

Tom Graves / Tetradian

Random ramblings over the metaphoric edge

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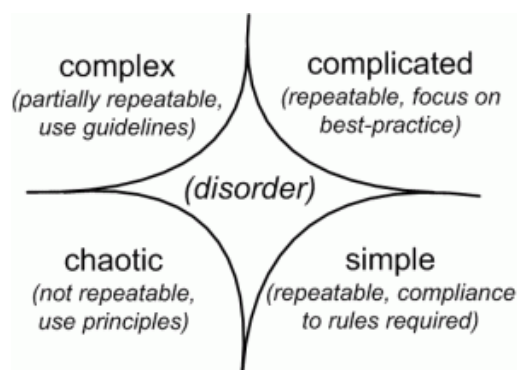


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More on chaos and Cynefin

February 21st, 2010 [Leave a comment](#) [Go to comments](#)

Another 'exploratory', following on from the previous post on '[Complexity, Chaos and Enterprise Architecture](#)', in terms of the [Cynefin](#) framework, and again developing out of Dave Snowden's excellent [webinar on complexity and 'abductive reasoning'](#).



Cynefin framework (original (c) Dave Snowden / Cognitive-Edge c.2003)

Cynefin is probably one of the most useful conceptual tools that I hold in my 'consultant's toolkit'. It is an enormously powerful and enlightening framework to understand the relationships between the simple, the complicated and the complex, and to understand why long-proven approaches such as Taylorism and Six Sigma can sometimes (or often, these days) go spectacularly wrong.

Yet for several years now - in fact pretty much since I first encountered Cynefin - I've been concerned that there's been very little attention paid to the role of the **Chaotic domain**. So that's the theme I want to tackle here: how may we reclaim the Chaotic, to make Cynefin more complete?

(I'd better say upfront that there'll be a fair amount here that Dave and others may disagree with, sometimes quite vehemently - and that's okay, because this is definitely a 'work in progress', and probably with gaping holes in the reasoning in places. I *need* that critique if this is going to work in practice. In no way do I consider that any of the other work in Cynefin is somehow 'wrong' - particularly not the work that Dave and others have been doing in the Complex space, which I regard as crucially important in business and elsewhere. All I'm suggesting here is that perhaps we need to approach the Chaotic domain with the same degree of discipline as we do with the others - and not simply 'run away' to the Simple or the Complex as soon as we hit the Chaotic, which is about all that standard Cynefin offers at the moment.)

This one will again be long (my apologies...), but should be useful to anyone who's familiar with Cynefin, or has any practical concerns about how to handle inherent uncertainties in business and elsewhere. More after the 'Read more...' link, anyway.

As I understand it, the Cynefin framework describes a '**diagnostic/solution space**' - four distinct categories of tactics

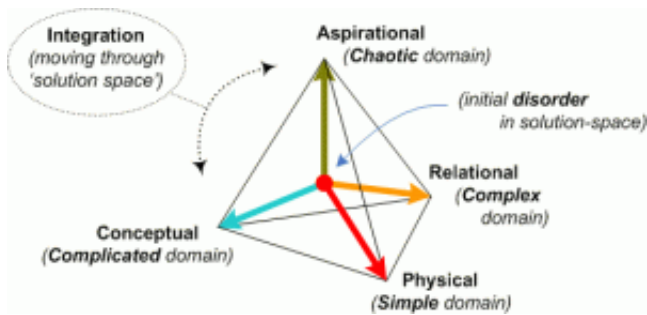
to filter impressions of an unknown ('disordered') context, so as to support sense-making and then decisions for appropriate action. To put it at its simplest if perhaps most tangled, Cynefin is a decision-support framework to support the decisions needed to support subsequent decision-support. 😊

These **four sense-making modes** or 'domains' are usually presented in flat two-dimensional form, as in the diagram above. But for reasons I explained in the previous post, they also fit well with the traditional Western 'four elements', which, roughly speaking, equate to physical, conceptual, relational and aspirational. These represent intersections of fundamentally different properties:

- *physical*: entity or entity-property, transferable, alienable (if I give it to you, I no longer have it)
- *conceptual*: entity or entity-property, transferable, non-alienable (if I give it to you, I still have it)
- *relational*: exists *between* entities, not transferable, requires active support from both ends
- *aspirational*: exists *between* entities, not transferable, requires active support from one end only (but may be dropped at the other end)

(In business, a simple example of an aspirational property is a **brand**: the commitment to the relationship comes from one end only - the 'consumer [I hate that term, but it does apply here...] - but the relationship is destroyed if the brand is lost, and may not easily be substituted fro another.)

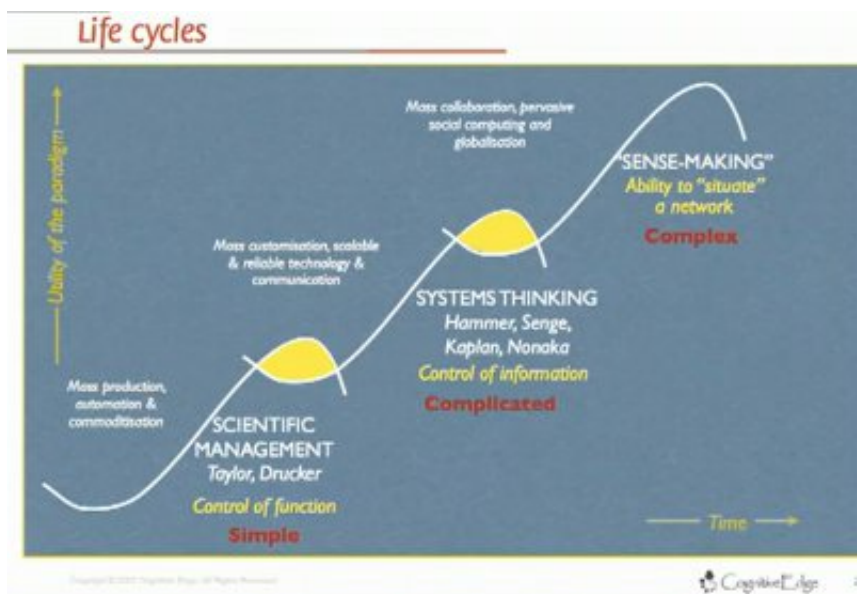
If we view Cynefin from that perspective, the four domains can also be understood as **dimensions** that mark out a 'solution-space' surrounding the initial 'disorder' of the unknown:



Cynefin domains as tetradian dimensions

To find appropriate techniques for solutions (responses) for the context, we need to be able to move around the solution-space in an intentional, integrated way. The Cynefin dimensions align somewhat with the 'four elements', so we can use the latter to suggest probable places to start: if we're dealing with physical things, Simple is probably best, if it's conceptual we would start with the Complicated, and so on. But the catch is that pushing hard in one dimension tends to preclude use of the others - hence Taylorism, which works so well in the predictable physical world, would instead be a flat-out disaster if we assume that it will work just as well in the complex messiness of interpersonal relations (the Complex domain).

