

The Heresthetic of Local Government Amalgamation: The Saliency of Dimension

The study of heresthetic is a quest to explain how potential political losers might become winners. Local Government amalgamation is invariably a controversial and hotly contested political decision. It thus represents the ideal context to locate a pedagogical discussion regarding how control of dimensions can lead to political success. Specifically, we examine two common dimensions through which amalgamation debate is prosecuted: efficiency (optimizing the ratio of inputs to outputs) and scale (which can be defined according to a number of parameters but which is instead generally discussed in terms of its asserted attributes such as capacity to deliver major infrastructure and integrated strategic planning, improved quality of leadership, and enhanced regional advocacy) from the perspective of the heresthetic value to proponents of amalgamation. Moreover, we discuss how revised conceptions of the Principle of Dominance and Principle of Dispersion can guide the heresthetician in the struggle to win hearts and minds during political contest. We conclude that timing and careful control of dimensions can marginalize empirical contest and neutralise some 'identity' heresthetic foils and thus contribute significantly to successful prosecution of the case for local government amalgamation.

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Introduction

Heresthetic is the art of exploiting latent attitudes of an audience in such a way that potential losers might become winners (Riker, 1986). It differs fundamentally from rhetoric which is ‘the faculty of defining in any given case the available means of persuasion’ (Aristotle, 2012, p. 8). That is, the heresthetician manipulates along existing tastes and preferences – often by re-casting the debate in terms of alternate salient dimensions – rather than trying to change tastes and preferences. Indeed, the etymology of Riker’s (1986, 1996) neologism is most instructive: heresthetic is derived from the classical Greek *haireomai* which means ‘to choose... a self willed opinion... which is substituted for the submission to the power of truth, and leads to division and formation of sects’ (Vine, 1940). The root word is recognisable in our English term ‘heresy’ which likewise denotes an opinion contrary to that which is commonly held. Thus, a person practising heresthetic seeks to struggle against a widely held position by dividing and forming sects out of what might otherwise be a dominant and homogenous group.

Like all arts, heresthetic requires practice in order for one to become a ‘master’. However, opportunities for deploying heresthetic maneuvers are generally limited to political leaders – and the opportunities for political leadership are relatively scant. Therefore, the ‘vicarious experience of instruction’ takes on particular importance for the aspiring heresthetician (Riker, 1986, p. ix). This pedagogical endeavor generally starts by identifying a surprising political result, then using this context to explicate on the strategic contribution of the heresthetician (McLean, 2002).

We, however, would like to introduce an innovation to this oft trod pedagogical path: Specifically we would like to show how a heresthetician might have turned an almost certain public policy loss into a win. The public policy we have chosen is local government amalgamation which is a reform ‘almost certain to engender community angst’ (Drew and Grant, 2017a, p. 37). The heresthetic maneuver we wish to demonstrate is manipulation of dimensions (ways of thinking about a political issue which tap into discrete preferences and tastes). To do so, we focus on two of the principal dimensions by which local government amalgamation have been ‘sold’¹: efficiency (which is defined by economists as the ratio of inputs to outputs – but which is more often used to convey service cost reductions) and scale (a concept which includes size dependent aspects, such as a councils capacity to undertake delivery of major infrastructure and regional planning, ability to partner and advocate with higher tiers of government, strengthening of regional identities and depth of resources to cope with unexpected shocks). We contend that the former concept is empirically contestable (that is, open to rhetorical challenge) and

¹We acknowledge that other dimensions exist – however, our concern is with the two dimensions most commonly employed to sell amalgamation in the Antipodes. Examining just two dimensions allows us to compare and contrast the benefits and drawbacks of each, which is consistent with our pedagogical endeavour. The lessons we deduce regarding the factors which makes one dimension more desirable than another, can be applied beyond the pair of exemplars.

amenable to precise definition, whilst the latter largely defies quantification or strict specification. This has important implications for the heresthetician who must struggle against what appears to be, in the Antipodes at least, a dominant preference against the proposition of local government amalgamation (Drew and Grant 2017b). To achieve this goal, the heresthetician must divide what is *prima facie* a homogenous group of amalgamation sceptics by introducing new dimensions which speak to latent attitudes and tastes.

