



Productive power of risk & uncertainty

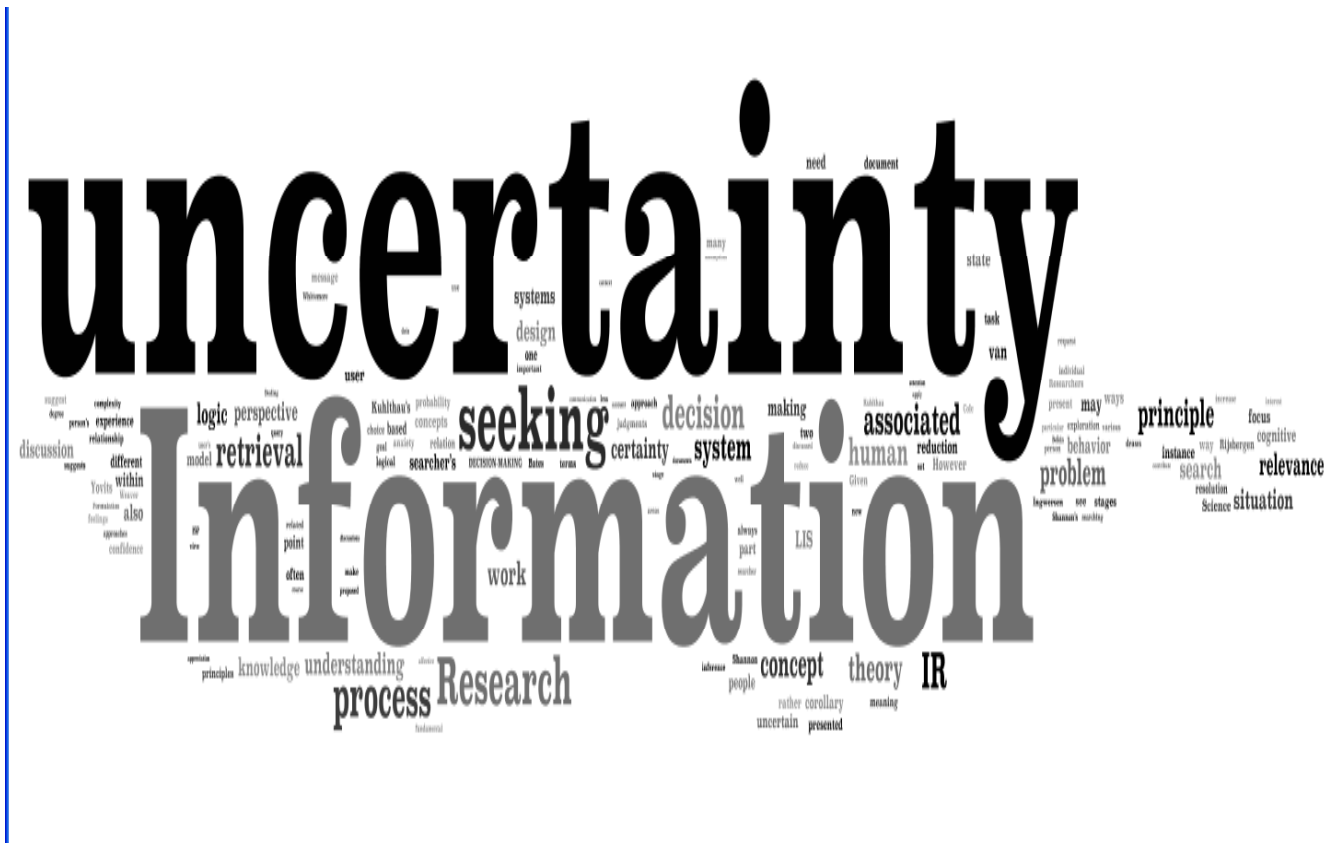
- Is a fear of uncertainty killing creativity?
- Are we becoming too risk averse as individuals?
As a community? As a nation?
 - What are the consequences - does it matter?
- How might we allow ourselves the space to be creative and inventive in our worlds?



Creativity in risk & uncertainty

- What is 'risk'? What is 'uncertainty'?
 - Some frameworks for consideration
- When uncertainty is good
 - Pleasures of uncertainty
 - Productivity of risk
 - Tolerating and managing uncertainty
 - Learning from risk and uncertainty
 - Examples and more questions
- Implications
 - "taking the good with the bad"





Uncertainty and Creativity in World Systems



Moral and political conclusions about the future

- Progress is not at all inevitable, nor is it impossible
- Belief in certainties is blinding and crippling
 - The uncertainty principle and sciences of complexity
- In human social systems, struggle for the “good society” is ongoing
 - In periods of transition struggle takes on most meaning
 - Fundamental change is possible, albeit never certain
- “uncertainty is wondrous, and certainty, were it to be real, would be moral death.”



