Ideas are imagined and culture, as a constellation of dynamic ideas, is a collective dynamic network of the human imagination surrounding a group of people. It is the imagination that creates reality, the rules for such a creation, and the application or 'enactment' of those rules. As the concept of discourse seeks to unravel this juxtaposition between reality and conceptions of reality, between meaning and the 'meaning of meaning', discourse analysis is an example of a practical research implication consonant with adoption of an 'epistemic' paradigm and with overcoming Nadel's Paradox.

Liberating Culture

In selecting methodology, the researcher is faced with an array of choices. These are interconnected with choices relating to epistemology and ontology and are premised by underlying assumptions. The assumptions are only exposed when choices are consciously made and often, this consciousness is not present or is obscured by institutionalised research practices within hermetically sealed research paradigms. Ideas and interests cannot be treated as occupying the same domain. Ideas are simply not understood using objectivist assumptions just as interests cannot be adequately modelled using subjectivism. As noted earlier, Nadel's Paradox means that ideas and interests must be treated with equal importance but they cannot be explored using the same ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions. Liberating culture therefore requires paradigm crossing (Schultz and Hatch 1996). Paradigm crossing involves recognising and engaging multiple paradigms requiring the cognitive flexibility to accept the coexistence of multiple truths and the expectation of benefits of mutual arising from the synthesis of apparent opposites. In other words, it requires a kind of ontological, methodological and epistemological 'double-think' enabling the application of apparently incommensurate paradigms in order to resolve Nadel's Paradox. The first advantage of paradigm crossing is to release choices and to expose the assumptions underlying them. In doing so, researchers are freed to develop their interests and recognise their limitations and motives.

In relation to the IMP Group, the proposed approach allows interests and ideas to be explored equally but separately using different social scientific assumptions. Paradigm crossing techniques include 'sequential' crossing approaches (Schultz and Hatch 1996,p.533). Sequential crossing involves exploring the complementarities between paradigms by revealing sequential levels of understanding through one method informing on, or providing inputs, for another from a different paradigm. The proposal here is that the analysis of Actor Bonds in an AAR analysis of a network are a suitable starting point for a subsequent and complementary analysis of the social construction of these bonds using discourse analysis. The sequential exploration of these

constructs points to complementary emphases upon network *form* and substance/structure as well as upon 'emic' relational and communicative *process* in addition to 'etic' variance modelling. The objective of such paradigm crossing is to attempt to reconcile structural (quantitative, relational structure) with action (qualitative, cultural aspects) explanations of social life. Such integration and synthesis seeks to exploit the synergistic benefits derived from both functionalist and interpretivist paradigms by recognition of their equal value.

Discourse analysis is a particularly suited complementary, interpretivist methodology in juxtaposition to AAR modelling. Discourse is constituted by information, knowledge and communication (Cooper and Burrell 1988,p.91). Significant differences between modernist and postmodern discourses are evident and contiguous to this are different conceptions of organisation and organising. Modernist discourse is characterised by transcendent yet anthropocentric criteria such as 'reason' and 'progress'. In modernist discourse, 'organisation' concerns enacting or legitimising rationality as a totalising ambition. Organisation is therefore promoted as a legitimate social tool for the totalisation of rationalism, reason and progress. It is an objective, administrative-economic function that enables planned activity. By contrast, postmodern discourse is characterised by a rejection of such modernist, structural certainties. Postmodern discourse involves paradox, contradiction and indeterminacy. Organisation is, therefore, an anthropocentric defence against a chaotic, uncertain and uncontrollable universe. From this viewpoint organisation has an inherent 'automaticity'; a life of its own that is beyond human control (Cooper and Burrell 1988) or management.