Apart from our unusual step of basing our instruction on an event which cannot be described as either a public policy ‘success’ nor a political ‘surprise’, we also innovate by adapting from Riker’s (1996) work on *The Strategy of Rhetoric* – to develop a model which explains the (somewhat iterative) decisions facing the heresthetician seeking to manipulate on dimensions. This development of a ‘dimension heuristic’ is consistent with our pedagogical intent. That is, the purpose of our work is to demonstrate what could be done in order to enhance the chances of success for future proponents of local government amalgamations, not merely to dissect a historical event. In this regard, it is important to note that one of the big challenges facing any proponent of local government amalgamations is that the ‘winners’ from this public policy struggle are likely to experience very small gains which are dispersed among many, whilst the ‘losers’ are likely to experience a profound ‘loss’ and are concentrated and thus more easily mobilized for advocacy regarding their position. It is therefore imperative for architects of local government amalgamations to have a good understanding of heresthetic if they are to stand any chance of successfully ‘selling’ the said reforms.

We are aware that our choice of context for explicating on dimension heresthetic could be accused of selectivity and synecdoche. Should this criticism be levelled at us, our reply would be consistent with that of Riker (1986, p. 64) – of course we have selected the events and a subset of the facts which we deem most suitable for supporting our lesson. This is a pedagogical piece, and like all teachers of merit we have selected events which best illustrate the lesson which we have to offer.

The balance of this journal article is organised as follows. First we review the literature on heresthetic with a particular emphasis on the control of dimensions. We also outline some of the criticisms of the work, and propose a reformulation of Riker’s (1996) work on the dynamics of rhetoric in order to explicate on a decision making tool for prospective herestheticians. Next we review the dimensions of ‘efficiency’ and ‘scale’ with a view to emphasizing the utility of each for a heresthetician seeking to win in a struggle for amalgamation. In so doing, we will draw on the largely unsuccessful local government amalgamations in New South Wales (NSW) Australia for contextual purposes only. Following this, we will enumerate on the measures which aspiring local government reformers in other jurisdictions would do well to observe. We conclude with some observations on the importance of our pedagogical narrative, not just for aspiring herestheticians, but also for the institutions and individuals which they seek to manipulate.

2. Dimension Heresthetic

It is important to note early on that heresthetic is about rational choice, not moral choice. Unlike its cousin rhetoric, heresthetic does not *rely* on the *ethos* – indeed, Riker notes that devious means will sometimes be employed in order to execute a win but observes that ‘however, much some may condemn the..... heresthetic, extraordinary cleverness deserves some reward’ (Riker, 1986, p. 76). Unencumbered by any pretense at teaching or exhibiting virtue the heresthetician has a wide range of manipulations at their disposal; which Riker (1986) organises according to three categories: agenda control, voting, and dimension control. We agree with McLean (2002, p. 555) that ‘historians, politicians and political scientists have always known that log-rolling and agenda manipulation go on’, thus suggesting that the third category – dimension manipulation – might prove to be the most interesting and most fruitful avenue for pedagogical purposes. Indeed, Nagel 1993 (p. 157) notes that ‘the preferred, most frequently attempted heresthetical device is manipulation of dimensions, by which he [Riker] usually means the introduction of a new dimension in order to upset the equilibrium’.