Which brings us back to Dave's slide from the seminar, about the **lifecycles of scientific modalities** in the Cynefin space:

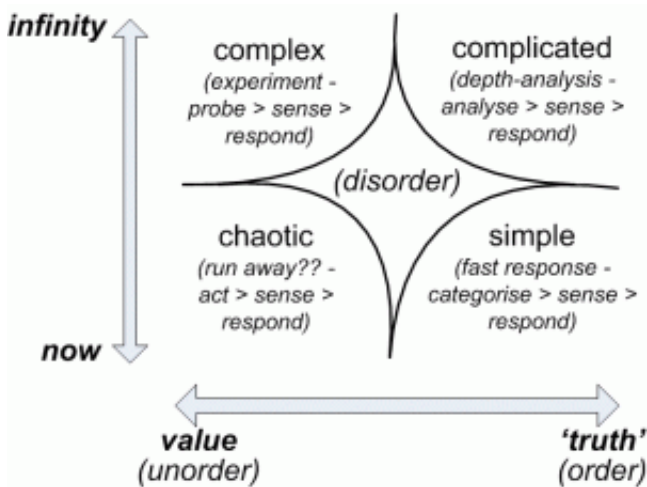


Dave here implies that there's something close to a linear development of management-science, with each modality superseding the next. But that's actually not what happens: instead, each new modality becomes the '**scientific fashion**' for a while, following much the same adoption-pattern as the well-known [hype-cycle](#). The slide above only shows the first part of the hype-cycle, the initial trigger, and then the rise to the 'plateau of inflated expectations' - where attempts are made to use the techniques for *everything* (as in the old adage that "if all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail") - followed by the descent into the 'trough of disillusionment'. In the later part of the hype-cycle, we reach the 'plateau of productivity' - which, in essence, means that we learn to use the techniques *only in contexts where they are appropriate*. Hence, again, Taylorist time-and-motion analysis *does* work very well in certain specific contexts; likewise Six Sigma, and so on.

The danger with the 'ascent' notion implied in the slide above is that it risks leading us to the same kind of deluded 'holier-than-thou' supremacism. In other words, much the same that we can see, for example, in Don Beck and Ken Wilber's so-called '[Integral](#)' version of [Spiral Dynamics](#) - initially a set of tools that are very useful in certain specific contexts, but one that's been mangled beyond sense and context into an overblown cult-like 'Theory That Explains Everything', that has understandably triggered Dave's ire on more than one occasion. Yet we can see the same risk also applies here: that initial excitement and exuberance at breaking free of the constraints of the 'old regime' are what *drive* the mistaken millennialism of the hype-cycle. And would not be helpful if [Cynefin too becomes a cult](#), in the same way the Taylorism and Six Sigma have done in the past.

One way to prevent that from happening is to recognise that the S-curves in the slide aren't a linear development: rather, they're *explorations into solution-space*, with a specific emphasis in each case along a specific *dimension* of that solution-space - Scientific-Management for Simple/Physical, Systems-Thinking for Complicated/Conceptual, Dave's Sense-Making for Complex/Relational, and so on. Right now, it's the "and so on" bit that interests me - because right now there *isn't* an equivalent science for the Chaotic/Aspirational segment of the solution-space - yet it's something we definitely do need.

The reason *why* it's important should become clear once we look at Cynefin in relation to *time*:



In real-world practice, the closer we get to the real-time of '*NOW!*', the less time we have to *think* - all we have time for is to *do*. In effect, this forces us towards a very limited range of choices across a spectrum of 'truth' to 'value' - in Cynefin terms, either Simple or Chaotic, because the *time* needed for Complicated analysis or Complex experiments is a luxury we simply do not have.

But Cynefin at present *does not have any means to operate within the Chaotic domain*. Instead, we're told, we must 'act > sense > respond', either 'taking control' so as to push the context into the Simple domain, or grab hold of a few random nominally-unrelated items as the content for subsequent abductive reasoning in the Complex domain. As can be seen in the later part of the seminar, Dave has done brilliant work with [fitness-landscapes](#) in his [SenseMaker software](#) to bring the Complex closer to real-time - but it's still not *actually* the in-the-moment 'now-ness' of the Chaotic, and arguably never will be, because by definition the assessment always happens *after* rather than *during* the event.

So we need *something* in Cynefin to fill that hole - because on the one hand the Simple-domain 'solutions' are likely to be too simplistic, and on the other we don't have the time we need to do anything else.

As for *why* we need it, contrast *marketing* with *sales*.

Almost all the classic **marketing** techniques sit either in the Complicated-domain - trend-analysis, market-segment analysis and so on - or somewhere near the Complicated/Complex border - test-marketing, the dreaded 'focus groups' and the like. More recently there's been a lot more emphasis on [viral-marketing](#), '[social CRM](#)' and the like, which is more solidly into the Complex-domain regions of the solution-space. The point is that *it takes time*, and *it works with large numbers* of actual and/or potential events.

But at the point of action, **sales** is *always* dealing with '**market-of-one**' - an *individual* quantum-decision to either buy or not-buy. Marketing helps us *before* that event; it will probably help us *after* the event; but by definition it can play no part *at the immediate instant* of the event. Each sale is an internalised quantum-event, a literally one-off decision in the midst of chaos - and no amount of external analysis or assessment is going to change that.

Using this concept of a Cynefin 'solution-space', the preferred approach for marketing/sales for most of the past century was to prevent the apparent 'need' for a decision - in other words, to 'take control' of the market, and force everything into the Simple-domain. A single **monopoly** for every industry; you can have any colour you like as long as it's black; no choice, other than to buy or not-buy - and marketing-pressure, peer-pressure and blanket advertising aimed to remove even that apparent choice. Yet these days that Simple option has been eroded by factors such as **proliferation of vendors**, **globalisation** and, especially, the **internet** - so much so that sales-folk might well say "it's Chaos out here in the market". In other words, it's shifted from Simple to Chaotic - from 'truth' to *value*.

(Hence, in my own field of enterprise-architecture, the importance of **values-architecture**, as summarised [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).)

This is the point where Dave and I diverge, philosophically speaking.

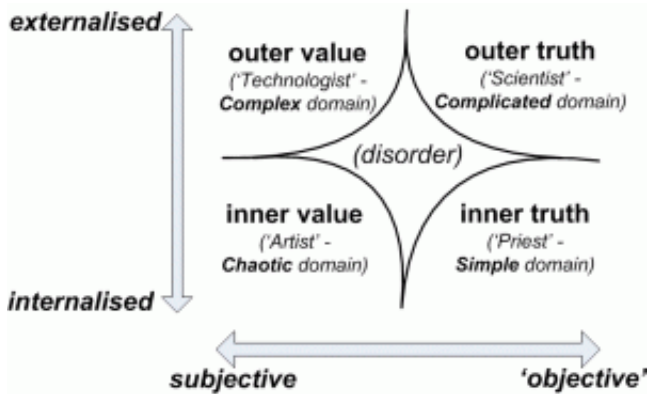
Dave's background is in **physics**, and thence to **cognitive-science**. I would say that he is, without question, one of the few real masters that we have at present in applying that category of knowledge and experience to real-world problems. As someone with such a strong sciences background, I would imagine his natural reflex when faced with any methodological difficulty is to go back to 'truth', go back to the science - and in most cases, that's probably the most reliable approach to take. *Yet by definition, it cannot succeed with the Chaotic domain*, because in every science, all sensemaking is *fundamentally* dependent on **repetition** - and again by definition, there is **no real repeatability in Chaos**. The cross-over point varies from one context to another, but conventional physics suggests that [Heisenberg uncertainty](#) is only resolvable once we move above ten quanta or so; below that point, conventional 'truth'-based scientific analysis no longer makes sense. Dave in fact alludes to this in one of his comments to the previous post:

I have a strong bias towards the natural sciences and the Cynefin framework is built from a science based position. However ... I have seen too many examples of dowsing not to believe it works in some way, I can also see that in all the cases it is a deeply embodied skill that cannot be taught. ... I also have to respect the fact that all controlled tests have failed to establish authenticity. This provides an interesting dilemma. On the one hand I have seen it work with water engineers, and with the man/jcb symbiosis that dug out the drive to the side of my house, on the other hand controlled tests have failed to validate. That means we have a really interesting anomaly that requires investigation - but it does not allow a strong claim for authenticity and the solution will [not?] be scientific.

