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Examining the Inseparability of Enterprise and Strategy Discourse

Brendan O'Rourke
Technological University Dublin, brendan.orourke@tudublin.ie

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Dr. Brendan K. O'Rourke,
Faculty of Business,
Dublin Institute of
Technology,
Aungier St, Dublin 2,
Ireland.
Telephone: +353-1-4027097
Email: Brendan.ORourke@dit.ie

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Outline of Presentation

1. Introduction

2. The separate development of enterprise and strategy discourse

3. Transcript & Analysis

4. Discussion & Conclusions

2 The separate development of Strategy and Enterprise discourses

A BRIEF GENEALOGY OF ENTERPRISE DISCOURSE

'Entrepreneur' was first used in its modern English sense to describe a new type of individual essential to the emerging dominance of the market in French by Cantillon (1755)

In theory, an entrepreneur was free from the rigid social class system for "Social standing was practically irrelevant to Cantillon's notion of entrepreneurship" Hébert & Link (2006:18)

The autonomous entrepreneur's roles in spotting and seizing opportunities, becoming a wise and responsible risk-taker, being creative and having an ethic of responsibility were developed in the writings of Adam Smith, Johann Heinrich Von Thünen, Jeremy Bentham and Weber.

So dominant a word in the development of economics that those who criticised economics in the early 1900s declared the death of entrepreneuralism capitalism.

STRATEGY TO THE RESCUE

The 'death struggle' of the small firm was discussed in Germany (Bögenhold, 2000) at turn of the 19th & 20th centuries, while in America it was being 2001) argued "that the 'control' of the great corporations should develop into 2002) a purely neutral technocracy" (Berle & Means, 1933:356).

Strategy arises when complexity & scale have:"… evolved to a point where winning sides relied no longer on the deeds of heroic individuals, but on the co-ordination of many units of men." Cummings (1993: 133)

Strategy as a discourse of accountability of the professional non-owner manager (Knights & Morgan, 1991)

Corporate strategy becomes dominant in business through education and personnel flows from the military to business (Bracker, 1980; Hoskin & Macve, 1988) e.g. the RAND corporation.

THE RETURN OF ENTERPRISE DISCOURSE

The 1973 oil crisis, the collapse of the Bretton woods system, the monetarist counter-revolution in economics, critiques of strategic planning and the rise of the new right.

Enterprise is now applied to the large organisations of managerial capitalism (Kanter, 1983:23) and public sector bureaucracies (Osborne & Gaebler, 1993 & perhaps Palermo & Bisigano, 2009), where it seems enterprise now includes that most alien of attributes accountability for process, not just product.

The ideological heroes of enterprise discourse are urged towards both growth and strategy (Carr, 2000).

Both strategy and enterprise discourses are now part of economic governance of both small firms and large bureaucracies but how are these discourses related in practice?

3. Transcripts & Analysis

Extract from an interview between Una and Brendan

34 Una: I preferred the technology journalism and I was given some contact management software to play with by a friend of mine and it was a revelation to me at that time that you could put together a web site and not have to handwrite every page

35 Brendan: Yeah sure.

36 Una: that it would populate an archive and sort things and um, you know, have a rolling headlines on the

37 Brendan: Ah okay

38 Una: front page and everything. Um so that's how I started with TronCom and the business kind of

39 Brendan: Yeah and did that, was that an intimidating start for you? You had been a kind of employ- employee if you like, you were working as a journalist and you were going into being a journalist entrepreneur or manager or whatever you, business person(.)[was that

40 Una: I was] never of an employee anywhere, I was always on my own.

41 Brendan: Okay.

42 Una: Um and I, and I found that I worked well on my own and I didn't feel isolated working at home oth- some freelancers do

43 Brendan: Uh-huh

44 Una: but what did feel strange was hiring another journalist to write stuff for me, for my own project because I had been used to hiring freelancers to write for other publications that I was editing

45 Brendan: Uh-huh.

46 Una: as a freelance editor but what it was actually a journalist writing stuff for me

47 Brendan: Mm.

48 Una: I remember having a real, having just this brainwave thinking if the website is growing, people are looking for more news on the website and I have some people who are willing to buy this newsfeed from me, but I can't write it all myself. At the same time I was writ I was writing a lot of eh analyst reports for companies on their internet strategy

49 Brendan: Right, yeah.

50 Una: and making good money from that and I remember realising that I could take the money that I was earning doing this analysis and pay another journalist to write for the website.

51 Brendan: Right, yeah.

52 Una: And I had eh, I, I met a friend of mine, who's a journalist, in the Headline Bar, which we're going to go by I think, and said would you write a few stories a week for me for like £100 or something?

((Seven short turns are excluded to avoid identification of the company))

60 Una: But from the very beginning I want to make clear that, well what TronCom does is we publish a series of publications under our brand and under our clients' brand. So going back to that original consulting part of TronCom where I was writing strategy reports for people I was also doing one of the first email newsletters for a company in Ireland, for ((a prominent Irish company)), I was doing a printed publication about internet banking for ((a prominent Irish bank)), all that [corporate

61 Brendan: so they were licensing] the
             content?

62 Una: No - all original content for those people

63 Brendan: Okay.

64 Una: so corporate publications.

65 Brendan: Okay.

66 Una: From the very beginning TronCom has had those two divisions. We've- essentially we publish and we publish things under our own brand or under our clients' brands so those two strands have all, always moved along together.

4. Discussion + Conclusions

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- All interviews used the enterprise-strategy in a dichotomous unity (cf Billig et al.'s ideological dilemmas, 1988) This points to the real danger of not seeing a particular statement in the context in which is made, and a lesson that looking at the practice of discourses can bring to how the academy might organise the objects of its study.

- There were other discourses & differences of emphasis used in the interviews, but the strategy-enterprise discourse was important.

- A dichotomy / dilemma allows you to talk about something but also can limit that talk to a particular dimension e.g talking of sweetness or sourness of food can crowd-out talk of *umami* or spiciness.

Thank you!

Questions, comments & criticisms

very welcome to

Brendan.ORourke@dit.ie