A dimension is a discrete way of looking at a particular matter. For instance, Feiock et al. (2006, p. 275) discuss dimension control relating to local government amalgamation, noting instances of debates framed in terms of ‘vague notions of economy and efficiency’, racial divisions (and the voice of minority groups), and economic development. Each dimension is likely to resonate with different groups: efficiency might prove popular with local government taxpayers who struggle to pay imposts, minority voice dimensions will appeal to minorities and many on the political left, whilst economic development will hold particular interest for business owners and perhaps the unemployed. The ‘art’ in heresthetic is to push and probe until a dimension is found that resonates with a sufficient number of auditors such that the heresthetician might win (see, ‘the dynamics of dimension heresthetics’ below). What is important to understand is that ‘heresthetic in its pure form takes preferences as fixed’ – what the skillful heresthetician seeks to do is to re-frame the issue in such a way that latent preferences are brought to mind which accord with the heresthetician’s goal. Moreover, in so doing, the master heresthetician – unencumbered by moral considerations as noted above – may well select dimensions which mask socially unpalatable objectives (an example of this might be a stated concern for minority voices, when it is known that the said minorities are closely aligned to a particular political party – that is, protecting ‘minority voices’ sounds far more admirable than ‘constructing a gerrymander’; Clingermayer, 2004)!

Four important considerations seem to apply to the deployment of dimension heresthetic. First, it is important to be cognizant of the fact that ‘ordinarily a single human being can simultaneously only evaluate a few issues and alternatives’ (the well-known magic 72 from educational psychology). This implies that herestheticians might be able to crowd out ‘unhelpful’ dimensions, but must do so with care lest a volley of new dimensions is perceived as mere background noise.

Second, timing is everything to the heresthetician: political debates and community attitudes do not remain static. As a consequence (of both shifting attitudes and the need to control the number of dimensions in auditor's minds) 'ploys have to be quickly developed and, if they fail, abandoned' (Taylor, 2005, p. 451). Third, sometimes the way in which a dimension is introduced may prove crucial. Riker (1986, p. 66) relates an example of a 'camouflaged gerrymander' being introduced by a 'non-political friend' launching a legal challenge in a federal court. The point of the story is that the nominal 'independence' of the party introducing the dimension may prove decisive in how the media reports on the dimension – they may well suspect a political maneuver, but in the absence of credible evidence may be obliged to report the introduction of a new dimension in neutral terms (Riker, 1986). Fourth, in order to fully understand political campaigns it is important not to discount rhetoric (persuasion) entirely – certainly heresthetic alone may win the day in any given struggle, but equally certainly there are instances where rhetorical persuasion might be employed to blunt or negate an otherwise compelling dimension (Riker, 1996).

The Dynamics of Dimension Heresthetics

In his last work (published posthumously) Riker (1996) sought to describe the dynamic evolution of rhetoric. Specifically Riker (1996, p. 7) noted that:

'when one side dominates in the volume of rhetorical appeals on a particular theme, the other side abandons appeals on that theme (the Dominance Principle) and when neither side dominates in volume both sides abandon it (the Dispersion Principle)²'

This is based on an assessment by Riker (1996) that rhetoricians are rational and will therefore abandon efforts at persuasion if the efforts do not yield benefits in excess of the opportunity costs (that is, the loss of 'air time' to argue on more fruitful matters). The framework was condemned as internally flawed with McLean (2002, p. 544) noting that 'if both of these principles applied fully, then in equilibrium the two sides would totally talk past one another'. We also agree that the two principles are not a particularly helpful way of describing the dynamics of *rhetoric*: In particular the emphasis on volume appears to be a result of Riker's (1996) concern for empirical legitimization (which he attempts later in Chapter 8 of his book), given that penetration is clearly a more important metric notwithstanding the difficulty in quantifying same. However, the Principles may perhaps provide a good foundation for describing a heuristic for *dimension* herestheticians (where a 'win' is desired, not an equilibrium state).

A heuristic for heresthetical decision making might take the following form:

²Notably, whilst Riker (1996, p. 7) frames the Principles in terms of 'themes' and 'volume' early on in his book, later formulations refer to 'issues', 'dimensions' and 'advantage'. Somewhat ironically, this imprecise rhetoric conflates and confounds explanations and thus obscures the insight of his core idea.