Dowsing (or 'water-witching', in the US) is a good example of a Chaotic-domain context - one which we'll come back to shortly. Yet as Dave implies, it seems that the only available option in the scientific approach is to force an immediate break-out from the Chaotic domain, into somewhere where repeatability *can* apply. This would usually be a move to the Complicated domain, such as with statistics-based 'chaotic attractors' and the like; or, as Dave has demonstrated so well, into the Complex domain, with fitness-landscapes and 'outlier-detection'. But it still doesn't work on the Chaotic domain *as itself*: from the scientific frame, it seems that **the only way we can work with Chaos is by not being there**. Which, these days, is hardly a realistic option, because it's chaos everywhere. And yet we're still stuck with no way to fill that gaping hole in Cynefin's solution-space.

My own background is almost the opposite to Dave's. Although I majored in sciences all the way through school, at university-level I switched over to the arts: specifically, to graphic-design - typography and the like - which is why some years later I became one of the pioneers in creating what is nowadays called desktop-publishing. In essence **I'm a technologist, not a scientist**; I place much more emphasis and much more trust in *usefulness* than purported formal 'proof'. Hence perhaps unlike Dave, my natural reflex when faced with any methodological difficulty is to go to the 'value'-side of the spectrum - Complex or Chaotic - rather than the 'truth'-side - Complicated or Simple. Where Dave would, I presume, turn to the peer-reviewed journals, my reflex is to go back to first-principles, usually by direct observation of the context. I'll freely admit that in Complicated-domain contexts my approach is arguably less reliable than that of the scientist; but because it makes no assumptions about repeatability, it *can* work within the Chaotic domain on its own terms. That's the crucial difference.

The other key difference is that I approach the Cynefin frame not as a scientist, but as a **methodologist** - which is not necessarily the same thing! I've been working on various aspects of these themes for probably more than forty years; for example, it's almost a quarter of a century since I first published my book [Inventing Reality](#), which addresses the same overall space in a rather different way. So when I first came across Cynefin, way back in 2003, I already had a lot of background to connect it with - and that background *did* include the Chaotic domain. For example, to me it makes useful sense to cross-map Cynefin with a variety of **Jungian** concepts:



I suspect Dave might not approve of this cross-map, but the point is that it's *useful*; unlike a scientific context, it's neither necessary nor appropriate to claim that it is in some way 'the truth'. (Which from Dave's perspective it isn't, of course: it's doubtful that there's any direct *scientific* cross-map between the two.) And the reason it's useful is that this kind of cross-map gives us pointers as to how to fill that Chaotic-domain gap in Cynefin - by focussing on *usefulness* rather than 'truth'.

As Dave implies, **dowsing** is probably a good place to start. I've been involved with dowsing in various forms since studying with Keith Critchlow at the Architectural Association, many decades ago; I'm probably one of the very few people doing systematic methodological study of the field, and likewise one of the few people who can formally identify the fundamental flaws in every so-called 'scientific' study of dowsing to date by self-styled Skeptics. To put it bluntly, I *do* know what I'm doing there; most people don't (and many - especially from the so-called 'New Age' of the market - frankly don't have a freakin' clue... 😞) Which means there's a real need for discipline there - and in many other contexts too.

So whilst Dave might be horrified at what I've done, in fact Cynefin provides a very powerful base-frame for a systematic approach to methodology in dowsing - including the Chaotic domain. (See the book [Disciplines of Dowsing](#) - you can download the full e-book for free from [here](#). There's also a [two-page reference-sheet](#) that summarises all the basic principles and practice.) The same principles apply in other fields: for example, I've recently been working with a number of well-known archaeologists to develop formal methodologies for subjective archaeology. *And the same principles also apply in business* - as in the discussion above about marketing versus sales.

Very short summary from all of the above:

- the Cynefin framework defines a 'solution-space' within which to select tactics to resolve problems in business and elsewhere
- Cynefin, as currently defined, severely constrains the solution-space by providing almost no means to manage the Chaotic domain
- if we include the Chaotic domain in a disciplined way, it greatly expands our range of options in the solution-space

So, how *do* we include the Chaotic domain? Here are a few suggestions to start with:

Don't panic! In the extremes of the Chaotic domain, everything and nothing is true; nothing is certain, nothing stays the same for long. Hence [Douglas Adams'](#) immortal catchphrase may prove very useful here... 😊 Standard Cynefin asserts that the appropriate tactic here would always be '*act > sense > respond*', to push us into another domain as quickly as possible: but that kind of panic-response may well lose us the information that we most need. Often the best advice here is the exact opposite of that: "Don't just do something - stand there!"

Find the still-point, 'the calm at the centre of the storm'. Every tradition asserts that there *is* such a still-point; every tradition also admits that finding that still-point ain't easy... Hence the importance of *practice*, practice, more practice, and yet more practice. Which brings us to...

Repetition. In the Complicated domain, doing the same thing and expecting it to come up with different results is

considered crazy; but in the Chaotic domain, it's one of the few tactics that really helps. In a truly chaotic context, doing the same thing will *always* lead to different results: so here, repeating the same thing over and over provides us at least with *something* that will remain the same each time. That kind of repetition may technically be subjective, but it's about the closest that we can have to scientific-style 'controls' here. Repetition works.

Use principles as a focus. Principles provide a stable point of reference amidst the chaos. In the business-context, this is the vision and values of the organisation. (By which I mean 'vision' in the ISO-9000 sense, as a stable anchor for the quality-system - not the flaccid marketing-puff that's usually passed off as 'our vision', and about which Dave rightly complains.) "When in doubt, go back to first-principles": that will help a lot here.

Allow serendipity. In the seminar, Dave describes abductive reasoning as "the logic of hunches", a bringing-together of "seemingly unrelated items". In the Chaotic domain, it becomes clear that everything is related in some ways to everything else: the patterns that we find there - and that we then evaluate via abductive reasoning in the Complex domain, as Dave describes - are actually little more than our *choices*, about connections that *we* choose to perceive between 'seemingly unrelated items'. But we first need to create space for those 'unrelated items' to arise in the first place. In his classic [Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance](#), Robert Pirsig describes this as 'fishing for facts'; and likewise William Beveridge includes chapters on the role of chance, the use of intuition, and the hazards and limitations of reason, in his equally classic [The Art of Scientific Investigation](#). Yet to quote Louis Pasteur, "**chance favours the prepared mind**": in the Chaotic domain we create space for the unexpected to happen, yet prepare the space with principles, with repetition, and 'the calm amidst the storm'. But there's also one other essential instruction...

