Politics and Complexity

Key concepts, claims and elements

* Complex adaptive system

A complex adaptive system is one where the relationships between different elements are not obviously or fully apparent. There are dynamic changes, causal relationships are non-linear and properties and behaviors are emergent.

- **Highly Unpredictable:** It's very difficult to predict the interactions of agents in the system.
- **Contagious:** As the agents in the system are well connected, things will spread quickly.
- **No complete control:** They are decentralized, like the geese flying in organized V-shaped flocks.
- **No complete information:** No one in the system has complete information.
- **Adaptive nature:** They are adaptive in nature.
- **Emergence** is a phenomenon in which the development and interaction of 'things' or agents in a system create **novel** characteristics and behaviors.

* **Anthro-complexity** considers the questions of how humanity makes sense of this world in order to act within it, as compared to what we might consider being mathematical or computational complexity, There are some features that can be seen as distinctly human: **intelligence, intentionality and identity**

* **Coherent heterogeneity:** As you increase variety within the (complex) system to the point where it becomes heterogeneous, it matters that the differences are capable of coherence. While there may be conflict, alignment, within context, should be relatively easy to achieve.

*The Cynefin framework and its domains: At its most basic, the Cynefin® framework is a decision support framework. Gallows distinguishes between three different types of systems:

- **Ordered systems:** cause and effect relationships are either clear or discoverable through analysis.
- **Complex systems:** the only way to understand the system is to interact.
- **Chaotic systems:** turbulence prevails and immediate stabilizing action is required.

Graphical walk-through: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nPErDG1UryU © Sue Borchardt

* **A theory of change for complex systems**

This is about mapping the dispositional state of a population or system at a moment in time. From this data, we can ascertain a particular direction or direction that we might wish to nudge towards. This is managing the potential to evolve from the present state by starting from where people are, as opposed to where someone deems they should be.

* **Sensemaking/Sense-Making**

Sense-making is the act of taking multiple sources and varieties of data and synthesizing it into one picture and making a judgment call on how best to act. It is the process of "structuring the unknown" (Waterman, 1990, p. 41). *Naturalizing Sense-Making* is one of the five schools of sense-making. It is defined by its use of natural science as a constraint on the development and generation of praxis to support sense-making. This also implies the question of sufficiency: "how do I know enough to determine the type of action to take?" Sense-making is primarily a **social activity and starts generally during and after the data collection** in workshops or in co-analysis. A tool that enables sense-making at scale in many different contexts (e.g. corporate, community, NGO, research) is the SenseMaker®

* **SenseMaker®:** an online crowd-sourcing research tool for collecting and self-interpreting micro-narratives and for discovering actionable insights beyond surveys and focus groups. It offers a science-based approach to guide collective impact and leverage the strengths of being ------- human in uncertain times. Outlier stories averaged away in traditional surveys, are important as weak signal detection as diverse viewpoints are necessary for a system to stay adaptive.

Sources: Wilber, Ken (2000). *The Collected Works of Ken Wilber*. Shambhala Publications.

Further reading: LIFT Intellectual Output (IO) N° 6: Sense-Making for society
Wiki - https://cynefin.io/wiki/Main_Page