

Mary Douglas's Cultural Theory: Learning and the Ends of Inquiry

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Intention today

» To distinguish four different kinds of enquiry and elucidate some features of their context and implications



A crash course in 'Cultural Theory'

aka NeoDurkheimian Institutional Theory (NDIT)

Loyalty
Common Cause
Mutuality
(Dis)agreement...

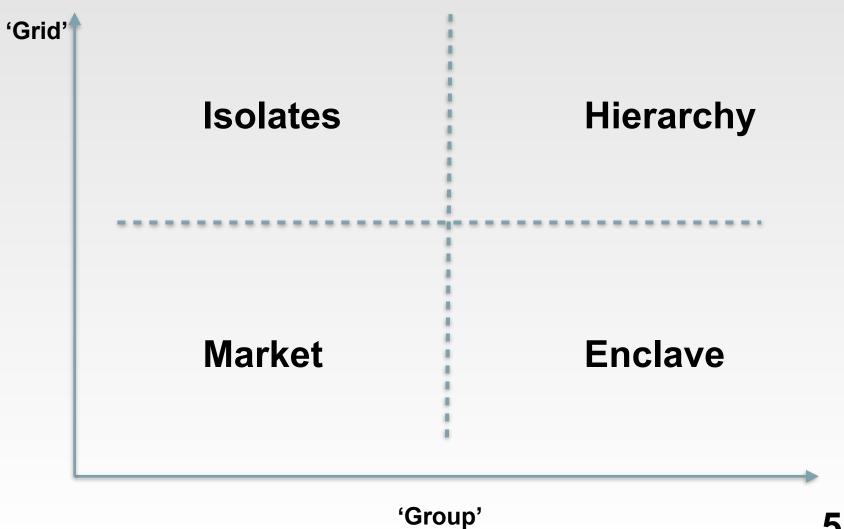


'Grid

Constraints
Rules
Roles
Age
Rank
Stratification...

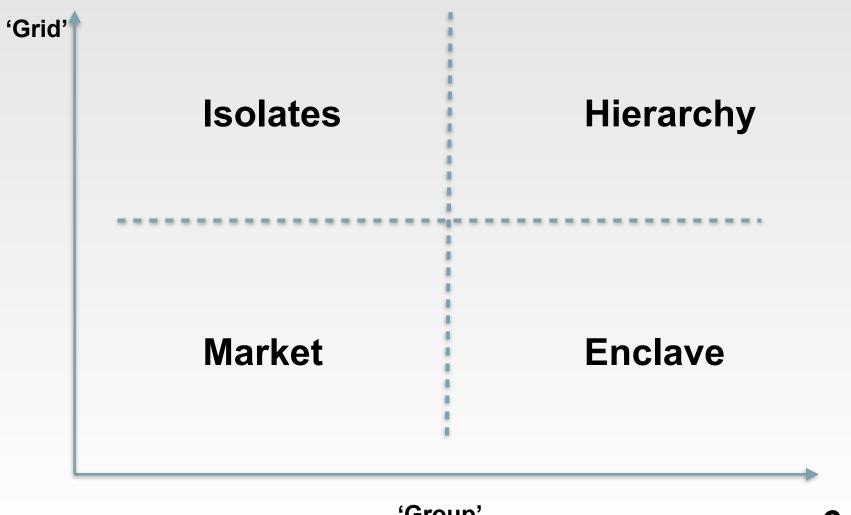


4 'solidarities' or cultures emerge





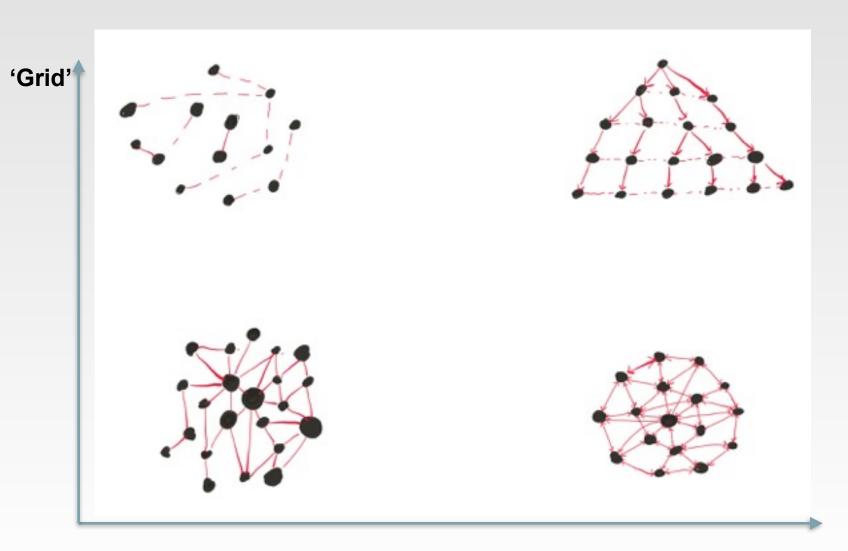
4 'solidarities' or cultures emerge as a result of small decisions or factors