1. If the dimension appealed to by one side dominates, then they should seek to ‘fix’ the dimensionality. By way of contrast, an opposing *heresthetician* should not seek to invoke the same dimension, but rather probe for an alternate dimension which resonates more strongly with the audience (adaption of Dominance Principle).
2. If the dimensions appealed to by either side fails to resonate with a clear majority of the audience, then they should drop the dimension and probe for a dimension which does resonate with a majority, or alternatively probe for a dimension which is complementary in nature and therefore might be summed to the original dimension in such a way that a clear majority preference is elicited (adaption of Dispersal Principle).

The two principles thus re-cast explain how herestheticians might be expected to behave in terms of dropping or introducing new dimensions to a politically contested issue. It is important to note that not all possible alternate dimensions are of equal value to the heresthetician: For instance, some dimensions are complementary in nature (raising the dimension does not negate the effect of the previously aired dimension and indeed may reinforce same), and such dimensions should be preferred. Moreover, if one side does manage to gain a clear majority on a particular dimension, then Riker (1986, p. 66) tells us that they should make efforts to ‘fix’ the dimensionality – that is, the heresthetician should attempt to prevent the introduction of a new dimension by the opposition. This latter act might be achieved by dismissing attempts to introduce new dimensions as irrelevant political ploys or, attempting to bring forward the moment at which an (irreversible) decision must be made, or perhaps by refusing to engage on the new dimension (and thus attempt to deprive the dimension of the media attention it needs to gain traction; see, for instance, Drew et al, 2016). Failure to ‘fix’ the number of dimensions when dominance has been achieved opens the heresthetician up to what we might call ‘heresthetical foils’ (it might also open up an opportunity for rhetorical foils if strong arguments exist for the otherwise dominant dimension).

The last task which falls to us in reviewing the literature is to consider some of the extant criticisms of the heresthetic research program. First, among criticisms are the documented instances where facts relied upon by Riker are contested (see Mackie cited in McLean 2002, and Rosenthal 2013). It is indeed, a grave error of scholarship *if* facts relied upon prove on subsequent investigation to be false – however, this does not, in and of itself, logically lead to the conclusion that the ideas taught from ‘contested facts’ are somehow invalid. Second, Riker has been accused of over-reach and hyperbole – we believe, this might well be a result of the narrative style of Riker’s (1986, 1996) books, a style which seeks to engage, entertain and instruct; quite distinct from the reserved style normally attributed to academics. Once again, the criticism is most probably valid – but it should not be allowed to detract from the

ideas presented. Attention has also been called to the inconclusive nature of empirical work conducted in the name of the Rikerian research movement (McLean, 2002). This is a problem if one seeks to justify a pedagogical narrative with empirical data (however, there is no reason to believe that pedagogy *must* be supported by empirical data – for instance teachers instruct mere infants that gravitation exists without deriving the size of the Gravitational constant). Moreover, the mixed evidence really shouldn't come as a shock given that Riker seeks to explain *surprises* and acknowledges that there are precious few master herestheticians (therefore suggesting that statistical regularity may well elude researchers). Riker's works have also been criticized for applauding *prima facie* immoral acts – but as we have noted heresthetic is the study of rational choice not moral choice (see Mclean 2002). In sum, whilst many of the criticisms may be valid, they do not relate directly to the pedagogical narrative – the self-professed aim of Riker's (1986, 1996) books and something for which Riker was rightfully lauded (McLean, 2002). We now seek to continue this pedagogical enterprise by considering the heresthetical merits of two dimensions which are commonly employed to 'sell' local government amalgamations: efficiency and scale.

