Knowledge- thing

Views of Knowledge:
Rational Instrumentalism

Knowledge

Organization
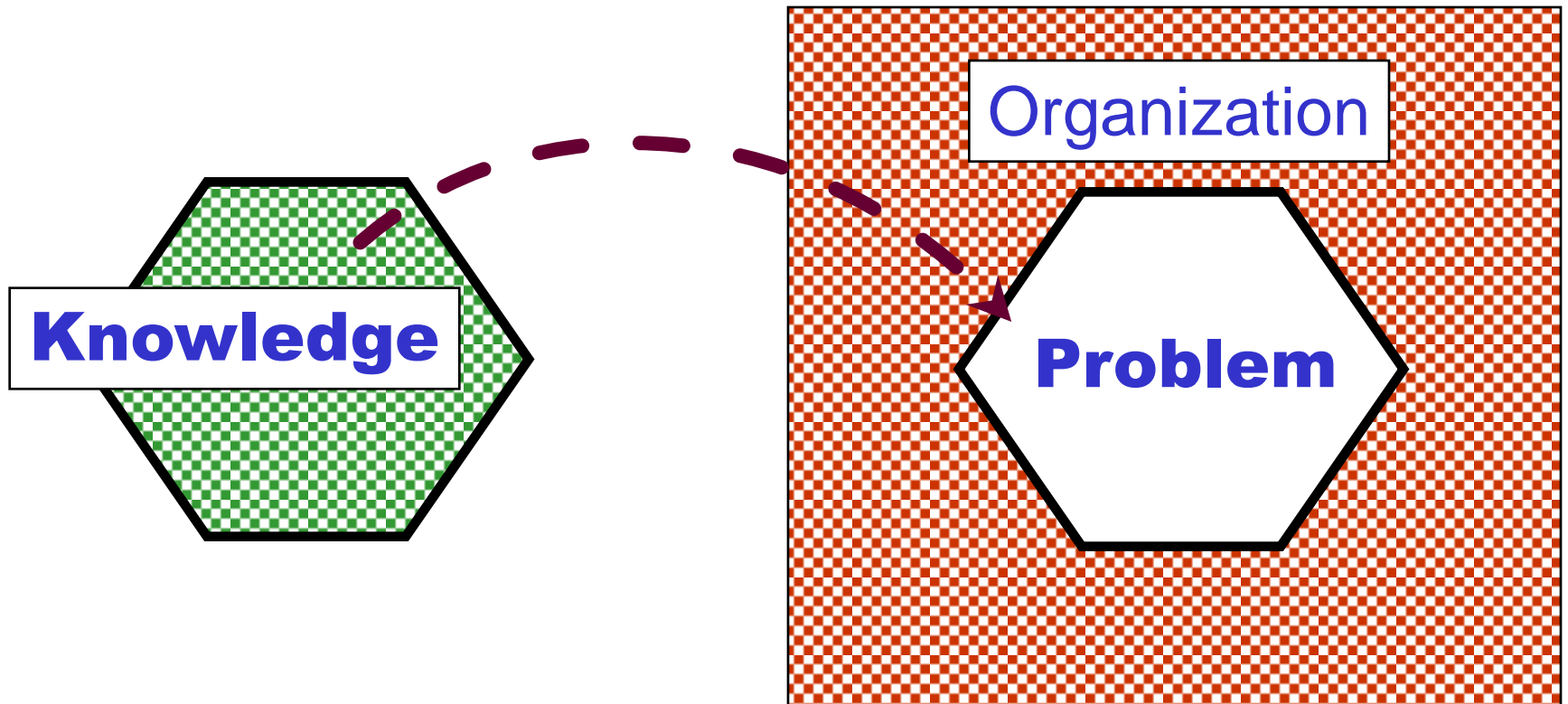
Problem

Knowledge as a problem-solving tool:
find the "piece of information" that will solve the problem

What are the assumptions here?

KNOWLEDGE CREATION

FROM:

TACIT

EXPLICIT

EXTERNAL-IZATION	SOCIAL-IZATION
COMBINATION	INTERNAL-IZATION

TO: EXPLICIT   TACIT

Knowing & Community

Knowing as *participation* in *community* and *practice*

The language of possession is very deep rooted. Organizational learning offers an alternative approach - learning comes through inclusion, participation. Knowledge creation, as we are discovering, comes from participation. Unfortunately organizations, and consultants, who are raised only to know the possession story, don't think too deeply about these issues and so miss out on the fundamental challenge of KM, which is to shift the thinking to participation.

