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# Conference Presentation: The Power of Words in Tension: Enterprise/Strategy as a Dilemma in Neoliberalism's Persistence.

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Academy of Management August 1<sup>st</sup> to  
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# **The power of words in tension: enterprise/strategy as a dilemma in neoliberalism's persistence.**

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# Outline of Presentation

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1. Neoliberal Enterprise discourse
2. Neoliberalism's Peculiar Persistence
3. Explanations for Persistence
4. Another explanation: dilemmatic capture?
5. Conclusions

# 1. Neoliberal Enterprise discourse

After the economic crisis of 1970s a form of enterprise discourse become hegemonic: neoliberal enterprise discourse (Hayek, Friedman, Thatcher, Reagan)

Neoliberal enterprise discourse was initially more about the ideology of the state but operates at the level of corporation, entrepreneurs and everybody.

Neoliberal enterprise discourse: a way of talking about everything as best run as it is imagined a new, small, fast-growing, owner-managed firm in a changing competitive marketplace is managed.

(Burrows, 1991a; Cohen and Musson, 2000; Fairclough, 1991; Jones & Spicer, 2005; Martilla, 2012; O'Rourke & Hogan, 2014 )

# 2. Neoliberalism's Peculiar Persistence

Atlantic economic crisis of 2008 and the puzzle of persistence. The strange non-death of neoliberalism (Crouch, 2011)

Neoliberal enterprise discourse re-emerges as the way the crisis is framed (Thompson, 2009) and discussed (O'Rourke & Hogan, 2013; 2014), and persists as 'the way to organize' (Du Gay, & Vikkelsø, 2012)

# 3. Explanations for Persistence

Enterprise discourse persists as an 'empty signifier' (Jones & Spicer, 2005; 2009)

Neoliberal enterprise discourses persists as enterprise's strong emotional appeal is captured in a discursive field of market logic (Kenny & Scriver, 2012)

Neoliberal enterprise is a strong spectre as its past animates a variety of highly specified social practices (Marttila, 2013)

## 4. Another Explanation: Dilemmatic Capture?

Neoliberalism persists because its pairing of enterprise and strategy talk together provides a number of 'ideological dilemmas' (Billig et al., 1988) between which the discourse can move back and forth without escaping the basic dimensions of its enterprise-strategy structure

**Enterprise Pole**

Individualistic

Disruptive

Creative

Risk-taking

**Strategy Pole**

Corporate

Legitimate

Analytical

Risk-managing

Holistic

Masterful

Optimistic

Resolute

Market-orientated

**Commonalities of Enterprise and Strategy**

# Interview talk with a lead entrepreneur

<p>'given contact management software to play with' (Turn 34).</p>	<p>Enterprise: creativity &amp; playfulness</p>
<p>"I was] <u>never</u> of an employee anywhere, I was always on my own" (Turn 40).</p>	<p>Enterprise: Individual</p>
<p>"I remember having a real, having just this brainwave thinking if the website is growing, people are looking for more news on the website and I have some people who are willing to <u>buy</u> this newsfeed from me, but I can't write it all myself. At the same time I was writ I was writing a lot of eh analyst reports for companies on their internet strategy" (Turn 48)</p>	<p>Enterprise: creativity &amp; playfulness ...market logic... Strategy: collective</p>

“But from the very beginning I want to make clear that, well what TronCom does is we publish a series of publications under our brand and under our client's brand” (Turn 60).

Strategy:  
Collective,  
corporate,  
analytical

“From the very beginning TronCom has had those two divisions. We've- essentially we publish and we publish things under our own brand or under our clients' brands so those two strands have all, always moved along together” (Turn 66).

Strategy:  
collective

# 5. Concluding Comments

Neoliberalism's dilemmas of enterprise/strategy are salient but talking only of them crowds out other salient aspects.

Neoliberalism is not just liberalism reborn... its enterprise incorporates the corporate strategy which was such a problem for classical liberalism.

# Thank you!

Questions, comments & criticisms  
very welcome, now and to  
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References in Presentation – more in Conference Paper

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