Listen. Probably the single most important advice for any consultant - and for any salesperson, for that matter. Stop. Don't talk. Just listen. "Nature abhors a vacuum": if you provide a 'still-point', a quiet calm, you may be surprised at what comes in to fill in the empty space. And very useful, too. Create the space. Listen. That's almost all we need to know about working in the Chaotic domain.

To conclude...

My apologies that this has been such a long post: I hope it's been worthwhile for you. But I guess what it comes down to is this:

Dave's view of Cynefin is, as he puts it, "built from a science based position". The advantage is that it is rigorous, largely context-independent, and firmly grounded in current cognitive research. The disadvantage is that, almost by definition, it can provide no real guidance on how to operate in the Chaotic domain.

My view of Cynefin is based in methodology-practice rather than formal scientific theory, and focusses more on individual difference and individual skill. The disadvantage is that it is less rigorous, and often highly context-dependent, hence arguably less reliable in the Complicated domain, and perhaps the Complex domain too. The advantage is that it *does* provide consistent means to operate in all domains, including the Chaotic domain - and hence can provide more options and opportunities in the overall Cynefin 'solution-space'.

Which approach is best? I would argue that it depends what you want to do: hence neither and both, really. But I hope this exploration helps in the choice of how to move around within the Cynefin solution-space, and that it provides some useful suggestions about other ways to use the real power of Cynefin.

Over to you for comments and suggestions, if you would?

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1.

[Paul Jansen](#)

February 21st, 2010 at 18:54 | [#1](#)

[Reply](#) | [Quote](#)

A very enlightening post that got me both thinking and feeling 'homecomingish'. Especially your Jungian cross-map adds a dimension to the Cynefin frameworks that rings home for me. In the application of behavioral sciences, or rather: behavioristic therapy, the 'stillness of the centre' (as you describe it) is exactly the spot within the chaos (of the 'subject') at which intervention occurs. In fact, absolute denial of the very subjectivity of 'chaos' by declaring it 'objectively true' creates a point from where the very nature of chaos in the 'here and now' loses its chaotic grip on what will, can follow.

Another observation I made (before) on the Cynefin framework is that the right-side of Cynefin resonates with the dominant left-brain functions, and the left-side of Cynefin resonates with the dominant right-brain functions (if you allow for this simplification). That would also imply that Complex and Chaos need more creative and artistic approaches than the (rational) Simple and Complicated, and do so to a greater extent of creativity and art than these, limited to the rational versions of 'creative art'. Hope this still makes sense.



2.

[Tom G](#)

February 21st, 2010 at 20:05 | [#2](#)

[Reply](#) | [Quote](#)

Hi Paul - I'm glad it was useful for you - that's really the point, after all.

On right-brain vs left-brain etc, I would agree that Cynefin's 'sinister' side (to use the old Latin word for 'left!') seems to align more with the arts, and the 'dexter' side more with the sciences - again, 'value'-oriented versus 'truth'-oriented. I suspect Dave would argue that the Complex domain provides the closest we have to a balance between the two orientations, and I would probably agree with him if he does.

Another point that Dave brought up in his comments to the previous was about 'embodying' a skill. In a very real sense, repeated practice sets up 'rules' that the body will follow, almost automatically, much faster than thought (for example, a jazz-guitarist's endless practice with chord-sequences and riffs - we think that that music flows 'naturally', but in fact it's more a sequence of embodied patterns, where the thought only has to guide the overall sequence of how the patterns fit together, rather every individual action within each pattern). The key is that it all needs to be reduced to very simple rules in order to be fast enough for action in real-time; if we have to stop and think about it, it's probably going to be too slow.

Thanks again, anyway - exactly the kind of engagement and discussion I was hoping this post would start.



3.

Dave Snowden

February 21st, 2010 at 22:51 | [#3](#)

[Reply](#) | [Quote](#)

You're creating a new model Tom, it may have been stimulated by the Cynefin framework but you have moved so far away from the concept that you need a new name. By way of illustration, you have simply ignored the issue of chaos as randomness. I suggest a new name for the model and new names for the domains as you are not using either Chaos or Complexity in any recognized sense of the words.

Also, both of you really need to move away from that nonsense about right and left brain, yes they are different but not in the sense of one being logical and the other emotional. The left brain handles very high data volumes and deals with autonomic response, the right brain handles novelty.



4.

Dave Snowden

February 21st, 2010 at 23:02 | [#4](#)

[Reply](#) | [Quote](#)

Oh and two other points

1 - Dave's background is Physics AND Philosophy with a heavy dose of theology & anthropology so please don't make assumptions based on a partial knowledge (including a partial misunderstanding of quantum mechanics).

2 - One of the reasons I really dislike the model above is that it creates two dichotomies, between the inner and outer and between value and truth. I don't know why people like dichotomies so much, I suspect that they like things in neat boxes (rather like the right-left brain nonsense and the elitist levels of spiral dynamics)

I really suggest you read Boisot's latest, especially on embodied knowledge as well as the work of Clark and others. You will find that modern science (you seem to take a high school and Newtonian perspective) has an awful lot to teach us in this respect.



5.

[Tom G](#)

Dave - Thanks for joining in here.

I do know and respect your background, and I also respect that you have more knowledge of the science than I do (though I do have a better grasp of it than just "high school and Newtonian perspective"). We share a background in philosophy, anthropology and the like: for the purposes of the illustration, it seemed more useful to focus on the differences. And I do note that - as you yourself said in the seminar and elsewhere - you do prefer to go back to the science first. Hence the - I hope respectful - comparison that I made about our different approaches.

(And on a slightly more ironic note, when is knowledge ever other than partial - mine, yours, or anyone else's? 😊)

You may note that I was careful to avoid going far into the left-brain/right-brain 'story'. It's a very useful metaphor, but I'm well aware that it's not much more than in terms of the science and physiology. The discussion above focusses on the relation between the Cynefin frame and the classic arts-vs-sciences dichotomy, with no actual reference to 'left-brain/right-brain' other than as a metaphor.

Much the same goes for the implied dichotomies - you'll note that I describe them as spectra rather than clear-cut logic-style boundaries. This especially applies to the 'vertical' dimension (inner/outer, time), which is key to the Simple/Complicated and Chaotic/Complex distinctions. I do feel you're attacking something of a straw-man there.

