



# Spaces of Generative Possibility- Action making for a BDM

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# Structure

Gaps in the literature

Methodology

Findings

Conclusions



# Gaps in literature review



- Complexity theory in social setting – building on work of Stacey (2000, 2002)
- Knowledge Management field - specifically to explain how knowledge is created -relational
- Business engagement from the perspective of a BDM

# Complexity theory lens



## Identification of number of principles of social complexity

### 1. Interactivity

1. Micro elements
2. Interaction at the local level
3. Co-evolution

### 2. Emergence

1. Tsoukas (2005) open world ontology ' which assumes that the world is always in a process of becoming, of turning into something different. ... The future is open, unknowable in principle and it always holds the possibility of surprise' '

### 3. Non-linearity

1. 1-2-1, 1-2-2; paradox

# Complexity theory lens



4. Space of possibilities
  1. Fitness landscape
  
5. Dissipative structure (Prigogine, 1996; Capra, 1998)
  - Non-equilibrated system (Bauman, 1992)

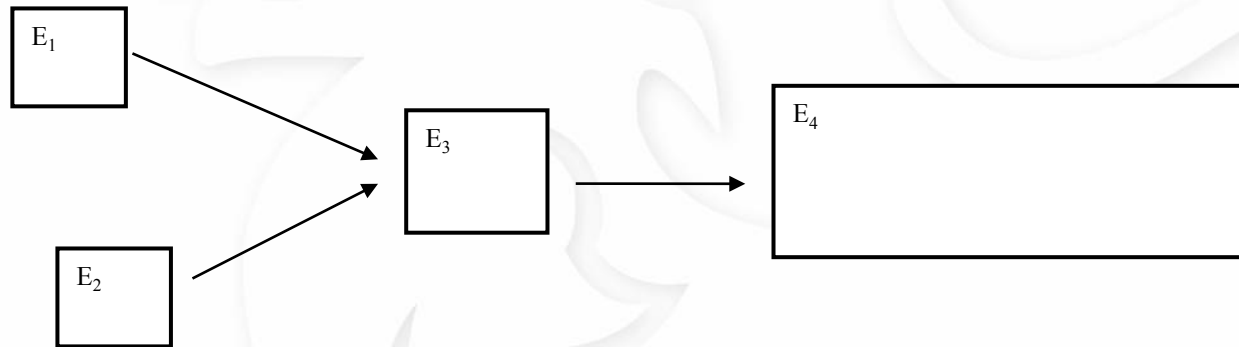
Generative possibility- action making

# Methodology



- Process approach
  - Ethnography
  - Narrative event sequencing (Buttriss and Wilkinson, 2006)
  - Case study – using semi-structured interviews of participants in the setting, my own personal diary and other documents
- My Career Background – Sales & marketing (account management) in large corporations before running limited company training business. Then BDM in education sector, 5 years at BCU.

# NES<sub>1</sub> Engagement with W.M. manufacturer by HEI

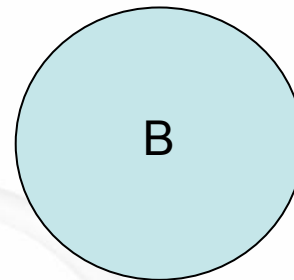
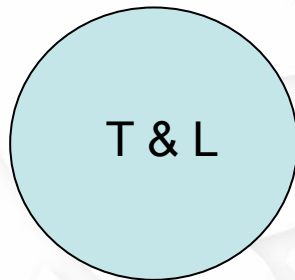


- E<sub>1</sub> - Undergraduate programme in-company
- E<sub>2</sub> – Three day training programme
- E<sub>3</sub> – Emergent process - development & validation of MSc
- E<sub>4</sub> – Emergent outcome - delivery of MSc programme

# Two worlds



- Different worlds of teaching & learning and business.





