

WORKING PAPER SERIES

2013-MAN-05

Francis Ford Coppola as Bricoleur in the Making of the Godfather: An alternative view on Strategy as practice

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FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA AS *BRICOLEUR* IN THE MAKING OF *THE GODFATHER: AN ALTERNATIVE VIEW ON STRATEGY AS PRACTICE*

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses Francis Ford Coppola's account of his making of *The Godfather*, one of the most successful movies in history, in an attempt to understand the role of *bricolage* in the strategy process. Our theoretical framework is Pettigrew's (1990, Pettigrew, 1992, Pettigrew et al., 2001) process view of strategy development and Stacey's (2000, Stacey et al., 2000) 'bottom-up- teleology'. The contextual variables in which bricolage was enacted were: the history of the project plus four of Caves' (2000) properties of the creative arts; namely the 'nobody knows' property, art for art's sake, the motley crew property and the O-ring theory of production. Coppola's account of how the movie project was crafted was transcribed using Nvivo and analysed using content analysis. The authors attempt to show that Coppola can be considered a *bricoleur* in the sense used by Lévi-Strauss (1962) rather than more recent interpretations. Coppola as *bricoleur* used human resource acquisition strategy; human resource development; and capability development and acquisition of resources as his repertoire of tools and resources to fashion his masterpiece.

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

This is the story of how *The Godfather*, one of the most successful Hollywood productions ever made was crafted, very much against the odds, out of a vision and less-than-perfect circumstances. We argue that this story is a useful case study on strategy as practice and process.

Coppola's *The Godfather* can be regarded as a case study of an outstanding commercial, strategic and cultural success which revived Hollywood (Thompson and Bordwell, 1994; pp.710-714). In the year of its release it took three times as much at the US box office as its nearest competitor. Finler estimated that it cost \$6 million to make, but took \$86.3 million at the box office (1988, p.125). Later estimates put the gross take of all three movies in *The Godfather* series at between \$800 million (Lewis, 1997, p.156) to one billion dollars (Browne, 2000, p.1).

Its commercial success was mirrored in its artistic achievements. It won three Oscars for best film, best actor, and best screenplay (Finler, 1988, p.167) and it has been described as one 'of the monuments on the landscape of American cinema' and 'one of the enduring works of American cinema.' (Browne, 2000, p.1). It has been commended for the very high level of craft shown in its production: set design, costumes, lighting, cinematography, sound, music, editing all providing 'an extraordinary level of sensuous delight in cinematic design and presentation' (Browne, 2000, p.2). Forty years after its release The American Film Institute still ranks *The Godfather* as the third-best movie of all time (American Film Institute, 2010).

It occupies an important place in the strategic development of the movie industry in that it was the first of the 'series' movies, in which historically linked characters and problems are revisited in different contexts (Thompson and Bordwell, 1994, pp.714-715); or based on proprietary characters and repeatable titles. These, coupled with tight legal protection, 'helped Hollywood to reap record profits' (Altman, 1999, p.117). One of Coppola's collaborators on *The Godfather*, and a personal friend of Coppola, was George Lucas who later produced the *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones* series, both good examples of the series format.

WHY THE STUDY IS IMPORTANT

Shamsie et al point out (2009, p.1440) that while the literature on strategy is replete with exhortations to management to develop the capabilities necessary to manage a turbulent environment, most of it stops well short of offering specific operational advice about the activities and processes necessary to achieve them (Priem and Butler, 2001). Existing studies of the movie-making industry are no exception.

Building on the works of Champoux (1999, Champoux, 2001a, Champoux, 2001b), the use of feature films in management research has been highlighted by Buchanan and Huczynski (2004) who argue that feature film can be used as a fruitful case tool for teaching core principles of Organisation Theory such as process theorising and narrative analysis. In another, related study (Huczynski and Buchanan, 2004), they go more into pedagogical details of using films as a case study. Whereas these articles look at the *content* of the movies and how it can be used for teaching and/or theorising, we wish to suggest that the *making* of it is in itself a complex strategic process that holds valuable insights into the strategising process.

For example DeFillipi and Arthur (1998) state that filmmakers need to develop competencies in key areas such as recruitment and ‘the management of complexities spanning coordination of cast, production crews, elaborate sets and sophisticated ... technologies’ noting that ‘these project specific, knowledge-based competencies can be an important source of competitive advantage’ (1998, p.126), they do not disclose much detailed information as to what specific management actions need to be carried out to achieve these highly desirable outcomes. On the other hand Coppola offers a relatively open and vivid account of how he managed the specific problems which confronted him to achieve strategic success.

