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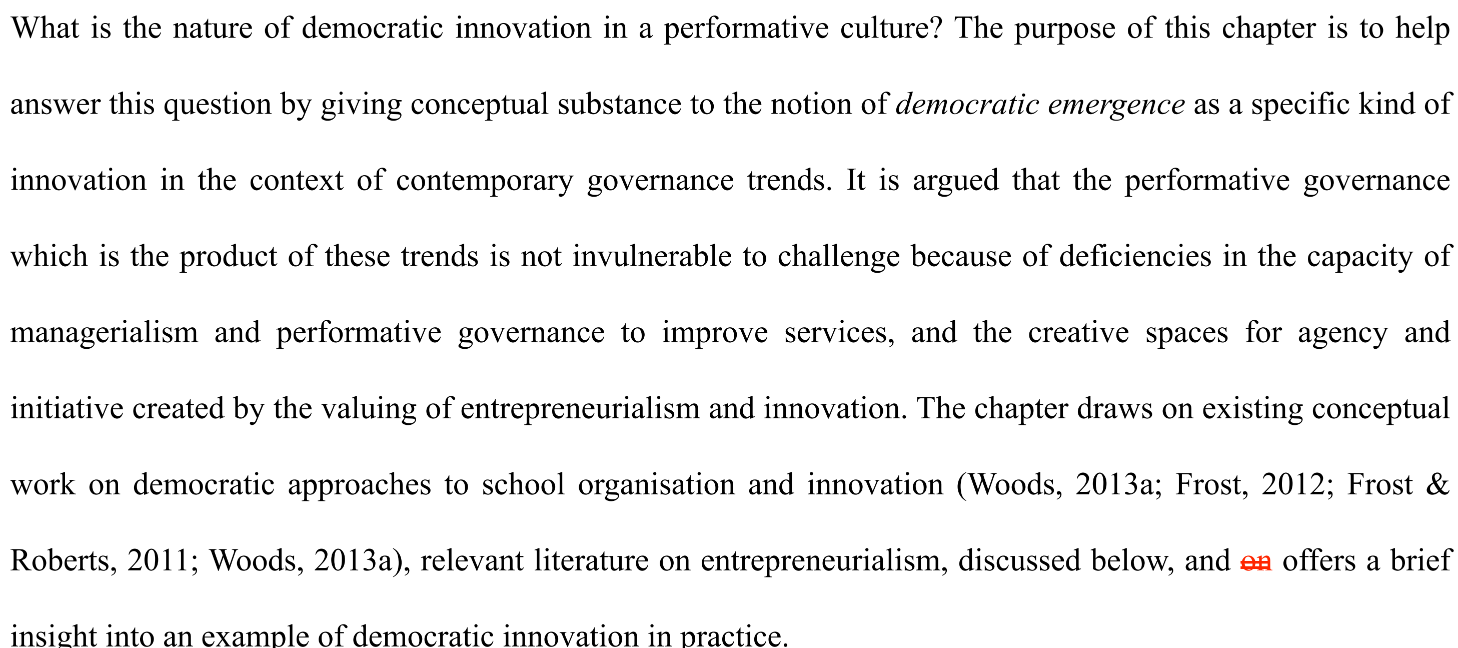
19. NEWNESS AGAINST THE GRAIN

Democratic Emergence in Organizational and Professional Practice



What is the nature of democratic innovation in a performative culture? The purpose of this chapter is to help answer this question by giving conceptual substance to the notion of *democratic emergence* as a specific kind of innovation in the context of contemporary governance trends. It is argued that the performative governance which is the product of these trends is not invulnerable to challenge because of deficiencies in the capacity of managerialism and performative governance to improve services, and the creative spaces for agency and initiative created by the valuing of entrepreneurialism and innovation. The chapter draws on existing conceptual work on democratic approaches to school organisation and innovation (Woods, 2013a; Frost, 2012; Frost & Roberts, 2011; Woods, 2013a), relevant literature on entrepreneurialism, discussed below, and ~~on~~ offers a brief insight into an example of democratic innovation in practice.