# Space of possibilities



## Two fundamental spaces of possibilities

The space characterises interaction at the local level based on pre-reflective tendencies, inclinations & expectations

- Draws on pragmatic philosophy's notion of humans appropriating the world through their actions (Joas, 2005) and Aristotle's notion of ethical activity being more than a disposition to act but the action itself

Not formal organisational structure or the informal network  
– in between at meso level

Brings with them distinct capital resources (Bourdieu, 1999)  
– an inventory of ends and a pool of means

# Adjacent space



- Emergence takes place within an adjacent space
  - to allow local actors to self-organise, co-evolve and create an emergence



# Non-equilibrated space

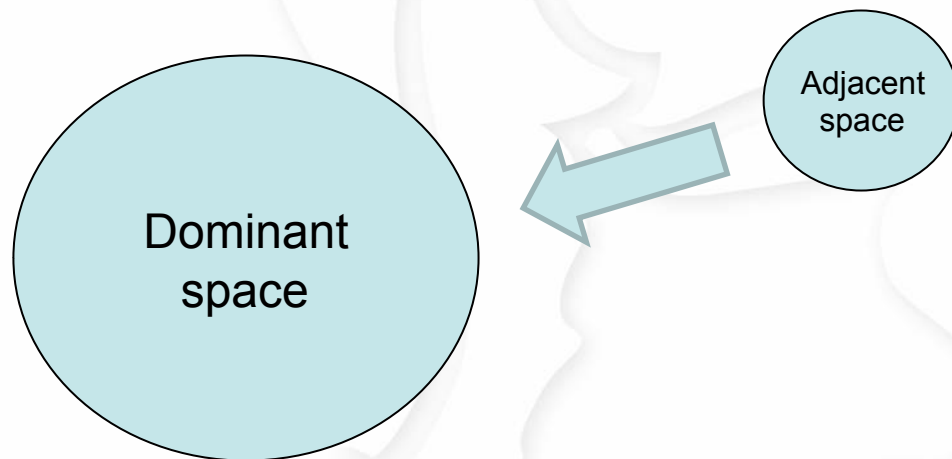


- Agent action - energy and commitment
- “It lost the drive necessary to keep it going.”
- Adjacent space often dependent on one individual – they leave and the space collapses
- People often bitter when space has been wound up or finished.

# Centripetal forces on adjacent space



- The dominant space is continually pulling the adjacent space back into itself
- This impedes local self organising action and co-evolving behaviour & is usually defined as constraints on organisational innovation



# Dominant space and adjacent space



## Capital resources

- Economic
- Cultural
- Symbolic

# Dissipation of actor energy



- Isolation of unit
- Unsupportive accounting practices
- Lack of internal customer approach
- Slow decision making
- Lack of capability / capacity
- Unsupportive procedures
- Confused intentionality – Type A & Type B

# Predispositions of t&l space



- Primary anxiety of bureaucratic mind - fear of disorder and fear of social disapproval
- Defences
  - Procedures
  - Regulations
  - Apocalyptic stories
  - Infantilisation of actors
- Behaviours
  - Rigidity
  - Conformity
  - Aversion to progress

# Emotionally draining



‘I remember going up the stairs in the faculty and was struck by a momentary and unsettling thought that I would have to get whatever I was going to do checked out by different groups in the institution before I could put it into action. It did not seem worth the effort. I did not want to discuss my reasons for doing something with so many different groups before I could get something done. It was emotionally draining and made me reluctant to discuss things with them.’



# Types of adjacent space activity



- Orientated towards outcomes and targets
  - Eradication of variance - Repetition of approved process
  - Logic of explanation
  - Observable & understandable by a third party observer
  - Purposeful action
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- Outcomes unknown at outset
  - Actor as non-deliberate, relationally constituted nexus of social activities
  - Purposive action