THE SPIRIT OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

The spirit of knowledge management is not about discovering or sharing what is (already) "out there".

It is about sharing in the creative social process of collaboration, discourse, and inquiry.

Doing this means developing attitudes, relationships, and practices that encourage participation and collaboration

Such attitudes and practices are embedded
in stories and images
that appreciate *co*operative and *co*llaborative relationships,
celebrating the social nature of organizational life

Sensemaking

Schön on "Problem Setting"

In real-world practice, problems do not present themselves to the practitioners as givens. They must be constructed from the materials of problematic situations which are puzzling, troubling, and uncertain. In order to convert a problematic situation to a problem, a practitioner must do a certain kind of work. He must make sense of an uncertain situation that initially makes no sense. When professionals consider what road to build, for example, they deal usually with a complex and ill-defined situation in which geographic, topological, financial, economic, and political issues are all mixed up together. Once they have somehow decided what road to build and go on to consider how best to build it, they may have a problem they can solve by the application of available techniques, but when the road they have built leads unexpectedly to the destruction of the neighborhood, they may find themselves again in a situation of uncertainty.

It is this sort of situation that professionals are coming increasingly to see as central to their practice. They are coming to recognize that although problem setting is a necessary condition for technical problem solving, it is not in itself a technical problem. When we set the problem, we select what we will treat as the "things" of the situation, we set the boundaries of our attention to it, and we impose upon it a coherence which allows to say what is wrong and in what directions the situation needs to be changed. Problem setting is a process in which, interactively, we name the things to which we will attend and frame the context in which we will attend to them.

Schön, D (1983), *The Reflective Practitioner*, New York, Basic Books. p.40

Seven Properties of Sensemaking

•Grounded in Identity Construction
•Retrospective
•Enactive of sensible environments
•Ongoing
•Focused on and by extracted cues
•Driven by plausibility rather than accuracy

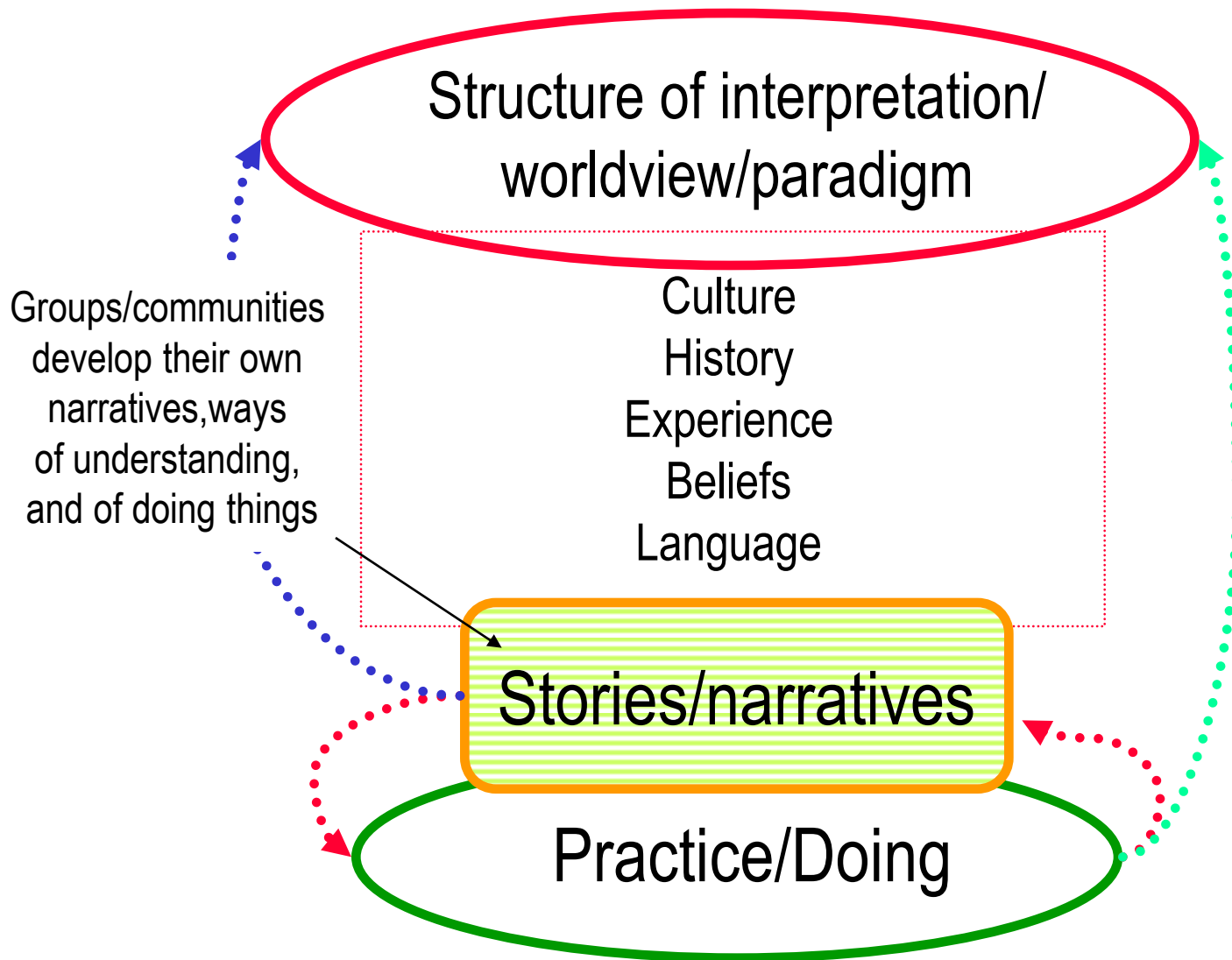Karl Weick (1995), Sensemaking in Organizations, Thousand Oaks; CA, SAGE Publications, p.17