On Cynefin itself, my firm opinion is that, in its own stated terms, the one who's "moved so far away from the concept" of Cynefin is you, not me. Yes, I'm well aware that that sounds bizarre, but if you follow the logic of the frame as presented, and your former work on pathways between the domains as problem-solving tactics in the 'solution-space', you'll find that that's true. These days you only discuss the Complex domain, with little or no reference to the others at all, other than as feeders into the Complex domain (as you do to the Chaotic domain with your current work on abductive reasoning), or possibly as outputs (Complicated and Simple domain). In essence it seems that you've used the Cynefin frame almost solely as a means to situate and differentiate the Complex domain from all the others - which is valid in its own way, of course, but it means that you've poured all of the attention into just one quadrant (zone, rather) of the frame, leaving the rest all but ignored. All that I'm saying - and it's in fact what you yourself said in the past, and appear never to have actually contradicted in your subsequent work - is that Cynefin describes an entire 'solution-space', which provides us with many possibilities for solutions: the hard part is finding appropriate solutions to any given context. These days (and back then, in fact) you concentrated on the Complex-domain region of the solution-space, which up till that time had been very inadequately explored; the Simple (Newtonian/Taylorist) and Complicated (post-Newtonian/'hard-Systems'-Thinking) domains had already been well-explored; all I'm doing here is suggesting that we could perhaps usefully explore the Chaotic-domain region of the solution-space as well, together with a much more solid methodological study of the processes of moving between domains (such as per your former work on pathways).

I suspect we'll have to disagree in our interpretation of the Chaotic-domain. Saying that "chaos is randomness" sounds to me like an extreme either/or dichotomy, exactly the kind of dichotomy you're complaining about re 'inner vs outer'. To you it seems solely to be a space to escape from, a source of "apparently unrelated items" and nothing more; whereas to I and, clearly, many others, it's more a space that's worthy of exploration in its own right.

I'll also have to disagree about "I suggest a new name for the model and new names for the domains as you are not using either Chaos or Complexity in any recognized sense of the words." It seems that you're aiming arbitrarily to put a ring-fence around all of these terms, so that they only mean what you mean them to mean, and that you're the only one who can know what they mean. That, in all too literal sense, would be a cult. The (too?)-literal translation of 'cynefin' is 'place': that seems to be a very good term for a solution-space that, by definition, must include 'the everything'. (See, for example, the excellent work on place by the English charity Common Ground - <http://www.commonground.org.uk>) In the mathematical and scientific sense, 'chaos' is a great deal richer and more subtle than a bald "chaos as randomness"; again in the mathematical sense, 'complex' has many different meanings, including the intersection of the real and 'imaginary' planes (and, yes, I am well aware that 'imaginary' has a precise meaning there). One of the few points we would agree on, I suspect, is that 'complex' is not the same as 'very complicated' - as too many IT-folks seem to believe!

I presume you must have had some involvement in the Wikipedia page on Cynefin. If so, please read it again:

you'll find that what I've described in the post above aligns precisely with the summary in the initial overview. Over the past few years you've changed the labels and interpretations for the domains almost at random, reflecting your current interests - 'Simple' and 'Complicated' used to be called 'Known' and 'Knowable', for example. All I'm doing is going back to the original concept of a 'solution-space', and trying to identify and work out how to fill in the gaps.

Once we put something out into the public space, we no longer possess it: it gains a life of its own. (A fact I know all too well, having seen someone build what was literally an entire inane New-Age religion out of one mistaken interpretation of just one phrase in one of my books. 😞) If you need to retain rigid control, so that it is never other than a reflection of your own current thought, you have two choices: either do not release it, or force it to become a cult with yourself as its sole figurehead. You have already released it, so the former is not possible; and the latter is really not a viable option for you, surely? The only other option is to respect that it now is what it is - which is all I'm asking you to do here.

Once it moves out into the shared-space, your voice and perspective - like mine, like everyone else's - simply becomes one amongst many, with much to add, much to show, much to contribute. All of those are true, in some sense of 'true'; none of them can honestly claim to be '_the_ truth', other than in the sense of 'truth' as a religious experience. That complex, roiling interaction of a multiplicity of 'truths', each with different value in different contexts, seems to me to give a better sense of the richness of meaning of 'cynefin'; demanding the dominance of a single 'truth' from a single person seems to draw us back instead to the baldness of the English word 'place'. I worry sometimes that you've now become so focussed on the Complex domain to the exclusion of all others that you've perhaps lost track of what your own term actually means.



6. Dave Snowden
February 22nd, 2010 at 07:07 | [#6](#)
[Reply](#) | [Quote](#)

Tom, many people have been involved in the creation of the Cynefin model (see my blog on the subject). I have tried to explain the simple scientific principles that underlie the different domains. If you spent some time on that you would see (i) why chaos is randomness and the things you talk about cannot fit there (ii) I have always said that there are many methods for the ordered domain, my focus is on unorder (which includes the voluntary entry in chaos for innovation). It also includes the social learning cycle (complex-complicated-chaotic as a cycle with some spin off into Simple). There are simply so many errors in what you say about what I do that I can't be bothered to do a detailed rebuttal. You are spinning a myth and casting me into a role within that myth that serves your own needs. Sorry I'm not playing and I think it shows that you have little awareness.

As to the idea that you are the preserver of the true faith of Cynefin from which I have departed; well its not only bizarre its perverse. I originally worked from Boisot's I-Space to create Cynefin, but I had the common decency to create a new name for a new model. On that basis we have maintained a sensible and fruitful dialogue. If I had simply taken his model name and said I now understood it better than he then I think he would have ignored me at best, derided me at worst.

You may be creating something of value, it may have been inspired by Cynefin but it is not Cynefin. Please exhibit some intellectual honesty and we might then be able to move forward.



7. [Paul Jansen - @pauljansen](#)
February 22nd, 2010 at 11:20 | [#7](#)
[Reply](#) | [Quote](#)

As I was reading the comments I found myself wondering how various readers might position the conversation itself into the Cynefin model. From Shakespeare we know that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and from this conversation I conclude that, maybe, the same can be said for chaos 😊. Hence too the 'sinister' relation with the left side of the model. Which brings me to the suggestion of two (missing) distinguishers in the conversation/model: (un)consciousness and (un)awareness. It seems to me that the heart of the discussion between Tom and Dave is not as much on the model itself, but as to what it represents. The difference in (un)conscious (un)awareness between two people discussing the model must also reveal the different positions taken: Dave seems to view Cynefin as 'complicated' while Tom views it as 'complex'. I know I am cutting corners here(!), and continuing to do so I would say that Dave views Cynefin more as an 'objective' model of 'ways

reality presents itself' whereas Tom emphasizes the inherent subjectivity of reality and therefore of the classifications within the Cynefin model itself. The left/right (brain) metaphor that I introduced into this discussion before, was aimed at the distinction between such awareness and unawareness, or rather 'subjectivity'. The questions to which answers I am now contemplating are: #1 regarding the inherent nature of the framework, can both Tom and Dave be right (at the same time)? and #2 would introducing the extra dimension of (un)consciousness and (un)awareness resolve the perceived difference? To that I have 'placed' the Cynefin framework in (yet another) matrix: <http://www.pauljansen.eu/images/adjustedCynefin-PJ.jpg> and I am 'stuck' for the answer right now...



8.

Dave Snowden

February 22nd, 2010 at 11:37 | [#8](#)

[Reply](#) | [Quote](#)

There is a perfectly sensible conversation to be had with Tom on a range of issues. He is more than welcome to develop a model with Cynefin as a source. However if he persists in telling me I don't understand my own model and distorting the dimensions and labels then there is little point. The model is neither complicated nor complex, it is a way of making ontological distinctions to permit different epistemological strategies to come into play.