We start with a review of the importance of process thinking in understanding management, before moving to a description of the Hollywood movie industry background and the part

played by *The Godfather* in its turnaround. Next we will turn to a brief description of how the film was made. An account of our methodology is followed by how the analysis of the Coppola's audio-commentary of digitally re-mastered version of the DVD released in 2007 shows not only *bricolage* in action, but one marked by Coppola's very distinctive vision, one which is not shaped a priori, but is formed as the project develops. We then continue the analysis to provide examples of Coppola as a *bricoleur*.

STRATEGISING: CONTEXT AND PROCESS.

In this paper, we follow Pettigrew's view of processes as "A sequence of individual and collective events, actions, and activities unfolding over time in context" (1997, p.338). The context in which the movie was crafted included

- The history of the project
- Four of Caves' (2000) economic properties of the creative arts; namely, the nobody knows rule, the O-ring theory of production, the motley crew, and art for art's sake.
- Coppola's evolving vision of the film

The making of *The Godfather* is a good example of how strategy frequently emerges through what can be called a moderately managed process. Pettigrew has argued that '[p]ower, chance, opportunism, accident are as influential in shaping outcomes as are design, negotiated agreements and master-plans' (1990, p.268). Importantly for the present study, the context is very much based on, and evolving with, the vision. Context is 'about constellations of forces shaping the character of the process and its outcome' (Pettigrew, 1990). In other words, it is an integral part of the process dynamics.

While they are difficult to catch with 'traditional', quantitative empirical tools, emergent strategies and what has been called "bottom-up teleology" (Stacey et al., 2000) are powerful metaphors to understand "how things get done" in organisations at large, and at project level.

The focus is less on managerial planning. Instead, organisations are conceptualised as open systems (Scott, 1991) which are governed by intervening at “leverage points” (Meadows, 1999) in order to direct the process of their development. In other words, our perspective of ‘governed emergence’ is somewhere between the traditional planning view on strategic management and those theories that see organisational development as the result of autopoiesis (Bakken and Hernes, 2003, Brandhoff, 2009, Letiche, 2000, Seidl and Becker, 2006, Stacey, 2000, Stacey et al., 2000) with rather little emphasis on the influence of individual managers and their vision - however blurred - of an outcome.

In his very interesting outline of the importance of process philosophy for the understanding of strategic management, Styhre (2002) sees process as ‘turning-into-something’, which of course requires us to re-conceptualise the notion of strategy itself. It is here that the notion of the strategist as a ‘*bricoleur*’, on which we will elaborate further down, becomes helpful. We decided to approach our case as a ‘process narrative’ (Van de Ven and Poole, 1995), looking at a sequence of events in which a structure – in this case, an initially rather loosely defined and fairly unclear movie project - unfolds.

It is important here to stress that this is not about improvisation as a (short-term) deviation from an existing plan (as e.g. described in Leybourne (2006) or Miner et al (2001a)). What we see in Coppola’s work is not some sort of (partial) deviation from, or amendment to, an existing plan or procedure. Instead, we are witnessing the very process of creation itself, which does contain, within it, some degree of improvisation to deal with e.g. financial and time constraints, opposition from the studio, etc. But these instances of improvisation happen within, and subordinate to, the larger context of a creative process that works from the bottom up, creating something that is only emerging through the process of creation itself.

We hope to make this clear by our discussion on the content. We then focus on the key

capabilities, or processes, used by Coppola, that depended upon *bricolage* - These are: network *bricolage*; improvisation and *bricolage*; and capability acquisition by *bricolage*. These are not the only capabilities he displayed. Many of his other competences such as his acute sense of timing, his ability to manage difficult co-workers, and his negotiating skills were critical to the strategising process, but they are outside the scope of this paper.

We would like to suggest that Coppola is very much a *bricoleur* in the sense of Duymedjian and Rüling (2010) who describe the archetype of the *bricoleur* in organisation management. taking up a concept originally described by the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1962). Several features of the *bricoleur* are found in Coppola's way of creating – or rather, crafting - his movie production. These are:

- his work is a flowing process, more a dialogue with the external world than a single-minded following of a pre-established plan;
- he relies on a 'stock' of tools and resources and a 'repertoire' of techniques, which he then creatively combines and uses to improvise;
- the film is the result of vision as much as improvisation and crafty use of the 'stock' and 'repertoire'.