Stories, Action, Knowing

Structure of interpretation/
worldview/paradigm

Culture
History
Experience
Beliefs
Language

Groups/communities
develop their own
narratives,ways
of understanding,
and of doing things

Stories/narratives

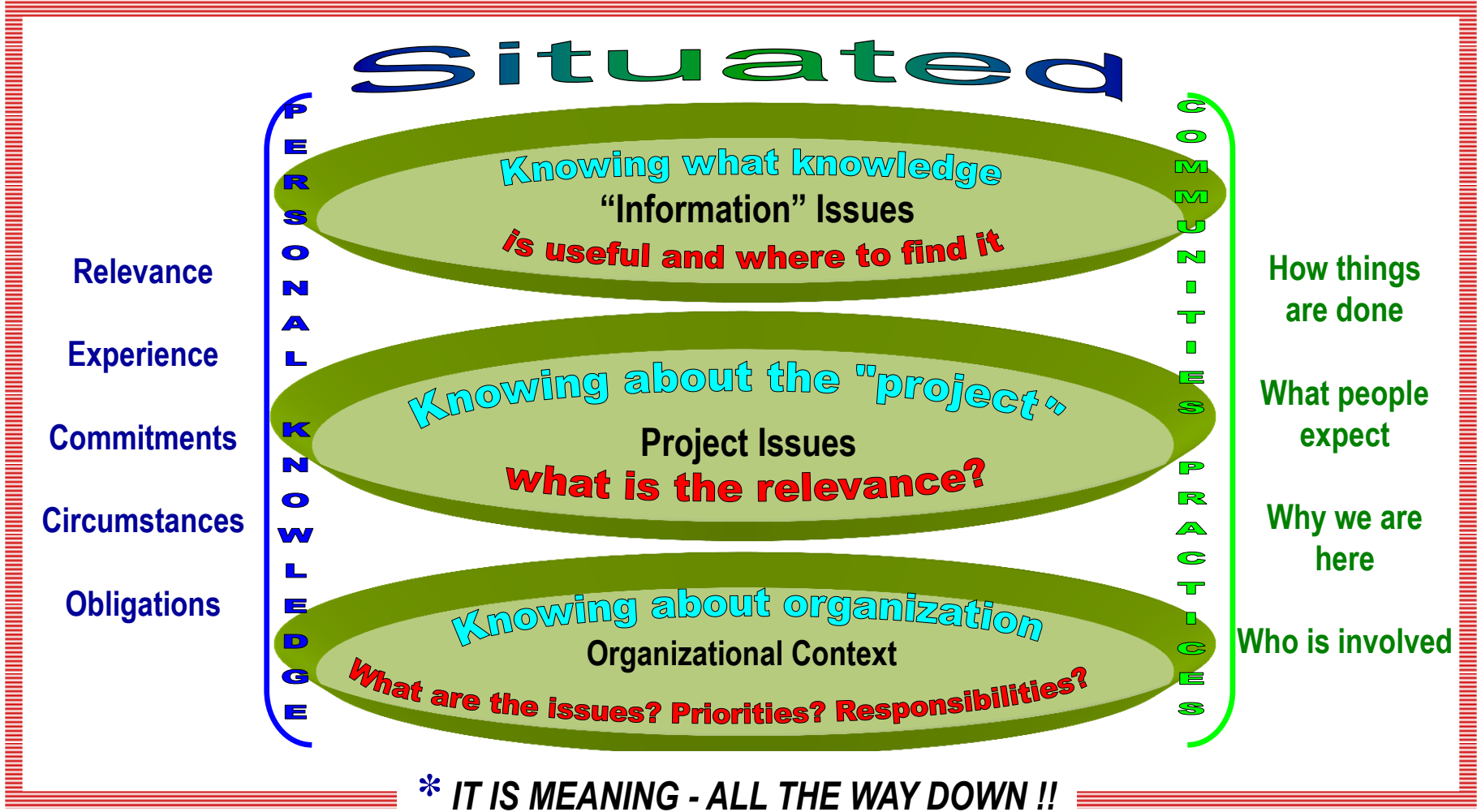Practice/Doing

Enactment of Identity

LEARNING, RELATIONS, AND IDENTITY

"Activities, tasks, functions and understandings do not exist in isolation; they are part of a broader system of relations in which they have meaning. These systems of relations arise out of and are reproduced and