

Should Management Scholarship Address & Inform Societal Grand Challenges?

Timothy M Devinney

Alliance Manchester Business School

AIHI, Faculty of Health Sciences, Macquarie University

A Caveat

- 🌐 Why am I here? A Christmas Miracle
- 🌐 Rage, Anger, Ego & Passion
 - 🌐 Make interesting journalism/blogs, films, novels, & social media posts, BUT
 - 🌐 Should not be the basis of meaningful science
- 🌐 Preferences
 - 🌐 Just because something may be of interest to specific individuals does not mean it should be the goal of a scientific community
 - 🌐 Just because you are a scholar does not mean an opinion is more than an opinion – that is the realm of Facebook & Twitter



- 🌐 Do We Have Anything Meaningful to Say That Others Could Say More Competently and Forcefully?
 - 🌐 Is management scholarship really ‘science’?
 - 🌐 Would anyone listen? Why should they?
- 🌐 Do We Have The Ability and Capital To Materially Generate Impactful Advice and Guidance?
 - 🌐 Big science vs small science
 - 🌐 Capabilities and resources
 - 🌐 Organizational and Individual Incentives

Do We Have Anything Meaningful to Say?

Is Management Really a Science?

Semi/Quasi Science

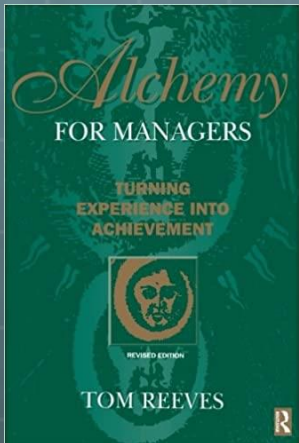
Management relies overwhelmingly on theories and technologies developed by other 'sciences' and used out of the context of their development

Theory in management studies is mostly borrowing and mashing together ideas from more fundamental disciplines with little formal modeling and mostly 'justification by citation'

We create increasingly complex jargon we cannot measure or define in any useful way and

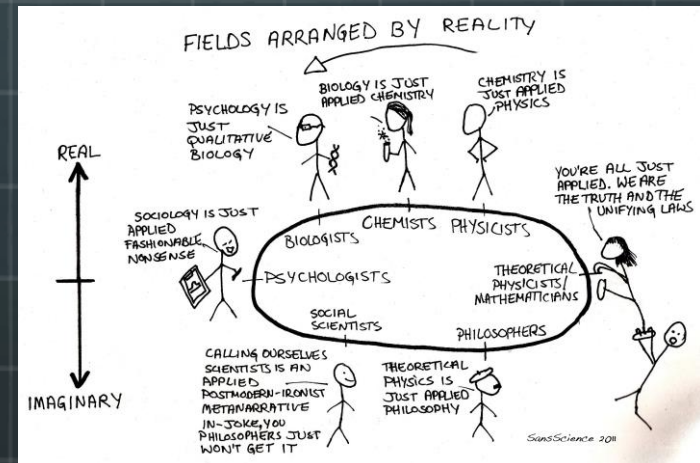
Fall back on 'contingencies' and 'paradoxes' as a panacea when reality does not align with theory

Management scholarship has been lagging increasingly behind in thinking and doing about "method" – we rarely if ever build our own instrumentation



This suggests that the structural issues regarding the quality, or perception of quality, of management and business research by other social scientists remain (AIM Assessment, ESRC)

Industrial Strategy, Brexit & SAGE



Do We Have Anything Meaningful to Say?

- Is Management Really at the Frontier??
 - **Frontier Scholarship:** Compared to STEM & Other Social Sciences
 - **Frontier Practices:** Compared to non-academic/university alternatives?
 - BRICS, TQM/BPR, Big Data, Digitalization, Platforms, Industry 4.0, Born Globals, Triple Bottom Line, Etc. Etc.
 - We have become fundamentally followers in the marketplace for business ideas and business innovations
 - While we study entrepreneurship and teach entrepreneurship, we really don't do entrepreneurship
 - While we study and teach innovation, we really don't do innovation
 - While we study and teach governance, we really don't do governance
- Management as Architecture & Engineering

Do We Have Anything Meaningful to Say?