If you want to say that reality is subjective (as opposed to saying that our perception of reality is mostly subjective) then we will get no where. Your own adjustment is similar to Tom's. I suggest you get together and create something and give it a name, that way we might make progress.

The idea that a complex space is a domain in which we are "unaware" defies all normal meaning of CAS. Awareness and unawareness, conscious and subconscious are all states in all domains. Those represent some aspects of the phenomenological dimension. One of the functions of the model in practice is to increase alignment between ontology, epistemology and phenomenology.



9.

[Paul Jansen](#)

February 22nd, 2010 at 13:36 | [#9](#)

[Reply](#) | [Quote](#)

As I read Dave well, Cynefin is to be (kept) within certain boundaries. The framework does cover 'emergent factors', but the framework itself is to be left excluded from this very principle. As I assume from some Tweets that followed Dave's last comment, any attempt by Tom to 'evolute the species' is to be understood as "plagiarism" or even "trying to steal a brand". The alternative presented is to 'start a new species'. The attempts to scientifically question Cynefin is perceived by Dave as "telling me I don't understand my own model" while I observe that any lack of understanding would, if any, be on the process of the discussion, rather than to its content. My personal small contribution to science can be summed-up in one observation: "All behavior is rooted in emotion", for which premise I find ample confirmation in this thread 😊

The need for a new framework(name) should, imho, only be a possible subject at the end of a conversation that exchanges views, while the name/brand-subject raised now, prematurely, seems to render any further learning and exchange futile.

Yet I would still like to comment on Dave's last post. The way Dave describes 'the way of the model' is, by definition, limited to intent of the model, as well as Dave's perception of the model. These both line-up well for Dave as it is his (personal) intent that the framework contents to communicate. Hence: modification of the model can feel as 'questioning personal intent' or maybe even integrity to Dave, and would explain the emergence of a 'heated argument' with some amagdala-responses 😊

To Dave there also seems to be a issue with "to say that reality is subjective (as opposed to saying that our perception of reality is mostly subjective)". For me, I see no practical reason for distinguishing between the two statements which (distinction), indeed, will get us no where. Unless an exception to the subjectiveness (of perception) of reality is assumed by Dave, which then may be illustrated by how Dave describes Cynefin in 'objective' terms.

The difference between Complex and Complicated is mainly that in the Complex the causal relationship between 'problem' and 'solution' is not evident. Hence: P->S->R. The question I raise with introducing (un)aware and (un)conscious is: can we say that the relation between Cause and Effect truly IS ABSENT in the Complex, or is it so that we are JUST UNAWARE of it? Since in the former situation it would imply that even probing can never reveal anything remotely similar to a cause and effect relation, also not in retrospect. In the latter we

can, by probing/experimenting, 'become aware' of such relationship, and even describe it afterwards, which is imho exactly what Cynefin learns. Dave states that introducing these 'alien' factors defies all normal meaning of CAS but I contest that it does not: CAS implies limited perception and understanding based on 'unawareness'. If not, then on what else is 'complexity' based? And as Dave himself wrote before: "one of the basic CAS statements is that the only valid model of a system is the system itself", which implies the very existence of an important difference between a model such as Cynefin and the very system it represents. If not awareness, then what explains for that difference? I perceive Tom's post as an attempt to bridge some of the gap between model and system.



10.

Dave Snowden

February 22nd, 2010 at 13:52 | [#10](#)

[Reply](#) | [Quote](#)

All very interesting points Paul, but there is a very basic problem here. Tom is not suggesting a minor modification to a model, he is suggesting a wholesale redefinition, and one which contradicts the basic construct of the model itself. Under those circumstances claiming that his model is the true Cynefin model is perverse, un-professional and a form of plagiarism. Create a new model, define it in relationship to Cynefin and an interesting and fruitful debate might emerge. At the moment we have a hijacking of a name/brand for reasons that I can't fathom, or at least for which the most obvious explanation would be disturbing. This is in part comical, in part tragic.



11.

[Paul Jansen](#)

February 22nd, 2010 at 14:55 | [#11](#)

[Reply](#) | [Quote](#)

It is all, apparently, complex... Hence the probing. 😊



12.

Dave Snowden

February 22nd, 2010 at 16:23 | [#12](#)

[Reply](#) | [Quote](#)

Too true, but we need a little constraint to allow meaning to emerge 😊



13.

[Tom G](#)

February 22nd, 2010 at 19:28 | [#13](#)

[Reply](#) | [Quote](#)

I'm very pleased to see that the conversation has continued in my absence. However I would have to say I'm a little disappointed at the pejorative 'unprofessional'.

It seems to me that there are two distinct things going on here:

- A: Cynefin as a published framework
 - B: Cynefin as a brand for 'what Dave Snowden does'
- leading to
- C: practical implications for the Cynefin community

A: Cynefin as a published framework

[Just as a quick check, is any part of the following description incorrect? If so, let's call the next section 'Part 1' for identification purposes, and so on.]

[A1]

The published framework describes four distinct domains of sensemaking/response tactics, arising outward from a central starting-point. In essence it describes a 'solution-space' incorporating regions in which simple

linear causality would seem to apply, more complicated but still linear causality, complex contexts in which causality (if any) may be identified only retrospectively, and where causal relations cannot be identified and may not exist. The labels have changed somewhat over the years, but at present these are Simple, Complicated, Complex, and Chaotic. It's perhaps important to note that although the domains are described as distinct, in practice they often blur somewhat into each other, and many actual sensemaking/response tactics will move in typical pathways from one domain to another.

[A2]

There are typical techniques that may be 'situated' in specific domains. For example, in the slide above from Dave's seminar, 'Scientific Management' is situated in the Simple domain [where I imagine Six Sigma would also be situated?], 'hard-Systems Thinking' (e.g. Beer and I forgot-who-else-was-mentioned) in the Complicated, and SenseMaker narrative-mapping and fitness-landscapes in the Complex.

[A3]

No techniques are listed as 'situated' in the Chaotic domain. Instead, it is asserted that there is no causality in that domain: it can therefore be no more than a source of information for e.g. abductive reasoning in the Complex domain, or the trigger for a forced return to the Simple domain (i.e. 'take control').

[A4]

The pathways between domains were described in detail in early material (e.g. 'New Dynamics of Strategy', 2003), but do not seem to have been featured in more recent material (e.g. HBR, "A Leader's Framework for Decision Making", 2007).

[A5]

The full set of domains have been referenced in some relatively recent material (e.g. HBR, 2007), but in essence the main focus at present is in the Complex (as per the seminar).

[A6 - possibly debatable]

There is a recent tendency to assert that techniques that are not appropriate for use in the Complex domain (such as Taylorism, Six Sigma and hard-Systems Thinking) are 'wrong', without acknowledging their validity in the (potentially very small) subset of contexts, within the overall solution-space defined by the Cynefin frame, for which they are appropriate (typically contexts with very high certainty and repeatability).

[A7 - probably debatable]

There is a tendency (evidenced by the seminar-slide above) to present Complex-domain techniques (such as SenseMaker fitness-landscapes) as inherently 'superior' than those that have preceded them (such as Scientific Management and hard-Systems Thinking). Doing so implies that the Complex domain is therefore an inherently 'better' region of the Cynefin solution-space than either the Simple or Complicated regions, or (as implied by the description of the process of abductive reasoning) the Chaotic region.