A proposition underlying the chapter is that democratic innovation has to position itself in relation to performative governance on the grounds that there is in the contemporary context no other choice. Performative governance is defined as a policy and organisational climate dominated by an instrumental rationality in which an entrepreneurial culture is promoted and progress and achievement are measured relentlessly against calculable ends such as targets and financial goals (Woods & Woods, 2013b). *Instrumentalising trends*, which institutionalise competitive values and managerialist priorities, are strong features of this climate (Woods, 2013). Their tendency is to eclipse or marginalise aims of individual criticality, democratic participation, autonomy and human development as intrinsically worthwhile purposes. The challenge to educators' identities is encapsulated by Jeffrey and Troman's (2012) conceptualisation of the 'embracing performative institution' (EPI). In EPI, power is exercised subtly in ways that lead organisational members to 'submit themselves to the authority of an institution, internalise its values and enact through them mutual surveillance

in an inmate culture' (p. 198). This chapter suggests that such a challenge can be resisted through democratic innovation.

OPEN INNOVATION

A discourse of innovation and entrepreneurialism is a prominent dimension of performative governance, much of it informed by the assumptions of individualistic enterprise promoted by instrumentalising trends. The market as a competitive arena of struggle, as well as market-like environments in the public area, value the skills of innovators and entrepreneurs as means to achieving performative and financial goals. This conflicts with humanistic assumptions of the idea of education as an intrinsic public good advancing the rounded development of people and their participation in society as democratic citizens (Woods, 2013b).

Yet, research and practice concerning innovation suggest that individualistic behaviour (by individuals and organisations) is not conducive to innovation. Collaboration is understood as integral to creating innovative cultures in all kinds of organisations (Gratton, 2011). This resonates with the idea of *emergence*: systems, organisations and leadership are increasingly understood as emergent phenomena, characterised by complexity and self-organising qualities. For example, complexity theory views systems and organisations as the product of innumerable local interactions (Stacey, 2012). The attention given to understanding leadership as a distributed phenomenon that arises from interconnected contributions and people across an organisation is in opposition to reliance on the individual, strong, heroic leader (Western, 2008; Woods, 2005).

Key features of entrepreneurial practice and innovation discernible in literature on innovation and entrepreneurship express their social, interactional character, and can be summarised under three headings:

Diversity of participation: This is the idea that it is beneficial to organisations that the widest range of stakeholders have opportunities to generate innovations and participate in their development. Sometimes referred to as democratic or distributed innovation, this process involves firms and industries adapting in response to the pressures they face by dismantling traditional staff structures and divisions (von Hippel, 2005). Another influential concept is that of co-production which is a service-dominant approach to innovation in

public services which puts the service service-user rather than the policy policy-maker or professional at the heart of this process (Osborne, 2013; Schlappa & Imani, 2012). It reflects a shift of focus from individualistic entrepreneurship to distributed agency (Miettinen, 2013, : p. 113).

Collaboration: If the distributed character emphasises the wide spread of people and agencies that should be involved in innovation, collaboration highlights the nature of the interaction: it emphasises the importance of co-operation and exchange, and that innovation benefits from being undertaken through collaborative processes, rather than through top-down procedures. Miettinen (2013) for example highlights the importance of intertwining 'individual and collaborative agency' (p. 130) and suggests that 'interactive learning and interactions between key institutions are essential mechanisms of innovation' (p. 42).

Institutional reach: Whilst incremental development is important, institutional reach draws attention to the importance of innovations which have wider scope and ambitions for organisations, networks and partnerships – innovations which have implications for culture (values and ideas), institutional arrangements (roles, organisational structures etc.) and social relationships. Osborne (2011) refers to radical innovation, which is complex and more than 'continuous improvement'. It is about '"newness" or *discontinuous change* ... this is what differentiates its managerial challenges from those of incremental organizational change or service development' (p. 1338). Another, related concept is institutional entrepreneurship, which is recognized as an important process through which new institutions are created and existing ones are transformed. Research has focused on 'institutional entrepreneurs' (also known as intrapreneurs) as actors undertaking institutional change projects involving 'the mobilization of resources; the construction of rationales for institutional change …; and the forging of new inter-actor relations to bring about collective action' (Kisfalvi & Maguire, 2011, :p. 152).

Processes and behaviours that are characterised by these three features we refer to here as *open entrepreneurial practice*.