3. Two Dimensions of Local Government Amalgamation Debate: Efficiency, and Scale.

There are two dimensions which are commonly appealed to by herestheticians to ‘sell’ local government amalgamation. The first, and most common, dimension is efficiency: Specifically the assertion that larger councils can capture economies of scale and thus reduce the unit cost of providing services. The second dimension – which has only recently appeared in debates on local government amalgamation in the Antipodes – is an argument that greater scale leads to qualitative benefits for communities including *inter alia* better regional planning, ability to attract more qualified staff, superior political leadership, and enhanced ability to partner with higher tiers of government (Drew and Dollery, 2016). We reflect on the heresthetic utility of each dimension from the perspective of a potential amalgamation proponent, before briefly examining how the dimensions were employed in the recent contentious forced amalgamations in New South Wales (NSW), Australia.

Selling the Efficiency Dimension

Technical efficiency is precisely defined by economists to be the ratio of inputs to outputs (after Farrell, 1957) but is more commonly employed in an imprecise ‘cost savings’ sense (Faulk et al. 2013). Moreover, it is often taken for granted that ‘efficiency’ is *ipso facto* good thus Reinhardt (1992, p. 3) states that ‘the fastest way to eliminate a rival policy is simply to brand it inefficient’. Efficiency sans deliberative interrogation probably does resonate strongly with communities – it is certainly the case that few citizens would advocate for *inefficient* government, not least because this would suggest upward pressure on local government taxation imposts. Yet it is also clear that efficiency is not in any sense the *raison d’etre* for government – there are many competing aspects of government which one might well value more strongly, such as equity, responsiveness, due process, and democratic accountability (Goodin and Wilenski, 1984). Indeed, the presence of competing and compelling values underscores the lessons from the heresthetic literature with respect to the need to fix the dimensionality if it resonates strongly.

Failure to fix a dominant dimension opens the heresthetician up to heresthetic foils (and possibly rhetorical foils). A commonly employed heresthetic foil is the dimension of ‘identity’ – which asserts that the proposed amalgamation will result in the loss of local community voice, or the dilution of a minority voice (Feiock et al, 2006). The other commonly employed heresthetic foil is to assert that the process is undemocratic (particularly when forced amalgamation is countenanced). Arguably, both heresthetic foils may be aired in any case because they are long-rehearsed and historically successful opponent dimensions, although Drew et al (2013, p. 56) did note that ‘blitzkrieg implementation ... in the 2007 Queensland amalgamation [very effectively prevented] ... organised resistance’ of this kind.

Moreover, when introducing the efficiency dimension, the use of a ‘non-political friend’ would seem to be particularly important – not solely for the purpose of

avoiding a charge of political ploy, but also because the ‘friend’s’ brand might add legitimacy to the assertion that amalgamation will result in efficiency (Drew and Grant, 2017a). Thus, in Australia citizens have witnessed the establishment of the *Independent Panel for Metropolitan Local Government* (in Western Australia, 2012) and the *Independent Local Government Review Panel* (in NSW, 2013; emphases added), in an apparent attempt to establish the ‘non-political’ *bona fides* of the party introducing the dimension of efficiency. Australian’s have also witnessed a recent trend to employing strong corporate brands in an attempt to underscore the independence and reliability of efficiency projections (for instance in recent amalgamation efforts in NSW and Tasmania, proponents of amalgamation have relied on reports by Ernst & Young and KPMG).

However, the use of the ‘efficiency’ dimension is not without risk. These risks arise from the fact that the concept can be precisely defined and precisely estimated. Thus, *ex ante* (and *ex post*) empirical estimation of efficiency may well refute the claims made by proponent herestheticians (and their friends). If this occurs then proponent dominance in the dimension may be transitory – although we do note that analyses of these kind take considerable time, therefore (once again) emphasizing the need to fix dimensions, particularly through the bringing forth of an irreversible decision (Drew et. al., 2016)³.