developed within social communities, which are in part systems of relations among persons. The person is defined by as well as defines these relations. Learning thus implies becoming a different person with respect to the possibilities enabled by these systems of relations. To ignore this aspect of learning is to overlook the fact that learning involves the construction of identities."
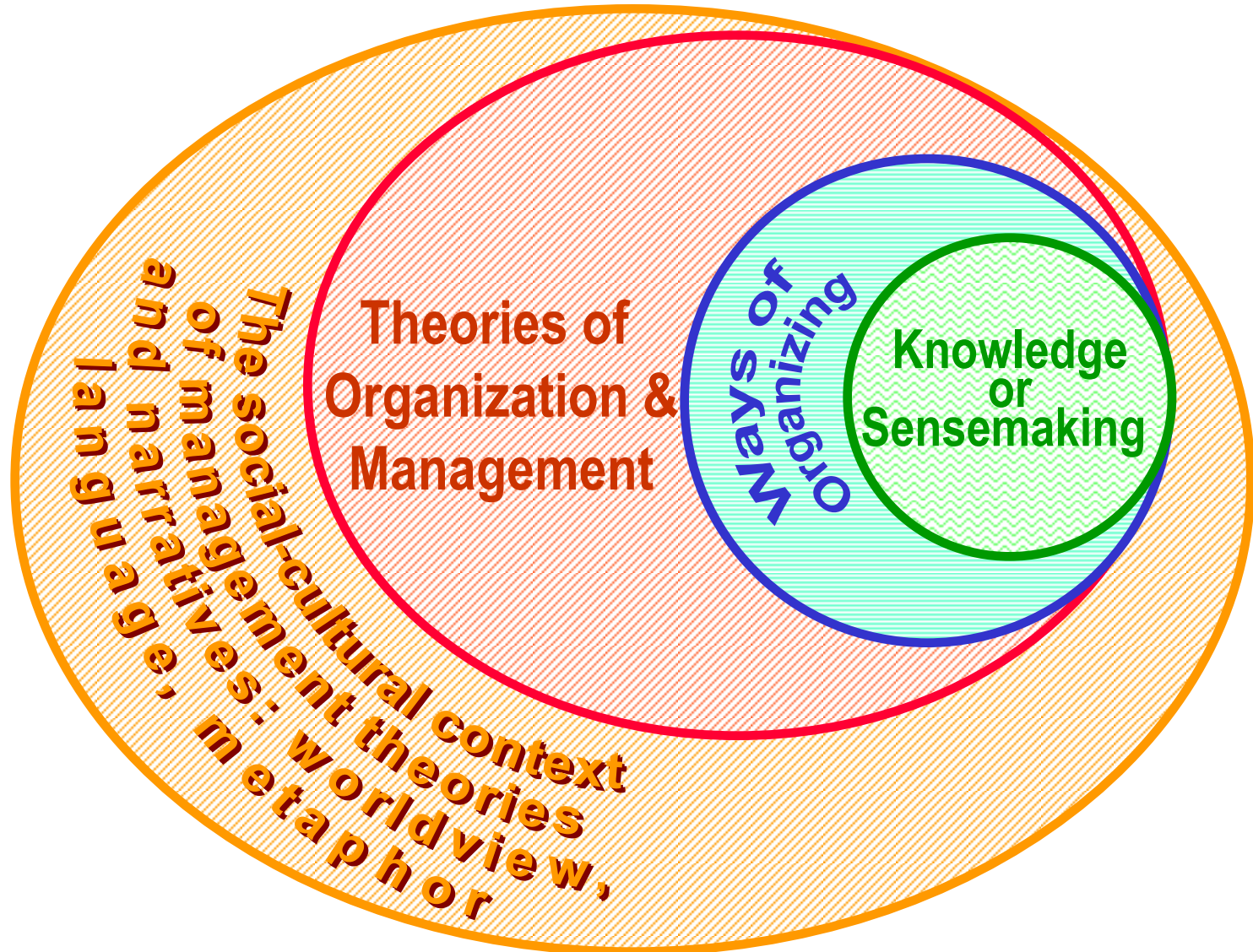
From Lave, J and Wenger, E (1991) *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*, New York, Cambridge University Press