Much of his stock and repertoire is human. As a *bricoleur*, his view on things is slightly idiosyncratic, which brings him into tensions with other stakeholders in the project (notably the studio). Also, as a typical *bricoleur*, Coppola makes use of 'resources' and 'repertoires' he has at hand.

But in contrast to the *bricoleur* described by Duymedjian and Rüling (2010), Coppola is an entrepreneurial and visionary *bricoleur*. His *bricolage* is the result of an individual effort (this is much closer to Lévi-Strauss' original concept than the more collective view Duymedjian

and Riling take, maybe as a result of the contemporary *Zeitgeist* which tends to celebrate the collective - the “team”- over than the individual. But Coppola’s effort is entrepreneurial and visionary, and in that it is first and foremost solitary. The vision is his, and it is at first difficult to convey to other stakeholders. He follows it, improvising with resources at hand, and compromising with given constraints (eg.finances and time limits).

THE CONTEXT OF *THE GODFATHER*

The History of the Project

In the early 1970s Hollywood was in crisis: few films released made money (Lewis, 2000, p.23). Production costs were out of control with huge amounts invested in epic movies with little public appeal. *The Godfather* came at a time when Hollywood had become ‘a bounteous poultry yard for ten-ton turkeys’(Caves, 2000, p.138). In 1968, Paramount Studios, part of the Gulf and Western conglomerate, had bought the script of Mario Puzo’s then little-known novel ‘*The Godfather*’ (1969). It was seen as a low budget project of no great merit. The culture of Paramount at the time has been described as ‘powerful and repressive’ (Browne, 2000, p.11).

At about the same time, Francis Ford Coppola’s independent film production company, American Zeotrope, failed leaving Coppola with personal debts of \$600,000. Paramount approached Coppola, only after other directors had turned it down, seeing the script as a story which glorified crime and having a ‘potentially incendiary ethnic character’ (Lewis, 2000, p.27). Coppola, whom Browne describes as ‘an independent genius’, (2000, p.11) initially dismissed the script as ‘a hunk of trash’, but agreed to manage the project for financial reasons. Nevertheless, as Coppola read the script another story began to emerge; that of a father possessed of three key gifts: cunning, ruthlessness and kindness. He has three sons,

each of whom has only one of these qualities – but not the other two. For Coppola *The Godfather* is about the problems of succession and leadership at a time of change, and a metaphor for American capitalism. He re-writes Puzo's initial script to reflect these themes. Further, Paramount's plan had been to set the movie in the 1970s, in Kansas City. Coppola's vision for the movie required that the story be set in New York immediately after the Second World War, with matching locations, sets, wardrobe, cinematographic equipment, fittings, music, and casting. The movie's budget was increased from two to six million dollars, precipitating a series of bitter rows between Paramount and Coppola, and ensuring that cost control of the project was a central issue for Paramount.

A further issue between them was Coppola's choice of Marlon Brando and Al Pacino in the key roles. Initially Paramount rejected both, preferring stars with known box-office appeal, and who, unlike Brando, would have been easy to manage. Shooting was delayed whilst the arguments are concluded. Coppola prevailed, but at a cost. Paramount lost confidence in him, responding in two ways: by increasing close supervision of Coppola on set, and by seeking to replace him. For much of the shooting Coppola was working in fear of immediate dismissal, and with a technical crew who had little confidence in his abilities. His problems were compounded by the eccentric behavior on the set of key actors.

Another problem was managing the growing interest taken by front organisations for the Mafia in the production of the film, with lobbying, demonstrations and public meetings taking place. Paramount's settlement with them included script changes and acceptance of Mafia members for non-speaking parts. Arguments continued between Coppola and Paramount post-production with disputes about the length and content of the film. One result of these events was bitter personal enmities between Coppola and members of Paramount management.

The Nobody Knows Property

The film industry has its own institutional features, embedded in its economics and in its labour and product markets, which shape and constrain its own strategies (Caves, 2000). One of the most important of these is, in William Goldman's throwaway line, that 'nobody knows anything' (Goldman, 1983). Whether measured by box-office takings or profits, successes in film-making cannot be predicted (Pokorny and Sedgwick, 2009, De Vany and Walls, 2004, Walls, 2005). The film is an experience good. Consumers' satisfaction is a subjective process which cannot be determined in advance. Some studies have attempted to explain the strategies contributing to success in the movie industry (Pokorny and Sedgwick, 2009, Shamsie et al., 2009), but these analyses are retrospective. Patterns of success may be discerned in the industry's financial history, but at the time of the movie's realisation then 'nobody knows'. One effect of the nobody knows property is to generate uncertainty at all levels, but especially between the client (the studio) and the project manager (the director). Since neither can define the success or failure, the management of the project and its final outcome is liable to be contested.