Selling the Scale Dimension

The heresthetic attributes of the ‘efficiency’ and ‘scale’ dimensions could hardly be more dissimilar. Where ‘efficiency’ is amenable to empirical analysis, ‘scale’ is impossible to contest empirically. Likewise, where ‘efficiency’ can be precisely defined (notwithstanding the fact that it is often quite imprecisely defined), ‘scale’ and its attributes largely defy definition. Scale can be defined in terms of population size, number of assessable properties, number of local government staff, or geographic size (square kilometers) but is often discussed (instead of being defined) in terms of qualities attributed to scale (such as capacity to undertake regional planning and regional advocacy, ability to partner with higher tiers of government, ability to attract more qualified staff and better political representatives) (ILGRP, 2013a). Indeed, in many respects the scale dimension can be boiled down to an assertion that ‘bigger is better’ (Drew and Grant, 2017b). This assertion is implicitly reinforced every time one is offered the opportunity to ‘upsized’ one’s burger meal or house or mobile phone plan – or dare we say it, one’s local government. It is an idea that pervades much of our world, thus suggesting that it may well be an idea that will resonate strongly with local communities.

³ We concede that de-amalgamation of local governments formed from whole constituent councils can occur – therefore, to make a decision (practically) irreversible it is necessary to construct the entity from parts of former councils, so that it is impossible to unscramble the egg (Drew and Grant 2017b).

Moreover, the scale dimension has benefits that extend well beyond being reinforced by the ‘bigger is better’ dictum. For instance, the scale argument may neutralize much of the opponent ‘identity’ dimension: More often than not individuals work, shop and live in multiple local government areas – if pressed to assert an identity, (for instance when asked where they live by a person from overseas), said individuals may nominate the larger regional identity (for example, ‘Sydney’ or ‘Tokyo’), rather than the specific local government area (perhaps ‘Randwick’ or ‘Shinjuku’, respectively). Thus, when scale is associated with the functional area in which the individual actually operates, the concordance may resonate strongly and make the identity dimension seem incongruous (it also means that spillovers will be internalized which is an inherently appealing concept on equity grounds). It also seems to be the case that the scale argument – because of the elusiveness of a definition – can be ‘sold’ by multiple (non-political *and* political) friends. For instance, property developer lobbies can point to more affordable housing that might result from streamlined development planning rules; examples of major regional infrastructure (along with the concomitant economic development) brought to fruition by previously amalgamated large regional local governments can be used as ‘proof’ that scale matters; and, politicians and bureaucrats from previously amalgamated councils may be pressed in to service to reflect upon the higher caliber of individuals which the larger entity has been able to attract (it would seem that they would have a vested interest in promulgating this claim in order to justify their current position). Indeed, all these ‘friends’ have been appealed to in order to advance the scale dimension (see, Drew and Grant, 2017b).

As we have noted, the heresthetician employing scale to sell local government amalgamations is immune from the risk of empirical refutation – the fact that amalgamation will increase scale (whether measured according to population, number of assessable business, number of staff or geographic area) is beyond dispute. However, the propensity to define scale in terms of its multiple attributes opens the heresthetician up to the risk that auditors will be incapable of simultaneously evaluating all the arguments, and therefore dismiss it as background noise.

We now examine how these dimensions were employed in the 2016 NSW forced amalgamation program, purely by way of a contextual exemplar for our pedagogical discourse.

Efficiency and Scale in the 2016 NSW Forced Amalgamations

In Australia, local government has no constitutional standing and it is therefore widely held that local governments can be amalgamated by state governments at will (subject to the constraint of procedural fairness) (Drew and Grant 2017a). In August 2011 the NSW government commenced what turned out to be a grueling process taking over five years – initially a sector led voluntary inquiry but ending up as a compulsory forced amalgamation program. Both dimensions – efficiency and scale – were introduced to the debate early on by an ‘independent friend’ namely the Independent Local Government Review Panel (2012). Initially, the state government focused on the efficiency dimension in rather vague terms which suggested that cost savings thus realized could be re-directed to provide for community wants (Drew and Dollery, 2016). Records of consultations suggest that these early efficiency arguments resonated strongly with community members (ILGRP, 2013b). However, rather than quickly fixing what appeared to be a dominant dimension – as the Queensland government had done a few years earlier (just over three weeks elapsed between the ‘independent’ panel recommendation and the enactment of same in Queensland; Drew et al. 2016) – the NSW state government instead provided money to local governments to prepare amalgamation and stand-alone business cases to quantify the savings.