Knowledge as Sensemaking:
"Layers" of Meaning*

CONTEXT OF KNOWING: PARTICIPATING IN OVERLAPPING NARRATIVES

Situated

PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE

COMMUNITIES PRACTICES

Knowing what knowledge
"Information" Issues
is useful and where to find it

Knowing about the "project"
Project Issues
what is the relevance?

Knowing about organization
Organizational Context
What are the issues? Priorities? Responsibilities?

Relevance

Experience

Commitments

Circumstances

Obligations

How things are done

What people expect

Why we are here

Who is involved

* IT IS MEANING - ALL THE WAY DOWN !!

"LAYERS" OF MEANING-MAKING

The social-cultural context of management theories: worldview, and narratives, language, metaphor

Theories of Organization & Management

Ways of Organizing

Knowledge or Sensemaking

Where is the Knowledge? 'Layers of Sense-making'

Situational context: IT problem, legal matter, contract renewal, meeting, cafeteria, home,

Social context: organization, community, competitor, consultant

relationship: 'boss', friend, colleague,...

"Informer"   **"informee"**

The *Social* Context of Knowing/Deciding/Acting

Situational context: IT problem, legal matter, contract renewal, meeting, cafeteria, home,

Social context: organization, community, competitor, consultant

emotional context: hope, animosity, enthusiasm

relationship: 'boss', friend, colleague,...

"Informer"

Conversation/Narratives

"Courses of Action"
•Opportunities
•Plans
•Strategies
•Decisions

Knowing and Community

Knowledge and Knowing

Conventionally "knowledge" is understood as something in the heads of individuals, it is treated as something that a person possesses, which *resides abstractly and statically* in his or her head. When we say "Miriam has knowledge of physics," the knowledge is something that Miriam possesses (as concepts, rules, procedures, etc.); *it is abstract* since the knowledge itself is understood to be something that is about but not in the tangible world. *It is static* because one could find the statement to be true even if Miriam were fast asleep. And while knowledge itself is typically spoken of as static, it is common to see it as necessary to action: "Miriam can solve the problem because she has knowledge of physics"….

In using the term knowing, we want to talk about epistemological issues in terms that are *dynamic, concrete and relational*. If we talk about Andri "knowing physics" our focus is on him *engaged in a specific task* within physics (such as testing an experimental laser design); it is on concrete, *tangible things and activities in the world*; and, it is relational because it is not about what Andri possesses but about *his engagement with things in the world*. Also, by "knowing" we mean something that is not seen as necessary to action but as something that is embodied in action - and, indeed, in the actions of *both individuals or groups*.

From Scott Cook and John Seely Brown (1995), "Bridging Epistemologies: The Generative Dance between Organizational Knowledge and Organizational Knowing", mimeo. (emphasis added).

Communities

Common interests; a similar way of "seeing" and "doing" from shared contexts/experiences; and involvement/affiliation with others.