'Group'



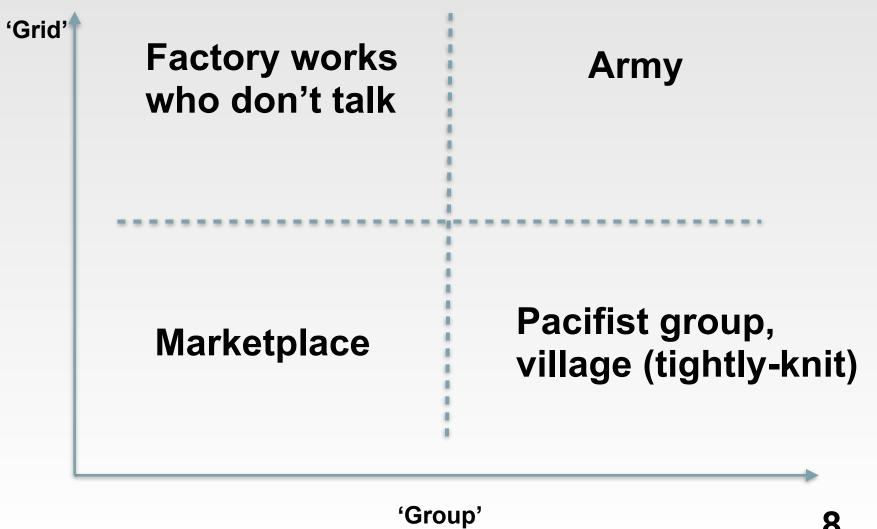
Relationships and authority



'Group'



4 examples





Relationships give rise to behaviours

'Grid' Structured, **Piecemeal** contractual, opportunism process **Short-term** pragmatic profit-orientated

Egalitarian, discursive



and values of eg time

The exam board will ratify your marks in six months

'Grid'

Any time

Sequential, ordered, authoritative

Impatient, haggling as arrangement

Utopian (everything asap, profound transformation)

What do we want? SomethingImportant! When do we want it? Now!



... thus recognition and value of knowledges

'Grid'

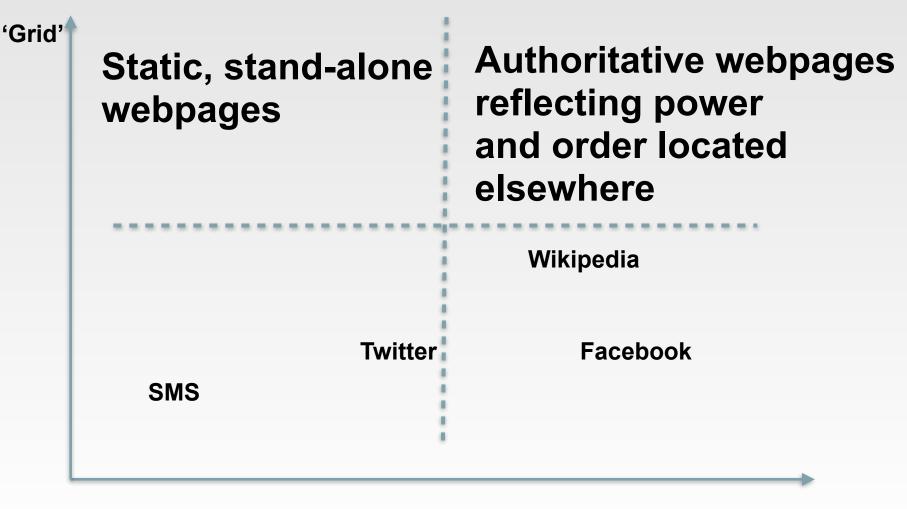
Isolated, tested, not linked to existing discourse Tested, reliable, proven, encoded densely in symbols

Pragmatic, 'next step'

Salvationary: existing knowledge redefined



Social media, internet (examples)



'Group'



What would be valued as fruitful enquiry?

'Grid'

Fascinating nuggets of underdetermined relevance

Taxonomy, classification, verification within paradigm

Actionable insight

Furthers the cause



What would be valued as engagement?

'Grid'

Ipsative progress, independent, autonomous, maverick

Finds niche, supports structure

Flexibility, opportunity, prizes, status

Belonging



as independent learning?

'Grid'

Brilliant complex understanding unrelated to larger picture

Working responsibly to protocol without supervision

Innovative, promising idea

Rethinking existing material to local agenda



What would groupwork look like?

'Grid'

Eclectic, individualised

Structured, bounded, distinct rules

Multiple short-term transactions

Egalitarian group lacking 'final' authority



Thoughts for discussion (aka 'so what?')

- » Constructive (cultural) alignment just got harder
- » there are four distinguishable 'types' of inquiry, independence and groupwork
- » monomodal evaluation does not capture all four
- » students are learning the cultural mode as much as the material
- » we mix modes at our peril, creating inarticulable dissonance