The heresthetic literature would seem to suggest that this lengthy delay was an unambiguous mistake: it not only failed to lock in a likely win, but also allowed time for opponents to trot out the somewhat predictable identity dimension heresthetic foils. Moreover, employing an array of ‘independent expert friends’ (which included the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal, Ernst & Young and KPMG – see Drew and Grant, 2017b), failed to regain the dominance which the NSW state government had once enjoyed on the efficiency dimension. Indeed, due to the rather inexpert conduct of the various parties engaged to provide assurance, a rhetorical attack was made disputing the independence of the expert ‘friends’ – a claim which was further enhanced when implausible assumptions used to model the efficiencies were discovered (Drew and Grant 2017a). These rhetorical foils further diminished the penetration of the proponent efficiency dimension (perhaps reinforcing the finding from the literature that heresthetic’s older cousin, rhetoric, cannot be entirely neglected in political campaigns; Riker, 1996). The events also confirmed our diagnosis of an Achilles heal for the efficiency dimension – the potential for empirical contestation.

At this point – faced with increasing assaults by opposition herestheticians on identity and democratic dimensions, the heresthetic literature would suggest that the amalgamation proponents should have probed for a (preferably) complementary dimension to regain the ascendancy ‘for even the most ideologically committed [should] observe ... the futility of arguing to a stand-off’ (Riker, 1996, p. 125). However, the most suitable complementary dimension – scale, first raised in 2012 – continued to be relegated to a rather muted background noise.

Without the benefit of parallel universes in which we might conduct scientific tests of alternate heresthetic maneuvers we can only hypothesise about what might have been had amalgamation proponents taken heed of the literature. However, it is clear that failure to fix a winning dimension allowed opponents to marshal resources, introduce new dimensions and even launch rhetorical foils, therefore confirming that delay certainly made prospects for a successful ‘sell’ more remote. Moreover, we know that the NSW local government amalgamations ended in a loss for the Premier and Deputy Premier of NSW, who both relinquished their leadership positions. Whether or not introducing the complementary dimension (after the initial delay) might have rescued the situation we can only speculate on: suffice to say that the scale dimension would not have damaged the earlier efficiency arguments and therefore could only have summed to improve the chances of winning the struggle to amalgamate NSW councils. In similar vein, we can only guess as to whether proponents would have won the day had they led with scale (instead of efficiency) – certainly it would not have been open to rhetorical foil and might also have neutralized the potential for opponents to penetrate with the identity dimension (which they did very successfully, Drew and Grant, 2017b). The state government also might have been quicker to execute the reforms if the scale dimension had been pursued in preference to efficiency (as there would have been no reason to embark on time consuming business cases).

Of course, another way by which we might ultimately test our hypotheses is for future amalgamation proponent herestheticians to draw on the ‘vicarious experience of instruction’ which motivated this narrative (Riker, 1986, p. ix). We conclude our paper with a consideration of how the lessons might be employed in future campaigns.

4. Concluding Remarks – Lessons for Proponent Herestheticians in Other Jurisdictions

I think here we should do the following (but if you have better ideas please feel free to dissent):

- A. Restate our heuristic from page 6 amending it to reflect the lessons learned from NSW (perhaps add ‘as quickly as possible’ re ‘fixing’ dimensionality; also add for #1 the need to consider decisive *rhetorical* foils *before* the opposition discards the dimension; for #2 the desirability of a dimension which is not only ‘complementary’ but also has ‘neutralising potential’ regarding opponent heresthetic) – I left stuff out on purpose so that we could have some lessons to update the heuristic with at this point in the paper. You might also want to prefix #1 with a comment about the choice of initial dimension plus perhaps also the method of introduction (independent expert). This is all entirely up to you – but what I think we need is to come up with two *short and precise* statements to guide heresthetic action, *which respond to our case study*