Art for Art's Sake

Members of the film crew (actors, directors, photographers, designers, make-up, writers, etc.) care about the quality of the product (Caves, 2000). They are concerned to show originality, creativity, finesse, technical excellence and faithful rendition features which may not be valued by the customer, and which will all cost money. The human characteristics which elicit the production of these features are imagination and passion. These can make the artist of whatever hue a difficult person with whom to reach compromises, technical or social. The art for art sake's property (Caves, 2000, p.4) has a number of consequences. Artists can be difficult to integrate into a team; similarly they can be reluctant to appreciate the cost

implications of their actions. To the extent to which the artist considers that their imagination and passion should be given free rein, and that they have the power to force that view, then they can be difficult for the director to manage.

The Motley Crew

The film production team is a motley crew (Caves, 2000, p.4). Examination of the credits list shown at the end of any modern movie shows the huge range of specialist functionaries and technicians which need to be integrated when making a modern movie. Many of these personnel are imbued with the notion of art for arts' sake, rooted in different skills and aesthetics, with conflicting priorities and preferences brought to the director for co-ordination (Caves, 2000, p.5). Yet for the film to succeed all these inputs have to function in synchronisation and in a mutually supportive manner.

The O-Ring Theory of Production

Movie making is a multiplicative production function where every input must function to a minimum level of efficiency if a good movie is to be produced. This is the O-ring theory of production, called after the failure of an O-ring which caused the Challenger disaster in 1986 (Kremer, 1993). A complex project costing millions of dollars failed, killing seven astronauts, because of a malfunctioning in a part costing a few dollars. As Caves notes the need for an acceptable level of performance for all employees has implications for selecting and managing team members (2000, p.6)

Coppola's Vision for the Movie

Coppola was initially unimpressed with Puzo's script, but saw within it the seeds a drama about the problems of succession in a family firm at a time of change. Part of his vision was a concern for accuracy. The film had to be set in New York and Sicily in 1945 and the actors,

locations, costumes, set design, equipment (houses and cars) and sound had to convey this sense of time, place and ambiance. This is Coppola's expression of art for art's sake and as director, or project manager, it falls on him to make this vision. We conceive of its manufacture as the production of aesthetics – the sense of light, colour, appearance, touch, acoustics, the spoken word, feel – to be conveyed to the customer (Garvin, 1988). Of course much of this comes with a price-tag which involves Coppola in a series of battles with Paramount over casting, music and locations. He eventually secures an increase in budget to \$6 million, but this notwithstanding the film has to be made in a resource penurious context.

METHODOLOGY

A full transcription was made of Coppola's audio-commentary on the making of *The Godfather* included on the referenced DVD (Coppola, 2007). This produced a script of some 19,000 words which was then coded for items of interest using Nvivo8. Over the years Coppola has given a number of other accounts of the making of the film and these were consulted, as were relevant secondary sources on the making of the movie and of the film industry.

Reliability was attempted through triangulation by data source (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Coppola's account is by and large supported by the secondary sources with the exception of two items. The first relates to the Mafia's attempts to influence the making of the movie. Mafia intervention succeeded in minor script alterations (Lewis, 2000, p.32). On this matter Coppola is silent, consequently his account may understate the amount of external pressure he was under whilst making the film.

The second relates to an argument between Coppola and Evans, Paramount's Head of Production as to which of them was actually responsible for the finished version. According to Lewis (1997) throughout the production Evans posed a series of challenges to Coppola's

control of the picture on casting choices, lighting, length, but when its success became clear Evans was happy to take the credit. Independent opinion seems to favour Coppola. According to Albert Ruddy (the film's first-line producer employed by Paramount) it was Coppola who was responsible. "But the final cut was Francis's cut – frame ... for frame" (Lebo, 1997, p.198).