The ideas that weave through them are so influential that a paradigm of open innovation is posited as emerging. Open innovation is argued to be essential for industry, for example, because enabling ideas to cross the internal and external boundaries of organisations is of enormous value for the initiation and progress of

innovation (Chesborough, 2005). The attractions of open innovation go beyond private industry, however. The paradigmatic shift in higher education and other areas is to 'systemic models of innovation… [and] nonlinear dynamic, models of experimentation with open ends, a complex interplay of actors, an explosion of innovative ideas … [and] a drift into many parallel ideas, actors, transactions and contexts' (Weber, 2013: , p. 4). The power of instrumentalising trends however means that entrepreneurialism characterised by the collaborative features summarised above and set in a perceived paradigm of open innovation is not necessarily democratic. The question to be posed is, therefore, ~~is is~~ what conditions in the contemporary context might be conducive to innovation which advances democratic principles ~~any~~ and practices within performative governance – that is, democratic emergence.

CREATIVE SPACES

Numbers of factors are opening possibilities for change away from new public managerialism and the micro-management characteristic of much performative governance ~~Woods~~ (Woods, 2013a: , p. 347–348). These include the limits of rational control and the existence of spaces and opportunities for creative agency, as well as unsustainability of 'managerialist shallowness' (focusing on narrow measures of outcome) and limitations of the private sector as a model for public services. The myth of rational management and exaggerated faith in an 'engineering' approach engenders growing recognition of the need to understand complexity, uncontrollability and the inherent deficiencies of micro-management, and to recognise that people are reflective beings, not reducible to instrumental devices in a rational system driven by material incentives or simulated, heightened emotions (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009; Olssen, 2010). These various factors help to give momentum to *drivers to democracy* in society and organisations: a combination of the instrumental value of collaboration referred to above and intrinsic urges amongst people in organisations to value participation and to seek, create and express meaning (Woods, 2011; Woods, 2013a).

The emergence perspective and open innovation have implications for understanding radical change that challenges instrumentalising trends and power and social inequalities – that is, for understanding how the

drivers to democracy play out in practice. Understanding organisations and leadership as emergent reinforces the idea that initiatives for change can exist at numerous points within a dominant policy thrust. Emergence foregrounds the appreciation of both the complexities of structure and power and the capacity for diverse individual agency and co-agency. Recent ideas that reflect this include the strategy of 'cracking capitalism' by widening the fissures in its structures (Holloway, 2010), processes of 'everyday making' which enable 'ontological reframing' and creative change in spaces of 'ethical action', without submitting to '"the bottom line" or the "imperatives of capital"' (Gibson-Graham & Roelvink, 2011), confronting neoliberal rationalities through 'critical engagements' in 'spaces of power' where 'new articulations' can be worked (Newman, 2012), and 'adaptive strategies' that make creative use of entrepreneurial spaces and pluralism in the performative governance system (Woods, 2011, 2013b).

These various spaces for potential change and challenge are termed here *creative spaces* and are important foci for research and practice which advance understanding of democratic emergence within performative governance. Creative spaces are defined as micro- or meso-level areas of leadership activity where entrepreneurial and innovative change are encouraged or facilitated and where social actors may interpret and shape received policy. Arguably these spaces are growing (Woods, 2012) as the managerialist governance paradigm comes under sustained critique (Osborne, 2010).

In this context, actors exercise agency which may be instrumental (performative); equally they are capable of agency which is embodied. By embodied is meant developing and drawing from our full human selves and holistic capabilities – including ethical, spiritual and aesthetic sensitivities – which underpin drives for participation and expressive meaning (the intrinsic drivers to democracy) (Woods, 2013a). Social and public orientated forms of entrepreneurialism challenge individualistic business entrepreneurialism (Woods & Woods, 2011; Woods, 2013b). There are cross-pressures, some encouraging instrumental agency, others embodied agency. In relation to higher education, Weber (2013: 1) highlights pressures in the direction of 'economization and marketization' and an 'entrepreneurial mode of academic creativity', the results of which 'are converted into commercial businesses and innovations'. Miettinen (2013: , p, 161), on the other hand, in his analysis of

innovation in Finland highlights the importance of *Bildung* in relation to innovation, in which 'learning, the development of self and creativity are richly intertwined' and go beyond cognitive development to involve 'self-realisation and growth of an individual'. Most likely, as the notion of adaptive rationality suggests, agency tends to be a mixture of instrumental and embodied rationalities ~~(REFs)~~. It is the nature of this mixture that colours the diversity of participation, collaboration and institutional reach of entrepreneurial practice – what we might term *open entrepreneurial practice* – that characterises contemporary organisations and policy (Woods, 2013b), summarised in Figure 1.