(Note that within the Complex domain, techniques designed specifically for that domain should of course be more appropriate than those that are not - especially techniques whose design indicates that they are only appropriate for the Simple and/or Complicated domains. Yet the implied assertion that Complex-domain techniques are inherently 'better' than the others in absolute terms also implies that the Complex-domain itself is inherently privileged in the solution-space - which, if so, would seem to be circular-reasoning?)

[end of section A]

B: Cynefin as a brand

[B1]

Dave has used the term 'Cynefin' both as a label for the published framework, and as a generic term for the work that he has done over the past decade or so in knowledge-management, organisational complexity, sensemaking in complex contexts, etc.

(There may be a lot of 'etc' that may be relevant here, but I hope those above are adequate as an initial summary?)

[B2 - personal observation, may be incorrect]

Since the HBR paper (2007), the 'Cynefin' label has been used primarily, if not exclusively, to describe work either in the Complex domain, or drawing on other domains primarily as a source for subsequent work in the Complex domain.

[B3 - ditto]

Corollary: little if any explicit work has been done within the non-Complex domains. In essence, the overall solution-space defined by the Cynefin framework has been constrained to the Complex-domain only in the current usage of Cynefin as a brand.

[B4 - personal observation derived from recent comments]

It is probable that Dave considers the term 'Cynefin' to be his personal brand-name. There are many understandable reasons why this should be so - not least personal effort over many years, and personal commitment to the term.

[B5 - from the Wikipedia Cynefin article]

The Welsh term 'cynefin' may be (inadequately) translated into English as 'place'. It has complex connotations of belonging, 'homecoming', commitment to and responsibility for place 'as itself'. Crucially it is not so much an abstract concept as an experience, even a way of life. [Note: this seems similar in some ways to the Australian Aboriginal concept/experience/etc equally-inadequately translated as 'the Dreaming'.] The term 'cynefin' therefore has a very strong cultural-described 'natural meaning' independent of and preceding either the Cynefin framework or Dave's personal work on sensemaking etc.

[end of section B]

C: Implications for the Cynefin community

[C1]

From section A, the Cynefin framework has been openly published, in various forms (e.g. HBR, Wikipedia), in a manner which indicates that it is generally available (e.g. it is supported by but not formally constrained to a sub-community of certified practitioners).

The framework is frequently referenced by and used by a broad community across a broad range of professional disciplines, including knowledge-management, strategy, enterprise-architecture and many others.

[C2]

The Cynefin-framework community is not structured as a cult (i.e. with a single figurehead controlling 'the truth') but as an academic-style community of peers. Many if not most of the members of this community are not certified Cynefin practitioners.

[C3]

Users of Cognitive-Edge tools and software are required to be certified as Cynefin/Cognitive-Edge practitioners. (For the remainder of this discussion, I'll refer to this as the 'Cynefin-brand community'.) In general, Cynefin-brand community is still an academic-style community of peers, but more tightly managed (as is usual for certification schemes) - for example, members will be expected to keep up-to-date with current developments by Dave and others under the Cognitive-Edge umbrella.

The Cynefin-brand community is a subset of the Cynefin-framework community.

[C4]

The Cynefin-brand community will tend to follow Dave's current leadership, and hence at present focus primarily on the Complex-domain within the overall Cynefin-framework solution-space.

The Cynefin-framework community may and often does work with any or all parts of the solution-space, using Cynefin terminology to describe where their solutions and sensemakings are situated within that space.

The Cynefin-brand community is therefore at present tending to use only a subset of the overall solution-space as legitimately described by the Cynefin-framework community.

[C5]

The solution-space described by the Cynefin framework has some evident affinity to the 'natural meaning' of the 'cynefin' term.

The solution-space typically described by the Cynefin-brand at present is only a subset of the Cynefin-framework solution-space, and hence applies an arbitrary constraint to the affinity between the two terms.

[C6]

An arbitrary constraint on a 'natural meaning' is described as a 'term-hijack' (see <http://weblog.tomgraves.org/?s=term-hijack> for a range of examples).

We therefore appear to have the somewhat bizarre situation that, by constraining the scope of the Cynefin-framework solution-space to a privileged emphasis of the Complex-domain, the creator of the Cynefin term is implicitly applying a term-hijack to the term that he himself created. (This is not unique: other examples include Andrew McAfee's usage of 'Enterprise 2.0', and John Zachman's usage of 'enterprise architecture'.)

It is therefore not 'wrong' for the Cynefin-framework community to use the term 'Cynefin' to describe the full solution-space, even though the Cynefin-brand community may (perhaps unwisely) choose to do so.

[end of section C]

Dave and others: please explain where, if anywhere, my reasoning above is incorrect?



14.

[Paul Jansen](#)

February 22nd, 2010 at 20:10 | [#14](#)

[Reply](#) | [Quote](#)

As it develops Tom and Dave seem to 'dig into' the 'turfwar of words' where I was still hoping to get on with the topic of this post. Tom is trying to make a rational case for both professionalism and the 'right to question' while Dave seems to have dismissed the whole discussion on the basis that his work is being hijacked. Allow me to step out of this amagdalanian exchange 😊. Toms 'making sense' or not and Dave's raising 'the ownership issue' rightfully or not will not be resolved by reasoning, I believe. Should you fancy a further elaboration on the possible evolution of the Cynefin framework (either under that name or any other) I can be reached at paul@pauljansen.eu. For the ongoing discussion I repeat my previous question: "regarding the inherent nature of the framework, can both Tom and Dave be right (at the same time)?". Lets assume the answer is yes and pick it up from there...



15.

[Tom G](#)

February 22nd, 2010 at 20:17 | [#15](#)

[Reply](#) | [Quote](#)

Hi Paul - I'm desperately trying to avoid a 'turf-war': it's in no-one's interest at all.

In any case, many thanks; and yes, please let us continue this conversation into the overall Cynefin-like solution-space - particularly the implied equivalent of Cynefin's Chaotic domain.



16.

Dave Snowden

February 22nd, 2010 at 20:47 | [#16](#)

[Reply](#) | [Quote](#)

You just don't get it do you? And you keep trying to describe your nonsense in terms of personal issues. Its really very simple. Developing on from someone else's model, acknowledging your sources with proper reference, explaining the differences is all good news. Claiming that model and its name is unprofessional plagiarism. The fact that you don't see this reflects very badly on your practice and principles. If anyone else pays any attention to you on this I may respond further, otherwise, with regret I am afraid that I have no further

intention of engaging with someone capable of such disgraceful behaviour. I now regret having paid this any attention in the first place.



17.

[Tom G](#)

February 22nd, 2010 at 21:13 | [#17](#)

[Reply](#) | [Quote](#)

Dave - This is really not acceptable by any standards, and you know it. This is absolutely not acceptable.

You appear here to be formally accusing me of plagiarism and unprofessional conduct.

As everyone can see, both in these two posts and elsewhere, I am not 'claiming the name' of Cynefin. As everyone can see, both in these posts and elsewhere, I have taken almost inordinate care to acknowledge the sources, with proper references, explaining the differences, point by point, every step of the way. I have therefore exactly conformed to your description of professional behaviour.