- B. *One very important thing I think is to discuss how the heresthetic would be affected by cultural sensitivities. This is where I suggest you bring in Japanese literature and experience. I am still pretty ignorant of Japan (a matter I wish to remedy) but one thing that I think would be the case is that the Japanese culture is much more likely to respect the authority of experts and politicians. If this is the case then the ‘friend’ need not be ‘independent’ and corporate brands may not be so important. I am sure there are other differences which will quickly come to mind for you – a short discussion, then perhaps use them to augment the page 6 heuristic would be great.*

[Interlinkage between institutional differences that produce difference in cultural sensitivities and heresthetic would be an important future research agenda. For example, comparing and contrasting this article's pedagogical case from Australia with Japanese municipal amalgamation experience would be particularly helpful for further elaborating insights gained from this article. This is because, as seen in many of comparative institutional perspectives, the degree of governmental intervention in the socio-economic life would be radically different between Australia and Japan \(Morgan et al., 2010; Soskice & Hall, 2001\). In particular, the role of 'friend' who introduce a dimension would be significantly different, providing an important context for the elaboration of heuristics.](#)

Regarding 'friend', brands usually, did not play a crucial part in Japan. Japanese governments at national and regional levels have tended to rely on Shingikai, which literally means 'an inquiry commission' for forming and implementing policies (Noble, 2003). In the mid 2000s, Japan witnessed country-wide municipal amalgamation. Consequently, approximately 3000 municipalities were reduced down to 2000. Regarding amalgamation this time, regional governments actively relied on Shingikai. Most importantly, they not only provided key dimensions but also coordinated relevant key actors with significant political power such as major taxpayers (e.g., executives of large companies) and national/regional politicians through informal communications, and orchestrated their direction for potential amalgamation (Nakazawa & Miyashita, 2013). In other words, Shingikai plays a major role in providing and 'fixing' dimensionality, which may be complemented by mass media (Endo, 2017; Endo et al., 2016). Conversely, without the reliance on such 'friend' (i.e., Shingikai), amalgamation attempts often faced difficulty in coordinating interests of key actors and resulted in failure (Nakazawa & Miyashita, 2013). Perhaps, in such case, herestheticians may need to focus on a different dimension and different audience (i.e., the mass audience).

I replicate the old version of the heuristic below for your convenience (ie. Please make changes to this – perhaps in italics or bold so that readers can see what we have ‘learnt’ from the case study):

1. If the dimension appealed to by one side dominates, then they should seek to ‘fix’ the dimensionality as soon as possible (NSW) or through proper manner (Japan). By way of contrast, an opposing heresthetician should not seek to invoke the same dimension, but rather probe for an alternate dimension which resonates more strongly with the major (NSW) or different types of (Japan) audience. (adaption of Dominance Principle).

2. If the dimensions appealed to by either side fails to resonate with a clear majority of the audience (NSW) or key audience (Japan), then they should drop the dimension and probe for a dimension which does resonate with a majority (NSW) or key audience (Japan), or alternatively probe for a dimension which is complementary in nature and therefore might be summed to the original dimension in such a way that a clear majority preference is elicited (adaption of Dispersal Principle).

C. The last thing we need to do is to discuss (for a paragraph or so) the importance of politicians, community and media understanding heresthetic (we raised this in the abstract). The politician’s interests are pretty clear (to win), I imagine media knowledge would allow them to interrogate heresthetic ploys more thoroughly (and perhaps the ‘independence’ and ‘expertise’ of friends), the community (I guess to have a more sophisticated deliberative democracy). I imagine you will think of other important points. My ‘rhetoric

paper in AJPS did this in the conclusion and you may therefore find that helpful.

All up we are probably wanting another 1500 words or so (we need to keep under 8000 for the journals I am aiming at (PA, PAR, PMR), plus have room to address any minor Reviewer comments).

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