PRESENTATION OF DATA

A content analysis of Coppola's account revealed 186 pieces of relevant data in 34 codes. On first inspection there appeared to be little overall pattern but when certain codes are combined into meta-categories, a clearer picture presents itself. This is shown on Table 1: Content Analysis by Meta-Categories of Coppola's Commentary on the Making of *The Godfather*

Insert Table 1 here

As can be seen his account is dominated by human resource acquisition, his own human resource development capabilities, his other capabilities and resource management. These four meta-categories account for fifty-five per cent of the coded data. Within these four meta-categories there were two types of strategising, behaviour. These were those behaviours:

- Which were to some extent dependent on *bricolage* in the Lévi-Strauss (1962) sense of the word; These can be categorised as network *bricolage*, improvisation through *bricolage*, human resource acquisition with *bricolage* in mind; *bricolage* as capability acquisition and the re-cycling and borrowing of physical resources and ideas.
- Concerned with the display of personal competences. These include: building affective relationships, managing difficult co-workers, recognition of fellow workers,

industry specific knowledge, dispute resolution, timing, and managing his own sense of insecurity.

We now turn to a discussion of his activities as a *bricoleur*.

NETWORK BRICOLAGE

Coppola's account is noteworthy for its numerous (n = 18) references to the use of family and friends. He knows and is friendly with most of the actors, having worked with them on other projects. His life-long friend, George Lucas, is employed as film editor. His father is the music director for the movie, composing and conducting the scores. His sister Talia has a role as Connie, the daughter of Don Corleone, and numerous Coppola children have parts as extras. As well as free labour they are frequently a source of ideas. In *The Godfather 3* he gives an important role to Sophia, his sister. It is known from other accounts of Coppola's work that he has used his family on other projects, for example on *Apocalypse Now* (Alvarez et al., 2004).

There were two reasons he included his family. The first is that his family was important to him and by engaging them in the shooting of the film, and then this would help his family to bond. The making of a movie afforded an opportunity for a summer school camp for the family.

“When I was going away on location for more than a week or two, I would just pull the kids out of school and take the family. I think it's very hard to encourage kids and have that relationship with them if you're off on business trips, making movies. So if you enjoy all these activities as a creative family, everyone will have a field they're good at and some confidence to pursue it.” (Beard, 2011).

A second reason was that some women of his family were interested in a career in film at a time when it was much harder for them gain a foothold on the career ladder. He used his

position as Director to sponsor them. So in this case the *bricoleur* is using the project to support his family, a reminder that for the *bricoleur* the boundaries between work and non-work roles are both blurred and permeable (Baker and Nelson, 2005, p.348). Finally *bricoleurs* routinely test conventional limitations – in this case about traditional assumptions about the boundary between work and non-work (Baker and Nelson, 2005, p.335).

IMPROVISATION AS *BRICOLAGE*

Not all improvisation is *bricolage*, but there are numerous examples of Coppola and his crew improvising their way out of problem, or taking advantage of opportunities, by *bricolage*. We define improvisation as ‘the degree to which composition and execution converge in time’ (Miner et al., 2001b, p.305, Moorman and Miner, 1998, p.698). Details of some key examples are given on Table 2: Improvisation and *Bricolage* in *The Godfather*.

Insert Table 2 here

The scene with the cat is an exception, because it is not forced by a problem; Coppola is taking advantage of an opportunity. Yet in the remaining three of these scenes Coppola can be seen as having to manage problems embedded in a constellation of contextual factors such as art for art’s sake, the motley crew, the O-ring theory of production, and processual considerations such as managing difficult actors and co-workers. Here we can see that Coppola is engaging in an interactive and re-iterative way to realise his vision, within limitations which have forced him to abandon whatever pre-conceived plans he had. He has to learn by trial and error, by improvising, which forces *bricolage* since the resources needed by Coppola – a memory for Montana, knowledge of Italian for Pacino, and acted terror from

the child – cannot be acquired on the spot. By means of a *bricolage*, making the best of what there is to hand, he solves these problems of resource parsimony. Yet what is remarkable here is that the improvisation process turns actors' deficiencies into strengths.

This incident demonstrates that improvisation is not an inferior way of strategising. Improvised scenes such as these made by *bricolage* produce resources which are valuable, rare, very difficult to imitate, and which depend upon some extremely complex intangible linkages, one of which is Coppola's sense of intuition. These scenes, and the competence to make them, would appear to satisfy the tests for competitive capability (Barney, 1991). The findings in this case support the growing body of evidence which suggests the capacity to manage improvisation (whether by means of *bricolage* or not) is a key strategic capability, notably in resource-hungry environments - see for example Radjou et al. (2012, pp.100-105).