Would Anyone Listen?

Management vs Social & Science Disciplines

- AOM – 20,000 Members, Budget ~ \$10M
- AMA – 272,000 Members, Budget ~ \$433M

Management vs 'Think Tanks'

- WEF – 1,000 Members (Fees: \$52K to \$628K; Budget: \$217M)
- Conference Board – 1,000 Members, Budget: \$50M p.a.

Management vs Journalists?

- Financial Times – 1 M Subscribers (25.2 M views per month)
- HBR – 400,000 Subscribers (11 M views per month)
- Fortune – 850,000 Subscribers (7.5 M views per month)
- AOM Journals – 20,000 Subscribers (0.5M views per month)



It's Been Tried & Shown Not to Work



Do We Have The Ability and Capital To Materially Generate Impactful Advice and Guidance?


Big Science	Little Science
Broad set of goals	Specific goal
Interdisciplinary problems	Discipline-oriented problems
Scientific goals defined by committee	Scientific goals defined by individual researcher/small group
Researchers selected to fulfill program goals	Researcher sets program goals
Long implementation time	Short implementation time
Infrequent opportunities	More frequent opportunities
Large, complex management structure	Minimal management structure
High cost	Relatively low cost
Highly variable resource timeline	Relatively stable resource timeline
New-start funding process	Base funding
Supports project managers, engineers, administrators; science support comes at end of long planning, selling, implementation phases	Supports science community throughout project
Dominant and increasing share of budget	Minor and decreasing share of budget

Do We Have The Ability and Capital To Materially Generate Impactful Advice and Guidance?


Infrastructure


 **Alan Turing Institute** – £12M p.a.


 **Cochrane Collaboration** – £13M p.a.

 **Rosalind Franklin Institute** – £103M in total (10 Universities)


 **Advanced Institute of Management** – £30M from 2003-2012


 The resulting model for AIM resulted in a fairly conventional ‘research first, dissemination second’.

 The model essentially treated engagement with practitioners as an activity parallel to rather than integrated with the research. The ability for practitioners to influence research agenda was limited.

 The Director’s Office went to great lengths to encourage research partnerships, make outputs accessible and facilitate dissemination and engagement, with a fair degree of success, but the delivery model was not well suited to engender a significant shift in working practices to co-produced research.

Capability & Coordination

 **James Webb Telescope** – \$10B over 30 years involving 10,000 people

 **CRC Smart Internet Technology** – \$30M over 7 years (10 Universities)

Do We Have The Ability and Capital To Materially Generate Impactful Advice and Guidance?

- 🌐 Individual & Organizational Incentives
 - 🌐 Are business schools prepared to give academics the time to develop large scale multi year projects with limited early year outputs?
 - 🌐 Are universities, which plunder business schools for cash, prepared to fund a model more aligned with STEM?
 - 🌐 Are business school academics willing to put their academic publishing careers on hiatus to go and work on grand challenges?
 - 🌐 Are business school academics willing to forgo the limelight to work on small components of massive projects?



We are scholarly Marie Antionettes: We want to do what we do and expect that people/society will value it without our making any material compromises

Conclusion

- We have our own meaningfulness
 - Business Schools are Not ‘Big Bang’ Institutions
 - Our influence is one student, one executive, one paper at a time
 - Our influence is based on the fact that we teach 60% of all university graduates
 - While Business Schools Have Many Leading Thinkers ...
 - Are fundamentally (collectively) scholarly engineers who apply and reconfigure ideas in a specific context
 - In Terms of Grand Challenges ...
 - We are not equipped – intellectually or institutionally – to lead. We can, at best, contribute in a small way. We are, unfortunately, ‘tweeners’ and the ‘in-betweener’
 - We are not ‘pure’ enough scientifically compared to basic disciplines to address theoretical/methodological needs
 - We are not ‘practical’ enough compared to think tanks and consultancies to address operationalization needs
 - Nor can we manipulate cosmic energy to alter reality to achieve nearly any effect or ability within our influence as the synthesis of duality

