

Operational research (OR) 'as if'

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Aim: Introduce an alternative notion to inform soft OR and systems thinking practice

Background

- Currently, overlaps between soft OR, behavioral OR and systems thinking about underpinnings of 'practice'.
- In systems thinking/ soft OR practice, there is a popular orientation towards 'pragmatism' (Ormerod, 2006; Ulrich, 1987).
- Pragmatism often assumes 'reasoning', 'collective action' if not 'adaptation' as medium or end-result of inquiry (Dewey, 1910; Rose, 2013).

Proposal

- Consider 'as if' as detaching scientific inquiry from truth (Vaihinger, 1935; Puett and Gross-Loh, 2017)
- As if is about refining responses to situations, assuming different roles (play), identities, becoming 'the way' (Puett and Gross-Loh, 2017).

Initial implications

- Challenging the seeking of sincerity by widening and incorporating **ritual** as 'patterned response' (Seligman et al 2008).
- Methodological rigour/ success could become iterative, uncertain, ambiguous, to help us better tuning our practice.



Next steps

- a. Synthesizing and incorporating this type of response for multi-method OR situations or scenarios.
- a. Validating it in (part of) practical intervention(s).

References

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