HUMAN RESOURCE ACQUISITION AND BRICOLAGE

Bricolage starts with *bricoleur's* access to resources. So whilst recruitment is not necessarily part of the *bricoleur's* repertoire, the human resources that can be acquired as stock will influence the quality of work whether it is made by *bricolage* or not. Coppola is well aware of this. It is clear that for Coppola recruitment is the key HRM task. For him, it is 'the head of the river' from which everything else flows (Farkas and Wetlaufer, 1996, p.116). He wishes to work with people with whom he can co-create. We define co-creation as "the process by which repeated and iterative interaction between individuals and/or organisations significantly or exclusively contribute to shaping the emergence and/or final shape of a product, or a social phenomenon such as institutions, concepts, or ideas". Co-creation elicits a search for *co-bricoleurs*. This can be seen in his comments on why he likes working with Italian actors:

"I really loved working with the Italian actors. ... They worked in a way very different from

what I was used to with American actors. American actors, you suffer with them on the way to the performance, whereas the Italian actors always came with something already worked out. If you don't like what they have worked out, then they'll work out something else.” (Coppola, 2007; 01:58:25).

One of his *co-bricoleurs* is Brando. It is Brando who defines the physical appearance of Don Corleone, the Godfather, through a process of *bricolage*. Here Coppola talks about Brando's first screen test:

“He must have been 47 and in a Japanese robe, he looked very impressive. I looked at him with his ponytail and said, ‘My God, how is he ever going to play a Mafia chieftain?’ It was funny. I hardly talked. I gestured and indicated that I had a camera. No-one spoke, it was totally silent. He walked on and put on a jacket and started mumbling. He went through a great effort to bend the tip of his collar. He said something like, ‘Those Italian guys always have the collar bent like that.’ He picked up a cigar and started to gesture with it and used it as a prop, and he nibbled a little bit of provolone cheese. And he just started to gesture. He rolled up the ponytail and he pinned it up and he took some shoe-polish and he darkened it. While he is doing this we are photographing him. The phone rang while he was doing this; he picked up the phone, and without talking, he started going (imitates Godfather's voice) and I always wondered what the person on the other line must have thought. Then he took some tissue paper and he said, ‘He should have the face of a bull-dog’ and he stuffed the tissue-paper in his jaw. Then he said, ‘If he is shot in the throat, he ought to talk like that a little bit.’ There really was a transformation of this nice-looking young man with a blonde pony-tail into this Mafia guy.”(Coppola, 2007; 01:31:50).

Coppola's quest for actors who were the believable Italian-Americans for which he was searching extended to the minor roles. There are elements of the *bricoleur* in how Coppola

recruited these. He looked outside the established system of using agents to recruit, relying instead on ‘open calls’ and casual recruitment. Open calls are audition sessions, during which anyone can present themselves for an audition. Non-actors such as taxi-drivers were recruited casually. All were recruited because they had the right appearance. The use of open calls and casual recruitment can be construed as a form of *bricolage*, as his rummaging in a treasury of heterogeneous resources which can contribute to the definition of the set which is his vision as yet incompletely formed, but conceptually formed (Lévi-Strauss, 1962, p.18).

BRICOLAGE AS CAPABILITY ACQUISITION

We define capabilities as the physical, human and financial resources and competences necessary to produce the film. Again, there are numerous examples of Coppola using *bricolage* to acquire the capabilities he needed. These are listed on Table 3: Examples of *Bricolage as Capability Acquisition in the Making of *The Godfather**.

Insert Table 3 here

The incidents presented in Table 3 are an eclectic collection of capabilities acquired by rummaging around, chance encounter, memory, serendipity and through networks. It can be said that in at least one case whilst *bricolage* solved one problem, it created others thus emphasising the processual nature of strategising. His decision to use what was by the standards of the day antiquated photographic equipment to more fully capture the feel of the 1940s gangster movie was one element in a troubled relationship with Gordon Wills, the main camera-man, and the second-most powerful person in the film-crew. This and the other

demands Coppola was making on his camera-man (dim interior lighting, dark coloured sets, intricate shots demanding up to 50 camera settings) were all ingredients in a very troubled relationship with Willis, by common consent the best cameraman of his generation. As Schumacher notes ‘Willis would grow impatient with Coppola’s tendency to think more like an artiste than a technician.’ (1999, p.113). Managing Willis demanded considerable skills of co-creation on Coppola’s part.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Several features of the *bricoleur* are found in Coppola’s way of creating – or rather, crafting - his movie production. These are:

- he relies on a ‘stock’ of tools and resources and a ‘repertoire’ of techniques to hand, which he then creatively combines and uses to improvise;
- that the film is partly the result of improvisation and crafty use of the ‘stock’ and ‘repertoire’;
- his *bricolage* embraces social phenomena such as networks.