# Adjacent space: Type A



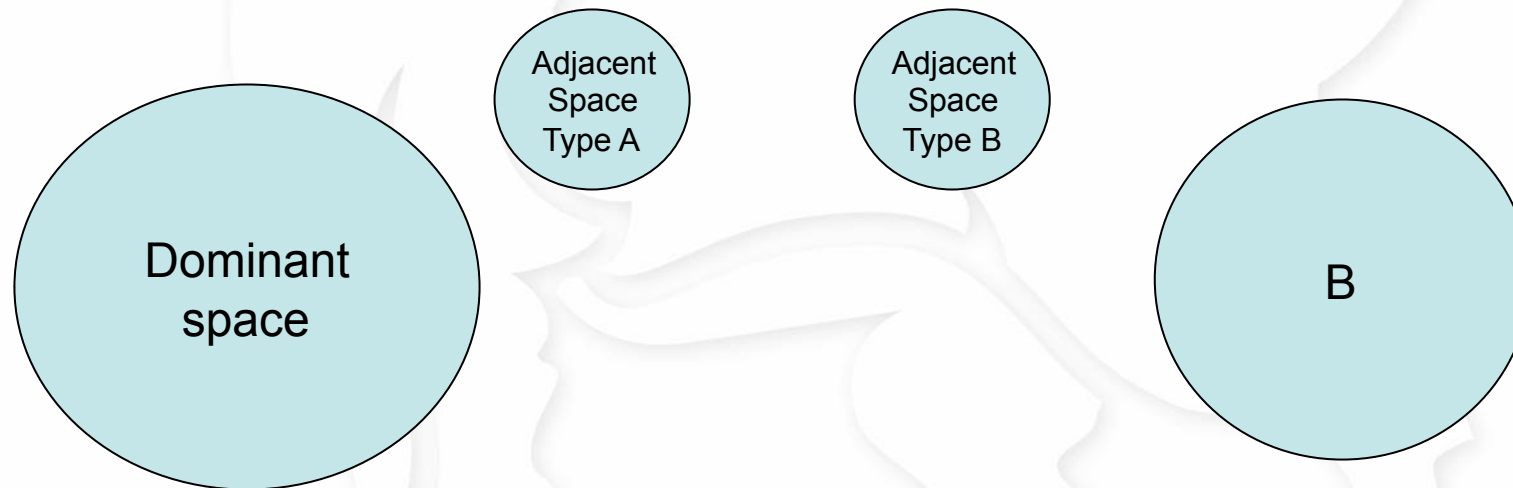
# Type A – building mode



Chia & Holt, 2006 (taken from Heidegger)

- Finance from 3<sup>rd</sup> party
- EU, national government agenda or regional metropolitan agenda
- Separation of client and customer beneficiary

# Adjacent space: Type B



# Type B - dwelling mode



- Action through 'readiness to hand'
- Actions are directed towards overcoming immediate impediment – purposive practical coping.
- Action geared to the short term – ends-in-view
- Action as viewed by actors applying a logic of practice
- Performative action remains 'quiet' because of an unarticulated availability

# Type B - adjacent space



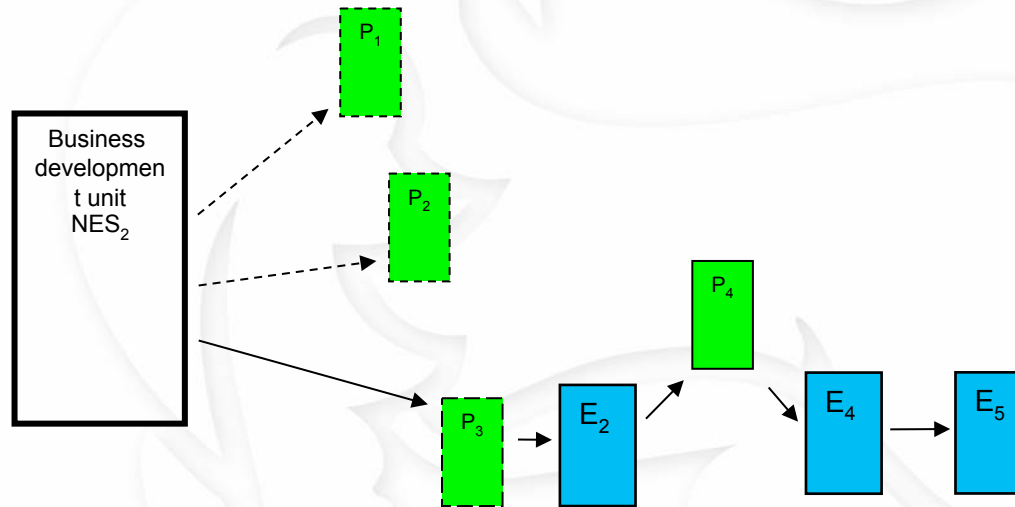
- Built in luck
- Non-linear relationships
  
- Close to the customer
- Customer relationship
- Customer ladder
- Account managing

# Generative potential. 1



- Nature of agency action
  - Fitness process – extinction event, emergent event
  - Built-in luck
  - Energy creation

# Fitness process





# Generative potential. 2



- **Grouping / ungrouping**
  - The example of slime mould

# Conclusions - practical



- **BDM role** requires reconciling many paradoxes
  - Teaching & learning v business
  - Dominant space v adjacent space
  - Building mode v dwelling mode
- **Tension in the business engagement agenda**
  - Government when involved in defining what is business engagement conceives of it in the building mode. See the HEIF categories