Discourse analysis asserts an identification of the construction of truth or meaning within science and management as a strategy of exercising power through knowledge. In other words, discourse analysis recognises that all human knowledge is subjective and a product of human imagination. All knowledge is communicated in the context of power. All discourse involves the contest of establishing which truth, from the many truths available, is established as most legitimate, valid and credible. Discourse analysis, therefore, focuses on how ideas or truths are socially

constructed or ‘made’ rather than ‘found’ by human beings. In particular, this involves within ‘critical’ discourse analysis, a ‘genealogical’ emphasis upon “how inequalities in power determine the ability to control the production, distribution and consumption of particular texts” (Oswick et al. 2000,p.1116). This critical approach, therefore, is an agenda to expose the political motives constitutive of ‘dominant’ modernist discourse. In other words modernist discourse is exposed to reconnaissance for its role in establishing and maintaining power inequalities in modern societies. Within the “hermeneutical tradition” (Gómez Arias and Acebrón 2001,p.15) of discourse analysis, the ‘archaeology of knowledge’ emphasises liberating local truths, meanings and voices denigrated by dominant, universal, globalising, modernist ‘metanarratives’.

Language, within discourse analysis, is generally accepted to be the principal medium through which human subjective understanding of the world is mediated. Philips and Hardy (1997) delineate three interrelated and “mutually implicated” (Oswick et al. 2000,p.1118) discursive entities that facilitate this mediation. The three discursive entities are discursive concepts, discursive objects and discursive subjects. Concepts are theories, ideologies and notions created through language that frame our understanding of identity and relationships. Concepts occupy the realm of ideas and closely resemble the notion of schemas. A ‘network’ is itself a discursive concept in that it is an alternative organisational notion to the concepts of ‘market’ or ‘hierarchy’. Objects occupy the practical realm and exist in the material world as well as the ideational domain. Within networks are ‘actors’ who are tangible beings who are discursive objects also carrying images of identity. Finally, discursive subjects are practices, structures, social responses and policies generated through discourse. Within networks, ‘trust’ would be an example of a discursive subject and ‘strategy’ would be another.

The advantage of this approach is to be able identify many of the phenomena examined by network analysis as discursive and, therefore, consequences of forms of information, knowledge and communication. Networks, actors, relationships, trust and ‘strategy’ are all products of human imagination. This can be employed in two ways in advancing network theory. Firstly it

can be used to establish ‘networks’ as a discursive concept and, therefore, as a ‘contested space’ within the ten different schools (Araujo and Easton 1996,p.63) of network theory. This provides the potential for challenging the dominance of inherently modernist and structural-functionalist conceptualisation of networks by more processual, postmodernist alternatives that can take culture more seriously. Secondly, it can be employed in field research to liberate understanding the non-rational, expressive and subjective ways in which networks are *imagined* by their participants. This promises a necessary shift from universalistic, nomothetic modelling conducted by outside observers (in schools of network analysis) to an emphasis upon the local narratives, the particularistic and pluralistic, socially constructed worlds of the network participant. This, in turn, requires the realisation that “it is not possible for the researcher to place himself outside of reality and look at it like an external God” (Gómez Arias and Acebrón 2001,p.14). The researcher shares the imagined reality with the researched. This requires researchers, in becoming conscious of their epistemes, or their own imagination, prior to conducting fieldwork, to realise the potential of liberating plurivocal or multivocal ‘chorality’. Exposing different (local) voices in order to diminish the hegemony of monovocal, unitarist, nomothetic modelling is an agenda to enrich network analysis both theoretically and methodologically.

Conclusions

This paper argues that network analysis, including IMP modelling, has been captive of the functionalist paradigm. As such, network theory has failed to take culture seriously, mostly through ignoring it or reducing it to a variable within an existing structural-functional, nomothetic model.

The proposition is that network analysis generally, and IMP particularly, should begin to take culture seriously. A 'paradigm crossing' approach is recommended in order to accommodate Nadel's Paradox, which is the problem of equal exploration dual domains of 'interests' and 'ideas' that require different ontological, methodological and epistemological applications. The 'sequential' crossing recommended proposes that analysis of Actor Bonds in an AAR analysis of a network are a suitable starting point for a subsequent and complementary analysis of the social construction of these bonds using discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is forwarded as a suitable complementarity to AAR analysis because of its potential to provide a lens that focuses upon the imaginative, non-physical and locally understood nature of networks. The suggestion is that this simultaneous exploration of networks from different paradigmatic viewpoints provides a more balanced, 'epistemic' agenda that enables culture to be taken seriously.

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