f **Like** 🐦 **Tweet** ