

Beyond the local. Making sense of 'large phenomena' from a practice- based perspective

Daive Nicolini

Ikon, University of Warwick

Central issue

- ▶ How can we use a practice-based sensitivity to address big issues and ‘large scale phenomena’
- ▶ Examples of large phenomena: functioning of the financial market, large institutional arrangements, the education system, bureaucracy and the future of the planet

Three broad strategies

- ▶ Rhizomatic sensitivity
- ▶ Examine the global in the local practice
- ▶ Study and do scalography

Practice-based orientation

The basic domain of study of the social [are] social practices ordered across space and time

(Giddens 1984, p. 2)

Flat vs. multilevel ontology

- ▶ Practice theory orients towards a flat 'relational' ontology
- ▶ Not all practice oriented scholars believe in a flat ontology
- ▶ Bourdieu, Giddens, Fairclough, Glynos & Horwarth do not believe in flat ontology

How to operationalise a rhizomatic sensitivity

- ▶ Large scale phenomena as a fabric of interconnected practices: from metaphor to method
- ▶ Bundle, nexus , texture, mesh, action net are metaphors and similes
- ▶ How do you do it in practice?

Kemmis: analysing practices and their architectures ('contexture')

- ▶ People bring sociomaterial practices into being but not under conditions of their choosing

Kemmis: analysing practices and their architectures ('contexture')

Elements of the practice	Practice architecture
Project guiding the practice	Practice landscape
Sayings	Discursive conditions
Doings	Material economic arrangement
Relatings	Social political arrangement
Dispositions (Knowledge, skills, relational orientation)	Practice tradition

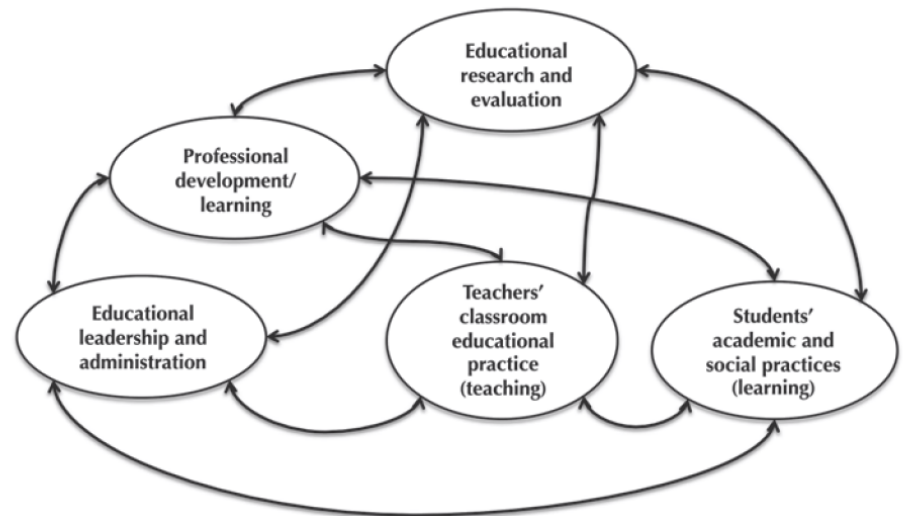
Analysing ecologies of practices

- ▶ Interdependencies, influence and *hospitability* (Schatzki meets Habermas)

How is the practice of

		Student learning	Teaching	Teacher learning	Leading	Researching
... shaped by the practice of	Student learning	A1	B1	C1	D1	E1
	Teaching	A2	B2	C2	D2	E2
	Teacher learning	A3	B3	C3	D3	E3
	Leading	A4	B4	C4	D4	E4
	Researching	A5	B5	C5	D5	E5

Example: education as an ecology of practices (Kemmis et al., 2014)