Much of his stock and repertoire is human. As a *bricoleur*, his view on things is slightly idiosyncratic, eg. his wish to include a cookery recipe in the film . Our study draws attention to the importance of network *bricolage* and supports the findings in of other researchers (Baker et al., 2003, Baker and Nelson, 2005) who have stated that in resource penurious times these networks are the main means by which the *bricoleur* finds resources for the firm.

His dependence on networks of friends and relatives raises an interesting question – does *bricolage* support creativity and innovation in unanticipated ways? To the extent to which network and other forms of *bricolage* lessen the *bricoleur’s* dependence on an external environment dominated by what are in some respects, hostile institutions such as the studio.

As Lévi-Strauss notes, it is the *bricoleur* who operates in a closed universe, who sets the rules of his game, working with what is to hand, with resources he controls. On the other hand it is the engineer who is subordinate to the project, and by implication, those who manage and own it together with the raw material and tools the engineer needs (1962, p.17).

From this point of view, Coppola's *bricolage* can be regarded as a form of loose coupling (Weick, 1976, March and Olsen, 1976) which buffers him against the worst excesses of a corrosive, repressive and "gross and agent-driven, mass production Hollywood studio system" (Alvarez et al., 2004, p.337), inimical for the type of creative and innovative work he realised in *The Godfather*. Whatever the other limitations of open call and casual recruitment, they did at least de-couple Coppola from one of Hollywood's formal control systems, in the form of the agent. Similarly, improvisation lessens his dependence on studio controlled resources which, in any case, are not forthcoming. The studio here is part of the *bricoleur's* problem rather than part of the engineer's solution. In his attempts to build *bricolage* capabilities it is noteworthy how many of these capabilities are independent of the studio or, like the old cameras and the studio cat, simply not valued by them. Another way of viewing the same phenomenon is that of uncertainty reduction (Luhmann, 2001). Coppola can be construed as using *bricolage* in all its forms as an attempt to mark off his activities with the film crew, from those outside in an attempt to reduce uncertainty.

The case begs the question of the extent to which Coppola's strategy for directing *The Godfather* could be replicated. The answer is almost certainly not. Much of his *bricolage* depends upon his sense of intuition. This is highly personal and specific to time, place and the people involved. His *bricoleur's* intuition provides an intangible linkage between many resources – financial, human and physical. In this sense, when it works *bricolage* is an invaluable strategic competence.

NOTES

¹ The six figures suffixed to the 2007 Coppola reference relate to the hour, time and minute of the running time where the quotation can be accessed. Thus 01:58:25 means that it can be found after at one hour, fifty-eight minutes and twenty-five seconds of elapsed play. It should be noted that these times are those noted when the software used to play the DVD is VLC Media Player. Other DVD readers give slightly different readings.

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**TABLE 1 : CONTENT ANALYSIS BY META-CATEGORIES OF COPPOLA'S
COMMENTARY ON THE MAKING OF *THE GODFATHER 1***

META CATEGORY	FREQUENCY COUNT	% OF TOTAL
<p>HR ACQUISITION (all the recruitment codes, use of family and friends and managing diversity)</p>	33	18%
<p>COPPOLA'S HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT CAPABILITIES (Managing difficult co-workers, improvisation, acts of co-creation, building affective relationships, managing creativity, recognition of fellow workers)</p>	36	19%
<p>HIS OTHER PERSONAL CAPABILITIES (sense of timing, acquiring free resources, resource recycling, knowledge of industry recipe, evidencing, borrowing ideas, resource making)</p>	19	10%
<p>RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (resource shortage, complementarity and purchase and making special effects)</p>	14	8%
<p>CLIENT MANAGEMENT (Disputes with the studio, and dispute resolution with the studio)</p>	23	12%
<p>COPPOLA'S PERSONAL INSECURITIES (The project leader's personal insecurities, his credibility, Coppola's perceptions of quality of</p>	29	16%

the project)		
<p style="text-align: center;">TIME</p> <p>(Rising popularity of the book and resources:time pressure)</p>	2	1%
<p style="text-align: center;">CONTEXTUAL FACTORS</p> <p>(The o-ring theory of production, vision as the management of aesthetics)</p>	30	16%

