

IRAHSS 2010

Closing remarks: Dave Snowden

“For now we see through a glass,
darkly; but then face to face: now
I know in part; but then shall I
know even as also I am known.”

1 Corinthians 13:12

What have we learned?

- Scenario planning remains the dominant tool of foresight, but is mature, a linear process, constrained by power, time consuming & mainly of value to the participants
- The idea of rational decision making at an individual or group level is discredited; illusion of control
- Horizon scanning may be out of date/the wrong metaphor
- Use of collaborative technology to link and support experts allows diversity but high risk of entrainment (which experts?)
- Good (and bad) things are happening out there largely without governance
- We face an unprecedented level of uncertainty, and the consequences of failure go beyond the catastrophic
- Failure is inevitable & necessary; from robustness to resilience; risk and uncertainty are not the same thing
- "Power without love is reckless and abusive....
...love without power is sentimental and anemic"
- Call International Futures (there are a lot of resources we can use)

“ The greatest loss of time is delay and expectation, which depend upon the future. We let go the present, which we have in our power, and look forward to that which depends upon chance, and so relinquish a certainty for an uncertainty ”

Seneca

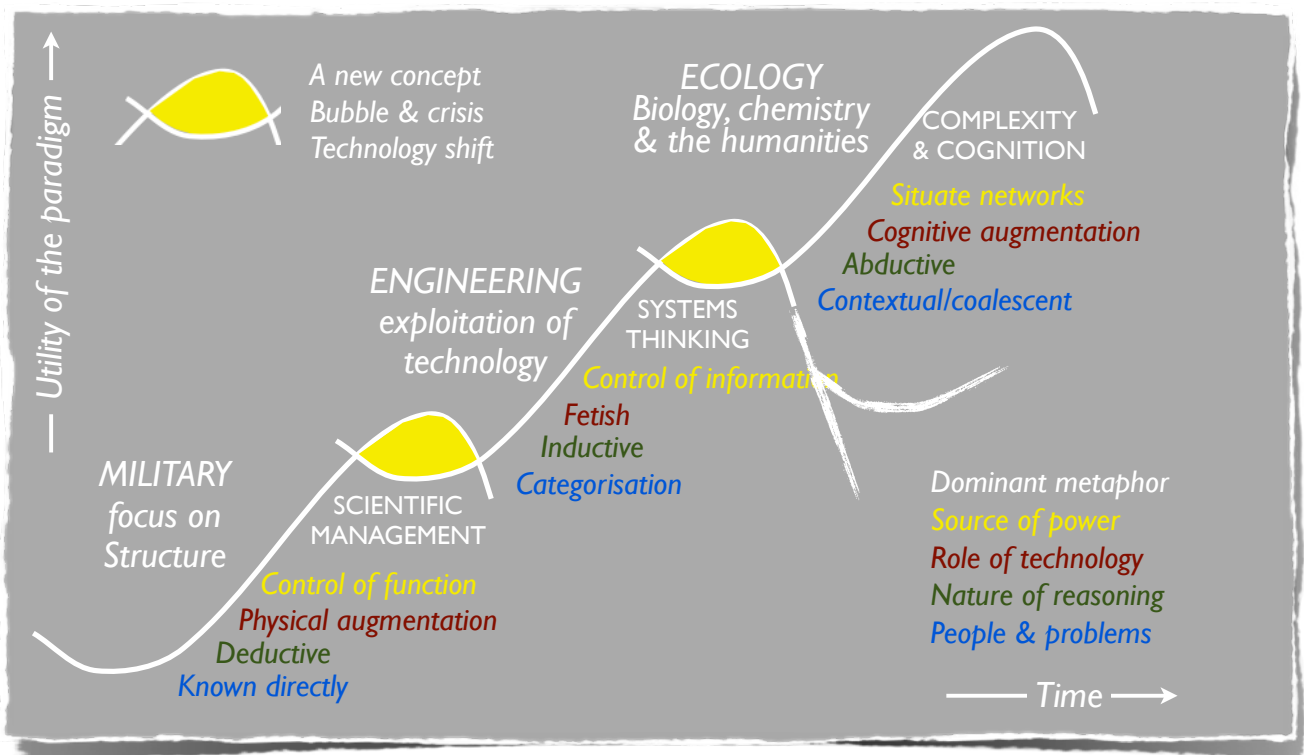
Issues & dangers

- “...track record and credibility”; fashion & snake oil
- failing to understand human sense-making
See-attend-act, do not necessarily lead to the other
- Using dichotomies not dialectic; dilemma not paradox;
privileging social atomism (cult of the individual)
- The village idiot syndrome & Swift-boating
- Common errors
 - confusion of *correlation* with *causation* ^(16/32) (causality is a general issue)
 - confusion of *simulation* with *prediction*
 - thinking that *hindsight* will lead to *foresight*
 - the human brain as a “limited capacity information processing device
 - thinking that you can train bias out of people (or computers)
 - failing to realise that people fall back into sin, the danger of facilitation
 - not realising that anticipation is impossible, anticipatory *awareness* is realistic
- Using new language for old concepts (CAS, Cognitive Neuroscience & Anthropology)

“Nor do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will spill out, and the skins will be ruined. Instead, they pour new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved.”

Mark 9:17

Life cycles in foresight



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7

“ While tacit knowledge can be possessed by itself, explicit knowledge must rely on being tacitly understood and applied. Hence all knowledge is either tacit or rooted in tacit knowledge. A wholly explicit knowledge is unthinkable. ”

Michael Polanyi “Knowing and Being”

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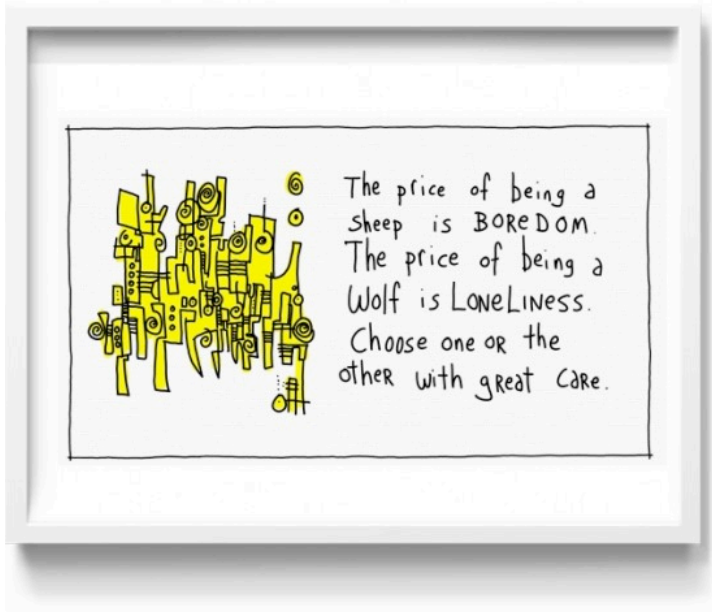
8

Missing in action

- Real time scenario creation, looking at evolutionary possibilities not a range of outcomes
- Human sensor network, the *wisdom* but not the *foolishness* of crowds; ritual & roles
- Context, constraints & connections; by government
- Managing for exaptation & serendipity
- From proof to coherence, from safe-fail to fail-safe experimentation
- “Praxis makes perfect”; the role of education ***developing the capacity for judgement***
- From robustness to resilience

“ We must find ways to stimulate the novelty-receptive right hemisphere of the brain, lest the left side carry through its conformist mandate of rationalizing and legitimizing expectations, habits and prejudices **”**

Leslie Paul Thiele “The Heart of Judgement”



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