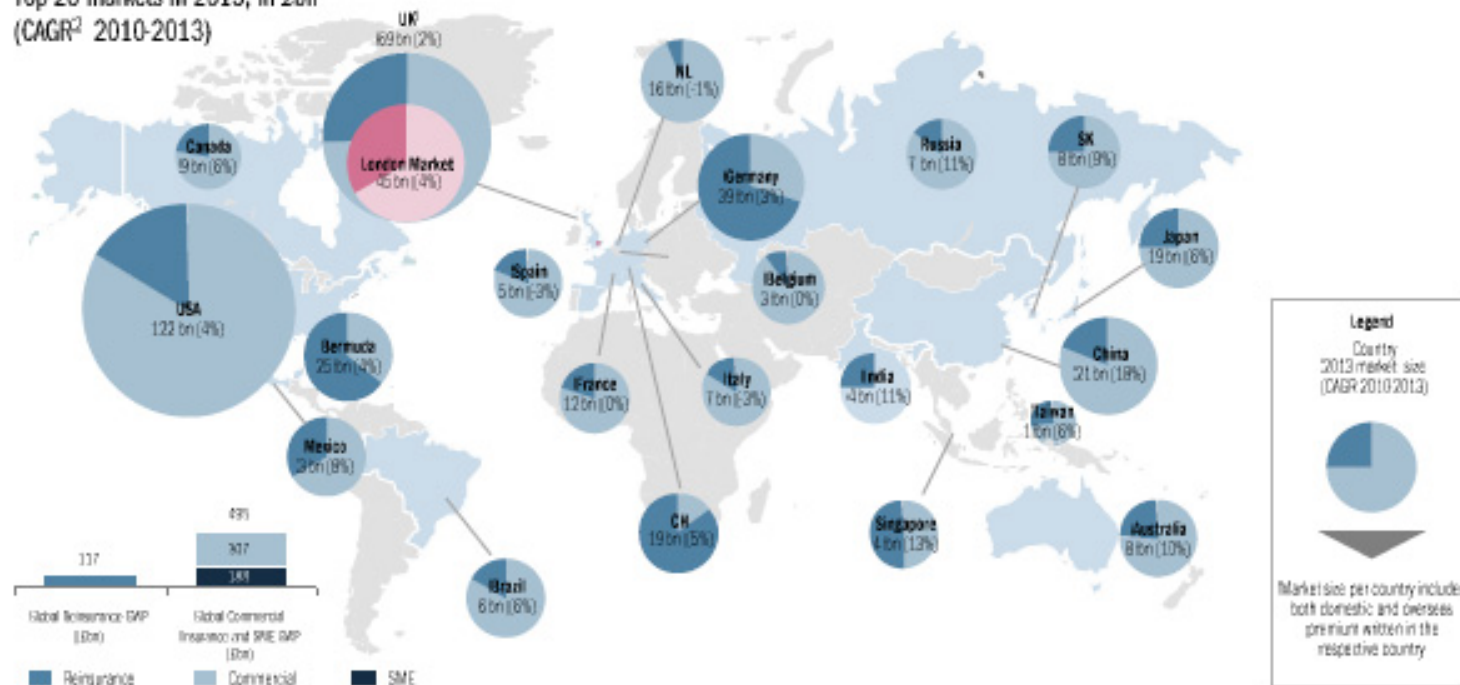
Uncovering nested relationality by tracing trans-situated practices

- ▶ Large scale social phenomena emerge from the active relationships between highly localized forms of activities
- ▶ Relational presence: each of these practice constitute the context for each other locally first and trans-locally later.

Example: reinsurance market (Jarzabkowski et al. 2015)

Global commercial insurance and reinsurance industry

Top 20 markets in 2013, in £bn
(CAGR² 2010-2013)



Finding the global in the local

- ▶ Identify a specific site of engagement
- ▶ Attend to social arrangement, historical body, lived experience
- ▶ Identify what are the crucial discourses operating in the scene
- ▶ Navigating these discourses “as a way of seeing how those moments are constituted out of past practices and how in turn they lead to new forms of action...”

Nexus analysis (Scollon & Scollon)

- ▶ Performing and perpetuating racial inequality



Studying scalographic practices

- ▶ Scalography: the study of the scoping technologies and the representation activities through which specific classes of practitioners construct and circulate 'large scale phenomena'
- ▶ Army command rooms; railway control centres; stock market; city control centres

Doing reflexive scalography

- ▶ Create macro-practices out of collection of local instances
- ▶ Use to construct narratives of growth, survival and disappearance at a large spatial and temporal scale
- ▶ Explain dynamic based on local events

Example: showering vs bathing competition

EveningStandard.

End of the bath? Climate change prompts council plans for 'shower-only' bathrooms



Big issues and 'large scale phenomena' from a PB perspective

- ▶ Rethink some entrenched distinctions
- ▶ Differences in scale are produced in practice and through practices
- ▶ Use more than one scale at the same time moving skilfully from one another
- ▶ Resist the temptation to study nexuses, assemblages and bundles of practices in and of themselves