• Are socially constructed *ideas about groups and relationships*: not fixed but established in knowing others

• The ground of community is *action or practice* – the things people do in making their way in life

• Are the *context in which ideas and stories are developed* in a common language

• Are the context in which *individuals construct their own identities and the identities of others* - "us" and "them"

• *Create the "boundaries"* of social relationships

Knowledge in Community

'Knowledge belongs to communities. The idea that knowledge is the stuff 'between the ears of the individual' is a myth. We don't learn on our own. We are born into a world already full of knowledge, a world that already makes sense to other people; our parents, neighbors, church members, community, country. We learn by participating in these communities and come to embody the ideas, perspective, prejudices, language, and practices of that community'

Etienne Wenger (1998), *Communities of Practice : Learning, Meaning, and Identify*, Cambridge, CUP

Knowledge in Community

[P]articipation is broader than mere engagement in practice. Claims processors are not claims processors just while they work in the office. … Their participation is not something they simply turn off when they leave. … It is a part of who they are that they always carry with them…. In this sense participation goes beyond direct engagement in specific activities with specific people. It places the negotiation of meaning in the context of our forms of membership in various communities. It is a constituent of our identities. As such, participation is not something we turn on and off.

Etienne Wenger (1998), *Communities of Practice : Learning, Meaning, and Identify*, Cambridge, CUP. *57*

Communities of Practice

'Collections of individuals bound by informal relationships that share similar work roles and a common context'

Lesser and Prusak. "Communities of Practice, Social Capital and Organizational Knowledge" *IBM Global Services Group. Information Systems Review*. Vol. 1, No. 1. 1999

'A group of people who are informally bound to one another by exposure to a common class of problem'

Brook Manville, Director, Knowledge Management, McKinsey and Co.

'A special type of informal network that emerges from a desire to work more effectively or understand work more deeply among members of a particular speciality or work group …. [who] through extensive communication have developed a common sense of purpose and a desire to share work-related knowledge and experience.'

Sharp, J. (1998), 'Communities of Practice: a Review of the Literature'.

'A small group of people who have worked together over a period of time. Not a team, not a task force, not necessarily an authorized or identified group. People in CoP can perform the same job or collaborate on a shared task or work together on a product. They are peers in the execution of "real work". What holds them together is a common sense of purpose and a real need to understand what each other knows.'

Brown,J.S. and Gray, E.S.(1995), 'The People are the Company', *Fast Company*, November, 80

Wenger on CoP: 14 indicators of CoP

1. Sustained mutual relationships -- harmonious or conflictual
2. Shared ways of engaging in doing things together
3. The rapid flow of information and propagation of innovation
4. Absence of introductory preambles, as if conversations and interactions were merely the continuation of an ongoing process
5. Very quick setup of a problem to be discussed
6. Substantial overlap in participants' description of who belongs
7. Knowing what others know, what they can do, and how they can contribute to the enterprise
8. Mutually defining identities
9. The ability to assess the appropriateness of actions and products
10. Specific tools, representations, and other artifacts
11. Local lore, shared stories, inside jokes, knowing laughter
12. Jargon and shortcuts to communication as well as the ease of producing new ones
13. Certain styles recognized as displaying membership
14. A shared discourse reflecting a certain perspective on the world.

Etienne Wenger (1998),*Communities of Practice : Learning, Meaning, and Identify*, Cambridge, CUP, *127*

Images of Knowledge and Knowing

Two Images of Knowledge/Knowing

Artifact (Possession)

Impersonal
- Data/facts
- Structure
- Integration

Objective
- Quantify
- Measure

Out there in the World
- Capture
- Store
- Distribute

Technology as the container of knowledge
- The place where the knowledge is

"Tame"

Process (Participation)

Humanistic
- Relevance
- Meaning
- Multiple perspectives

Emergent,
- Engage
- Generate

Integral to social being
- Context
- Experience
- Conversation/Narratives

Technology as an enabler of conversations
- A space for enacting meaning

"Wicked"

Additional

Organizing to Know:
Managing the Interstices

- Interpretation/sensemaking
- Ways of knowing
  Social/cultural
  contextual
  emotional
- Ways of **Re**presenting

INFORMATION

COMMUNITIES

- Interests
- Practices
- Relationships
- The context of meaning making: narratives and conversations
- Peripheral participation
- Facilitation/management

ORGANIZING TO KNOW

COLLABORATIVE SPACES

- Spaces of community, places for advocacy, engagement, conversation, & reflection
- Means of sharing
- Sources of information
- Artifacts and tools

Organizing to Know: Managing the Interstices

Culture/values

Worldviews

Business objectives

Leadership styles

Management practices

COMMUNITIES

INFORMATION

COLLABORATIVE SPACES

ORGANIZING TO KNOW