DEMOCRATIC EMERGENCE

The argument of this chapter is that it is useful to conceptualise the process where emphasis is given to embodied agency and democratic practice~~,~~ and where instrumental agency is made subservient to these broader principles and values. This process is termed here democratic emergence. We suggest that the value of conceptualising democratic emergence is that it will enhance both researchers' and practitioners' understanding of the opportunities for challenging performative culture and provide a resource for critical reflection on practices that seek to move in this direction. Democratic emergence is a specific kind of response to the possibilities within creative spaces. It is defined as the creation or advancement, within such spaces, of cultures and practices that enhance holistic democracy (Woods, 2011, 2013a) and social justice and that adapt, challenge, or develop an alternative to, performative governance.

Four propositions are put forward as ways of describing aspects of democratic emergence:

Creative spaces are crucial aspects of the social and organisational context for democratic emergence. The development and sustaining of democratic emergence are influenced by a social and organisational context that includes instrumentalising trends and the effects of drivers to democracy. Creative spaces in that tension-filled context result from both the 'cracks' within performative governance and the emergence and forging of creative spaces by innovative actors. These provide the opportunity and location for democratic emergence.

The level of the self is of equal significance, and its development is crucial to embodied agency. The aspirations

of democratic emergence have implications that are deep and demanding, involving the intellectual, affective and spiritual domains in reflective activity (Woods & Woods, 2010). One of the levels of the open innovation paradigm that Weber (2013) highlights is that of exploration and transcendence of the self. This is characterised by fluidity of institutional boundaries, by holistic, 'sense-based generativity and creation'. Arts-based approaches to creativity and personal development are important in relation to this. The level of the self involves 'shifting from an educational, pedagogical and social competence definition into an art and design based one' (Weber, 2013: ,p. 15). In terms of a broad, holistic conception of democracy, the personal component has been described as involving democratic consciousness: 'a free-thinking mindset, a predisposition to co-operation operating with virtues such as compassion, capabilities like articulacy and criticality, a sense of innate equality in relation to those in authority, awareness of the claims you can rightfully make on others and they on you, and "mindful practice" (the capacity to be guided by aesthetic, affective and spiritual sensibilities, as well as cognitive knowledge)' (Woods, 2011: , p. 44).

Purpose and intention that challenge, and offer an alternative to, performative governance are essential to democratic emergence. Innovative change which has the character of open entrepreneurial practice in the sense described above may open democratic possibilities, but is insufficient in itself. There needs to be an articulated intention to nurture holistic forms of democracy within and through these innovative processes. This does not mean, however, that the phenomenon is one of planning and executing change in a linear sense. Rather, there will be complex interactions, uncertainties and unexpected shifts in direction and outcomes as the processes emerge over time.

Practice gives life and meaning to creative spaces. Social and organisational influences, the self and purpose and intention come together in practice. If democratic emergence is best understood as being on a journey through 'degrees of democracy' towards dimensions of democracy such as power sharing and holistic well-being (Woods & Woods, 2012, 2013a), that journey is made through practice. This is potentially important for understanding how the controlling effects of performative governance may be challenged and reshaped. Despite offering greater autonomy in some ways, the English school system for example is also characterised

by a centralising presence – the authoritative and co-ordinating presence of the core executive as Ball (2009) puts it. There are, nevertheless, possibilities for an alternative 'presence' constituted through practice – if we understand its nature correctly. Following Gherardi (2009) and others, practice is more than repeated action, but enacts and creates knowledge and meaning. The knowledge and meaning are often implicit and include ethical and aesthetic judgements about what is valued and what is not. Furthermore, practice not only recreates social structures (such as power relations, gender distinctions, and so on), but also changes and creates them over time. So, practice in democratic emergence can, for example, display the open entrepreneurial features of being distributed, collaborative and institutional, but will also introduce into these principles of democracy, social justice and holistic development.

OPEN INNOVATION AND DEMOCRATIC EMERGENCE IN PRACTICE: THE HERTSCAM NETWORK

The story of the HertsCam Network provides a helpful stimulus for reflection on the concept of democratic emergence as manifested in practice. The HertsCam Network was originally established in 1998 as a partnership between the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education and Hertfordshire Local Authority. Underpinned by a belief in the efficacy of the use of research to develop better teaching and learning practice, the network originally focused on supporting a small cohort of teachers in developing their research-based knowledge. Over the next 14 years, the network evolved from this institution-led entity into an independent social enterprise, guided by a teacher-led Steering Committee. Its central focus shifted from teachers conducting research to teachers leading change (Frost & Roberts, 2004). A clear understanding of the concept of teacher leadership and the development of practices to support its emergence has been central to the network's evolution.

