

DBA RESEARCH METHODOLOGY WORKSHOP

# The Realia-Paradigm Matrix

Translating Organizational Artifacts into Defensible, Paradigmatically  
Grounded Research Questions



# Workshop Goals & Portfolio Deliverable



## 1. Capture Realia

Identify concrete workplace artifacts or systemic business empirical signals.



## 2. Apply Paradigm

Interrogate the artifact via Critical Realism, Pragmatism, or Interpretivism.



## 3. Craft Question

Formulate a FINER-compliant DBA research question for portfolio entry.

PHASE 1 (15 MINS)

# What is Organizational Realia?

**Realia** refers to concrete, unvarnished artifacts from active management practice. Unlike academic literature, realia captures the live tension in organizations.

**Internal Artifacts:** Internal memos, turnover reports, board decks, audit logs.

**External Artifacts:** Regulatory warning letters, news leaks, earnings call transcripts.

**Process Artifacts:** Failed KPI tracking dashboards, compliance exception reports.



# Case 1: The Executive RTO Mandate Memo

REALIA ARTIFACT

## Internal CEO Memo

"Effective Q3, all staff must log 4 mandatory office days weekly to restore spontaneous collaboration and cultural alignment."

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### Systemic Signal:

35% rise in top-tier engineering resignations within 60 days post-announcement.

RESEARCH PARADOX

## Control vs. Performance

Leadership enforces spatial presence to drive innovation, yet directly destroys the human capital required to innovate.

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### Focus Area:

Organizational behavior, agency, and workplace governance.

## Case 2: The ESG-CapEx Divergence

REALIA ARTIFACT

### Annual Integrated Report

Financial disclosure showing a 40% increase in ESG compliance spending alongside flat carbon-reduction outcomes.

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**Systemic Signal:**

Budget growth without operational impact across business units.

RESEARCH PARADOX

### Symbolic vs. Substantive

Compliance mechanisms satisfy external rating agencies but fail to alter internal operational decisions.

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**Focus Area:**

Institutional theory, decoupling, and sustainability strategy.

## Case 3: AI Credit-Scoring Bias Warning

REALIA ARTIFACT

### Regulatory Audit Log

Regulatory warning notice citing an automated lending algorithm for systemic approval rate disparities across demographics.

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#### Systemic Signal:

Opacity in algorithmic decision-making creates regulatory risk.

RESEARCH PARADOX

### Efficiency vs. Accountability

Machine learning accelerates credit decisions but removes human ethical agency and accountability.

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#### Focus Area:

Algorithmic governance, fintech ethics, and risk management.

PHASE 2 (30 MINS)

# Paradigmatic Interrogation

## Critical Realism

Focus: Mechanism & Structure

Views realia as an empirical event caused by underlying unobservable structures.

### Core Question Type:

What generative mechanisms produce this outcome?

## Pragmatism

Focus: Action & Intervention

Views realia as a practical problem disrupting organizational value or performance.

### Core Question Type:

How can actionable interventions resolve this disruption?

## Interpretivism

Focus: Meaning & Sensemaking

Views realia as a socially constructed product of stakeholder perceptions.

### Core Question Type:

How do actors construct meaning around this artifact?

# Key Elements Across Paradigmatic Perspectives

| DIMENSION      | CRITICAL REALISM                                                        | INTERPRETIVISM                                                      | PRAGMATISM                                                           |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ontology       | Stratified reality (Empirical, Actual, Real) independent of perception. | Multiple, socially constructed realities shaped by human meaning.   | Relational; truth is determined by practical consequences in action. |
| Epistemology   | Knowledge is fallible; seeks causal explanation via retroduction.       | Knowledge is subjective, co-created, and context-dependent.         | Knowledge is instrumental, focused on solving practical problems.    |
| Role of Realia | Empirical signal exposing hidden generative mechanisms.                 | Symbolic artifact subject to participant sensemaking and narrative. | Workplace breakdown or friction point requiring intervention.        |
| Primary Aim    | Explain structural causes to enable systemic transformation.            | Understand participant lived experiences and shared meanings.       | Design actionable frameworks to optimize management practice.        |
| Common Methods | Mixed methods, deep case studies, retroductive modeling.                | Ethnography, narrative analysis, semi-structured interviews.        | Design science, action research, evaluation research.                |

PHASE 3 (25 MINS)

## Elevating to a Viable DBA Research Question

WEAK QUESTION (ATHEORETICAL / GENERIC)

"Why do employees quit when companies enforce return-to-office policies?"

STRONG DBA QUESTION (CRITICAL REALIST LENS + REALIA ANCHORED)

**"What generative mechanisms constrain middle-management agency during executive RTO mandates, and how can governance structures be redesigned to mitigate attrition?"**

# Required Portfolio Entry Structure

01

## Realia Statement

Attach or cite the concrete empirical artifact.

02

## Surface Paradox

Summarize the core practical contradiction.

03

## Paradigm Lens

Justify chosen philosophical stance.

04

## DBA Question

State FINER question with theoretical rationale.

# 90-Minute Facilitation Timeline

10 MINS

## Lecture Brief

Introduce realia and paradigmatic framing.

20 MINS

## Peer Critique

Exchange realia and test surface paradoxes.

30 MINS

## Paradigm Mapping

Map realia across competing paradigms.

20 MINS

## Plenary Debrief

Compare research questions on whiteboard.

10 MINS

## Portfolio Log

Finalize entry into research portfolio.

NEXT STEPS

# Populate Your Research Portfolio

Log your completed Realia-Paradigm Matrix into your DBA  
portfolio before next week's methodology seminar.



## Image Sources



<https://akrofis.com.tr/gallery/s6-p113-content-2-b5a6ec3d.jpg>

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