

# SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON RESPONSES TO REGULATION AND DANGER

## THE REGULATORY GOVERNANCE INITIATIVE CRITICAL CONVERSATIONS

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# Action & Cognition in the “Wild”

- ▣ Ethnographic study of responses to regulation and danger.
  
- ▣ The researcher:
  - Is embedded in the organization, community, or group for several months or years
  - Records observations, interviews, and, in some cases, participating
  - Produces rich description of response but also analytic understanding of patterns

# Action & Cognition in the “Wild”



# Governing the Gap

- ▣ A gap, a space, a lacuna between...

Rules

Regulations

Procedures



Response in situ

Practice

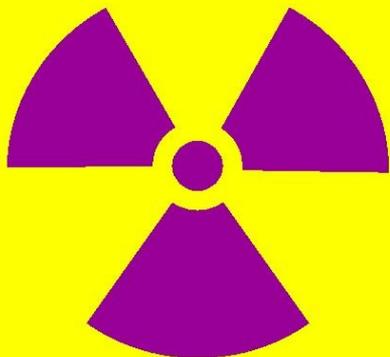
Enactment

- ▣ The gap will always exist and persist.  
Focus of governance rather than closure.
- ▣ How do we manage this gap?

# Action & Cognition in the “Wild”

- ▣ Human cognition differs because it is influenced by cultural and social processes
- ▣ Understand that centrality of meaning in action and cognition
  - We act based on our interpretations
  - Interpretations are constructed through experience, occupation, norms, persuasion
  - Interpretations are constructed in dyads and groups as we narrate our experiences

**CAUTION**



**RADIOACTIVE  
MATERIALS**



**Lab coats  
must be worn  
in this area**



# Response to Regulation

BIOLOGISTS -  
RESISTANCE

CHEMISTS -  
WILLINGNESS\*

Why?

- ▣ Historic relationship of the discipline to industrial practice
- ▣ Social organization of the laboratory
- ▣ Experimental practices , materials, and equipment



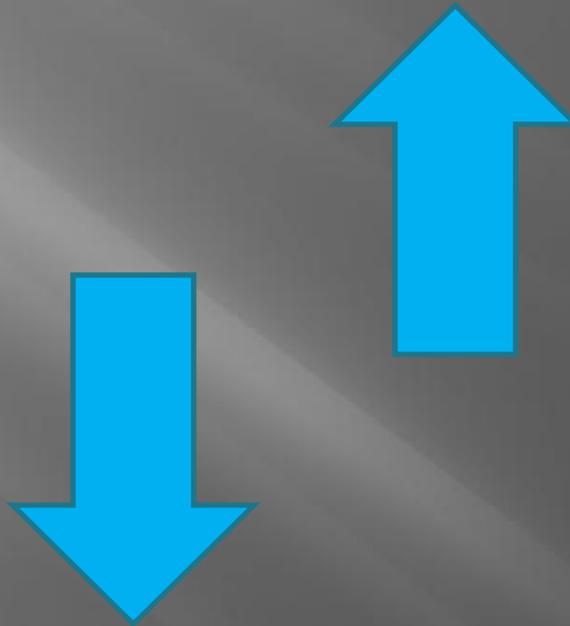
# Response to Uncertainty & Danger

- ▣ Frameworks for interpreting and responding to cues are disrupted
- ▣ Shift from decision making to sense making
  - Shift to emergent efforts to create order and make sense of what is happening
    - ▣ Informs alternative responses and strategies
    - ▣ A group process in which distributed cognition is leveraged to find answers
    - ▣ It occurs through conversation, fast, fact-based, emergent, open.
    - ▣ Depends on the strength of the groups role structure

# Response to Uncertainty & Danger

- ▣ Support Sense Making through Role Structures
  - ▣ Membership, tasks, roles, and expertise are specified
  - ▣ Roles are clear and continuous
  - ▣ The interlocks between roles are clear and continuous
  - ▣ Individual specialization is known and leveraged
- ▣ Strong Role Structure avoids
  - Paradox of Obedience
    - ▣ Breakdown of authority at crucial moments observed in both Mann Gulch and Storm King Fires
  - Lightens cognitive load of any one individual

# Sense Making and Role Structure



Deteriorating sense making  
efforts can be stabilized by  
enforcement of role  
structure or vice versa

# Governing the Gap

## Some Examples

- ▣ Bricoleurs – experienced individuals improvise using materials at hand
- ▣ Virtual Role System – assume what ever role is vacant, pick up the activities, and run a credible version of the role
- ▣ Protocol Breaking – wisdom to deviate from protocols under conditions of uncertainty
- ▣ Relational Regulation – identification and leverage of relational dependencies in the organization
- ▣ Responsibilization - devolving control to all members of the organization.

# But what about....

- ▣ Incentives
- ▣ New Technologies
- ▣ Command and Control Structures
- ▣ Perfecting Policies
- ▣ Better Communication

Another gap emerges...  
initiating another cycle of emergent  
governance

# Further research

- ▣ Ethnographic Observation
- ▣ Interviews
- ▣ Field experiments



Behavioral Modeling/  
System Dynamics

With the purpose of capturing:

1. Situated perceptions and experiences
2. Processes of governing gaps
3. Observe role of key “variables”

# Thank You

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