A non-positional view of teacher leadership underpins the HertsCam approach. In HertsCam, the term 'teacher leadership' references the belief that any teacher, regardless of their position within the school, can take the initiative and lead the development of practice. In contrast to the potential exclusivity of appointing a small

number of teachers to specific roles, here a democratic philosophy underpins the recognition of leadership potential in all.

The strategies for leading change developed in HertsCam are now being adopted internationally. The International Teacher Leadership (ITL) project was launched by the Leadership for Learning group at the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education in 2008. With a project team of over 50 experts supporting around 1,000 teachers in 150 schools in 15 countries, the ITL project seeks to contribute to school reform by developing strategies which support teacher leadership. Materials and techniques developed in HertsCam over many years are adapted and translated to enable partners in participating countries to support teachers as leaders of processes of innovation.

In HertsCam and the ITL initiative, leadership is viewed as an emergent phenomenon, promoted by the provision of appropriate support. A key support strategy is the concept of ‘teacher-led development work,’ a methodology which enables teaches to initiate and lead change which enhances professional knowledge. Engagement in teacher-led development work requires teachers to work sequentially through a number of key steps:

Step 1: Teachers clarify their professional values.

Step 2: They identify a concern.

Step 3: They negotiate with colleagues to explore that concern.

Step 4: They design and produce an action plan for a development project.

Step 5: They negotiate with colleagues to refine the practicality of the project.

Step 6: They lead a project which draws colleagues, students and their families into a collaborative process of change.

Step 7: Through their own and others’ learning, they contribute to knowledge building in their networks and educational systems.

Teachers leading development work become members of support groups which meet for workshop sessions. These sessions are facilitated by experienced teachers or others who are able to support colleagues' professional development. They also attend regular network events. Originally run by external facilitators, these events are now run by teachers themselves in a process of bottom-up knowledge-building.

Reflection on HertsCam and ITL initiatives illustrates how the drivers to democratic emergence play out in practice. The approach to teacher-led development work is underpinned by a view of leadership as agential, drawing on the fundamental driver amongst people in organisations to collaborate in order to create meaning (Frost, 2006; Woods, 2011; Woods, 2013a). Teacher empowerment has emerged from the network's working practices. The creative spaces provided by workshops and network events provide opportunities for invention and innovation, allowing teachers to capitialise on fissures in the performative culture (Frost, 2005). Teachers draw on their moral purpose in order to challenge performative governance, making the journey towards democracy through collaborating with others to change both practice and thinking. In this way, teachers are now creating their own knowledge, rather than simply relying on published research. And the features of open entrepreneurial practice that are evident in the network are imbued with democratic principles and a sense of ~~self~~ self-development that aims to go deeper than improvement of skills and attitudes for instrumental ends.

Evaluations of HertsCam and the ITL initiative confirm the impact of this approach to teacher leadership (Frost, 2011; Hill, 2010; Mylles & Frost, 2006). However, the most powerful testimonies are seen in the stories of the teachers themselves who talk of the transformative power of their development projects not only on their teaching but on their own learning, the learning of their students and the nature of professional practice in their schools and beyond (see www.hertscam.org.uk).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter has noted the momentum behind the idea of a new open innovation paradigm, and posited ~~the~~ key ~~distributed, collaborative and institutional~~ characteristics of innovation - diversity of participation, collaboration and institutional reach - as constituting open entrepreneurial practice. The latter practice may be instrumental

and dominated by performative culture, or it may take on a character that challenges performative culture by developing features of democratic emergence. The HertsCam Network is an example of democratic emergence bringing such a character to open entrepreneurial practice in education. In-depth investigation and critical reflection on further examples and their development over time – and the factors which help and hinder them – are crucial, using the concept of democratic emergence as a framework. This will, in our view, help in identifying how the narrowing effects of performative culture can be challenged and reshaped in creative spaces, by drawing on the powers of the embodied self, the ethical and spiritual impulse of democratic intent, and the creative potential of collaborative practices.

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