TABLE 2: Selected Examples of Improvisation as Bricolage in *The Godfather*

Description of Problem	Improvising Action	Reference	Coppola's Comments
None. Coppola takes advantage of presence of Paramount Studio cat	Coppola hands the cat to Brando for him to use on set. He knows Brando likes cats.	00:03:54	"Not at all planned, just a random idea."
Lenny Montana (Luca Brasi) cannot remember his lines in a scene with Brando, who is intent on making life difficult for Montana.	Make his inability to articulate part of the story. Insert a prior scene to establish Montana's lack of verbal coherence.	00:13:07- 00:14:27	"Just an example of taking advantage of the accidents and the problems that you have, of an actor not being able to get through his scene."
The Sicilian sequence: Al Pacino cannot speak Italian. Coppola wishes to avoid a screen cluttered with sub-titles.	Pacino's bodyguards translate for him. The iteration underlines the growing regal stature of Michael Corleone (Pacino).	01:36:25	"And so, at the last minute, I just hit upon the idea that Al would speak in English and that Angelo would translate for him".
(The Godfather) Brando has to make his screen grandson cry and run away. The boy refuses to co-operate. The time allocated for the shooting of the scene was limited by the studio.	Brando carves and wears a set of monster teeth from an orange in order to terrify the child.	02:24:34	"Marlon had this idea. He said 'I do this with my kids.' He carved these little teeth out of orange peel, and put it in his mouth and made himself a monster. You could see the little boy was

			really frightened. We just got lucky, really, and because of Marlon's ingenuity.”
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Table 3: Examples of *Bricolage* as Capability Acquisition in the Making of The Godfather.

Capability Acquired	Source of Capability	Coppola's Comments and Reference
The look and feel of a 1940s Hollywood gangster movie.	Paramount's back-lot. Coppola finds and uses the cameras used in shooting gangster movies made in that era.	(Schumacher, 1999, p.113)
Realistic representation: special effects.	Nature as a source of free resources.	"I remember the night we shot this, it was really starting to storm, and we were worried whether or not we could even get it because the power was going to be blown out and the wind was so high. I love to shoot in weather. I'm always ... when they tell me there's going to be a huge storm or a typhoon, I always say, 'Well, let's shoot', you know, because that's like special effects for free, and scenes always play very well if they are set in weather or rain. I've been doing that all my career." (00:48:27)
Realistic representation: how gangsters cook.	Mario Puzo, the script-writer	"I wanted to get an entire recipe in here so people could learn how to make tomato sauce. So in my script, the line was Clemenza says, 'Well, first you put in the olive oil, some

		<p>garlic and then you brown some sausage.”</p> <p>When the script came back to me, Mario had crossed out the line, ‘Brown some sausage’, and said, ‘Then you fry some sausage. He said, ‘Gangsters don’t brown - gangsters fry.’”</p> <p>(00:57:05)</p>
<p>Realistic representation: the assassination of Sonny (James Caan) at the toll-booth.</p>	<p>The movie ‘Bonnie and Clyde’ directed by Arthur Penn.</p>	<p>“It’s no secret that this scene was really inspired by Arthur Penn and his wonderful movie <i>Bonnie and Clyde</i> when Bonnie and Clyde are killed. I’m a big admirer of Arthur Penn. As my dad used to say, ‘Steal from the best””(01:52:22)</p>
<p>Creation of a sense of fear.</p> <p>In editing the scenes shot in the hospital where the Godfather is recovering, Coppola realises that the scenes lack tension. He cannot return to the location for more shots. The problem is solved by re-cycling scrap.</p>	<p>George Lucas, Coppola’s friend and employed on the production as a film editor.</p>	<p>“... in building the suspense I wished that I had some shots of empty corridors so I could play the sound of footsteps coming and build the suspense. But I was so rushed and so frightened of not getting the scene in time that I ... just did not shoot any shots of just the empty corridors. George Lucas went through the footage, and he said, ‘To build suspense, you’ve got to have some empty corridors.’</p> <p>We looked through all of the shots, and after I had said ‘cut’, there would be maybe just a few feet of empty corridor, and we took those”</p> <p>00:59:12</p>