My only 'fault' appears to be that I have asserted that, by your own published terms, you appear in recent years to have constrained your usage of the Cynefin frame to a much narrower base than that of the original and published scope of Cynefin. All I have done is indicated that, in reference to the terms of your original published frame, there appears to be scope for an exploration of the Chaotic space, and the integration across the full suite of domains, similar in nature to what you have done with the Complex domain. In all of that, again, I have cited the original sources, fully acknowledged your original ownership, fully described the differences, and fully indicated the points where I expected potentially disagreement from you, so as to ensure that no-one would or could ascribe any of my potentially-mistaken hypotheses to you.

Therefore, in your own terms, your accusation is not only baseless, but professionally unacceptable. The "disgraceful behaviour" here is yours and yours alone, and you know it.

I expect and await your formal apology. Anything less, as you know full well, would be gross professional misconduct on your part.

I hope it is also abundantly clear that I will not accept anything else from you other than a formal apology.

Beyond that, the matter is ended.

Thank you.



18.

Dave Snowden

February 22nd, 2010 at 21:20 | [#18](#)

[Reply](#) | [Quote](#)

If I have your assurance that you do not intend to reference the model you have described above as the Cynefin Framework then I will have no problem in withdrawing the above remarks.



19.

[Tom G](#)

February 22nd, 2010 at 21:36 | [#19](#)

[Reply](#) | [Quote](#)

Accepted. The matter was already in train before I received your above response - see <http://weblog.tomgraves.org/index.php/2010/02/22/alternatives-to-cynefin/> . As you will have seen, a general request has also been sent out via Twitter to ensure that this is done as quickly as possible.

I would, however, perhaps ask you to consider whether you yourself would accept such a conditional 'apology' from someone who had baselessly accused you of plagiarism or professional misconduct.



20.

Dave Snowden

February 22nd, 2010 at 21:47 | [#20](#)

[Reply](#) | [Quote](#)

I said about five times: if you call this something different then there can be an interesting discussion. The fact that you kept saying no led me to the conclusions above and I reacted accordingly (somewhat exasperated by the flu I will admit). If we have cleared that up then I unconditionally withdraw the comments above and will respond on your more detailed post above over the next few days.

Peace ...



21.

[Tom G](#)

February 22nd, 2010 at 22:16 | [#21](#)

[Reply](#) | [Quote](#)

For Dave Snowden: a Twitter request for suggestions an alternative to the 'Cynefin' term has now been sent to all people I can identify who ReTweeted references to either of these two posts.



22.

Dave Snowden

February 23rd, 2010 at 06:18 | [#22](#)

[Reply](#) | [Quote](#)

Noted, now as promised a response to your wider points using the same numbers

[A1]

Accurate in parts, but some errors. There are three types of system in nature - ordered, complex and chaotic defined in terms of the constraint relationship between system and agents. To account for human nature Order is split into two Simple and Complicated, based on whether the relationship between cause & effect is self-evident or requires investigation/expertise. The fifth state of unorder relates to inauthentic response, namely a lack of awareness of which domain you are in. The distinctions between order, complexity and chaos are phase shifts, and are not blurred. In fact the shift from simple to chaos is a catastrophic (Thom) change. The original use of "known" and "knowable" to "simple" and "complicated" was made to avoid confusion between ontology and epistemology.

[A2]

Process approaches are in the Simple and Complicated domain. Six Sigma represents a process approach taken to extreme

[A3]

Simply wrong

The chaotic domain is one in which there are no constraints. Under those circumstances, if the agents are truly independent of each other then large number mathematical techniques work, along with crowd sourcing (I prefer distributed cognition etc. To achieve a result here the agent connectivity has to be reduced to near zero. No natural system stays in a chaotic space for any significant period of time. Connections evolve. Humans can enter the space, for a limited period of time accidentally (a crisis) or deliberately (innovation & distributed cognition) but its not natural. Dynamic movements to simple (forced control and not recommended unless there is not alternative) and complex (start to create connectivity, respond to emergent possibilities) are described in various papers. seminars and course material.

[A4]

Dynamics were in the first draft of the HBR article but did not survive editorial "simplification". They continue to be taught on all CE courses and the original set in "New Dynamics" continue to be expanded in practice.

[A5]

Incorrect. The seminar was focused on Abductive research which is primarily a complex approach. Other work on forced use of Chaos (distributed cognition) is a major area of development at the moment. Through out our history we have said that we will not develop techniques for ordered spaces, but will will situate existing methods and handle dynamic movements through those spaces.

[A6]

Substantially Incorrect. Taylorism was correct in its time, but we now know the limits of its utility, ditto

systems dynamics. Such techniques are right within context, but wrong if they they are applied to complex problems. Six Sigma is an example of what happens at the end of an S-Curve, the increasingly failing paradigm is taken to excess and is nearly always wrong in consequence.

[A7]

Incorrect. Complex techniques are inherently superior in complex situations, in ordered systems they may well be inferior. This is very clear in articles and in many a presentation. The different domains simply are, there is no question of inherent superiority.

[B1]

Incorrect, since leaving IBM the name has been used exclusively for the model. Generic terms have been naturalising sense-making, organic KM and others. But the model is the model. Even in IBM days while it was the name for the centre, it was not the description of what we did - that was then as now all about sense-making

[B2]

Incorrect - see above, its the name of a model which has all domains in it

[B3]

Incorrect - see above comments (although no work is done to create specific methods for ordered domains, there are more than enough out there we don't need to reinvent the wheel)

[B4]

I don't see it as a personal brand, but it is intimately linked to me as its creator and to a lesser extent two joint authors. What happens to it matters to me.

[B5]

When I talked to several indigenous groups in Darwin they came up with over 20 alternatives in a few minutes. It is an important word in Wales, and has been used in many a novel. I am the first to use it for a model in management, others have used it for ecological and other movements including performance art. Like any "sacred" word (and most languages have some) it has to be used with respect.

[C1]

Agreed, nearly all publications I have seen respect the original model and articles

[C2]

Agreed, and we have been doing our best to reduce any dependency on me (training is now carried out by others etc etc)

[C3]

Incorrect. The only requirement to be accredited (we do not certify) is to complete a training course. That entitles you to use the software tools and associated methods subject to a fee. All non-software methods are open source. There are no requirements or expectations of community membership. There is no Cynefin brand community, that name is only used for the model. The community is Cognitive edge and the software brand is SenseMaker™

[C4]

There is no Cynefin brand community - see above. Other than our patents on SenseMaker™ and linked methods we do not constrain how people use the methods, but if they claim our authority for what they do then (if it is seriously wrong and possibly damaging) we will publicly state our position. I think we have had to do this once only. Nearly of the community maintain normal standards.

The whole subset and partial use comments here are just wrong I am afraid

[C5]

The name is evocative of CAS hence its choice. There is no Cynefin-brand, there is a Cynefin model which is used in many different ways. Fundamentally in error here I am afraid.

[C6]

There is no constraint to the complex domain, that is a basic error I am afraid. Cynefin is a model, it is not remotely similar to a name like "Enterprise 2.0". It is also a well defined model based on the three types of physical system and the agent-system constraint relationship.

end of response

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