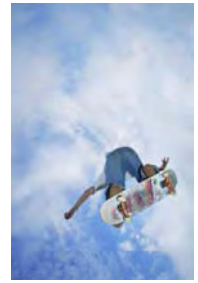
Uncertainty and creativity?

- Intellectual curiosity drives discovery
 - Risk-taking at individual and collective levels propels us forward
 - Example: discussion about Large Hadron Collider
- Perceiving risk and uncertainty
 - There is no inherent judge of good or bad uncertainty
 - flying versus driving
 - locus of control
 - Role of experience
 - Sense of self and group





Productivity of risk



- The productivity of risk in human practice
- People can choose to actively engage with risk
 - 'adrenaline junkies' - extreme athletes
 - financial speculation
- productive life of risk
 - What is the productive work of risk taking?
 - What is there to gain by taking risks?
 - Fieldwork on trading floor of Chicago Board of Trade
 - Money not only reason people voluntarily engaged in risks
- Draws attention to ways some people see it fitting into their work and self-defining behaviours



Coping with uncertainty and 'calculated risks'



- Current financial crisis: risk without consequence?
 - "fine balance necessary to work with risk"
 - involves working with norms of risk management that are generated on the trading room floor
 - self-definition and group-formation co-evolve
- Conundrum of risk and culture
 - mixed bag of perceptions of risk across situations and cultures
 - the concept of risk can be understood as a framing device
 - allowing us to transform it from "...an open-ended field of unpredicted possibilities into a bounded set of possible consequences."
- Risk conceptualized and managed in different ways across communities, cultures, organizations

Zaloom

Boholm



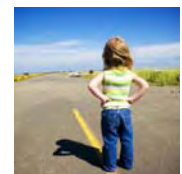
Can information overload kill creativity?



- Academic research & knowledge generation
 - The challenge of IT systems that reduce uncertainty
 - Cost/benefit - effort, time, reputation
- Does the reduction of uncertainty cut off opportunities to deal with divergent thinking?
 - Systems best suited to convergent thinking
- Complex research dynamic & non-sequential
 - Uncertainty and innovation valued in research
 - Making time for serendipity



The risk landscape of childhood?



- How can we “protect” children from dangers associated with new or untested technologies
 - “Our anxiety as parents and our efforts to bubble-wrap our children may be putting them at more risk than we suspect. In a world of risk aversion, many loving middle-class families have made their childrens’ lives virtually risk- and responsibility-free. ...But security comes at a price.”
Michael Ungar
- Giving children the “risk-taker’s advantage”
 - Taking a more participatory approach to these issues
 - Giving children a voice in their future can offer them some of this responsibility.



Engaging with risk and uncertainty



- Risk taking and risk management are important for creating children's social identity
 - "Children's willingness to take risks, make mistakes and find solutions forms an important part of their collective learning." It seems to be a "...performed as a balancing act between risk willingness and self-care"
- Children need a chance to develop their ability to assess and handle risk, chance and uncertainty in their everyday practice

Christensen and Mikkelsen



Are students too risk averse?



- Growing desire for certainty about successful outcomes linked to effort
 - Getting students to take intellectual risks
 - Responding to the 'fear of failure'
- Allowing students to experience risk and responsibility
- What are the implications given good and bad forms of uncertainty are intertwined?





Can we change the landscape?



Risk communication Tolerating uncertainty



- human capacity to tolerate uncertainty
- risk communication and 'medialisation' of many risk issues
 - "What role will personal local experience play in the assessment of global information deriving from the generalized knowledge of distant expert communities?"

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Revisit my questions

- Is a fear of uncertainty killing creativity?
- Are we becoming too risk averse as individuals? As a community? As a nation?
 - What are the consequences - does it matter?
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When we don't know, we must imagine



- o "...uncertainty is wondrous, and that certainty, were it to be real, would be moral death. If we were certain of the future, there could be no moral compulsion to do anything. We would be free to indulge in every passion and pursue every egoism, since all actions fall within the certainty that has been ordained, then the future is open to creativity, not merely human creativity but the creativity of all nature. It is open to possibility and, therefore, to a better world."

Wallerstein



Thank you

Questions or comments welcome:

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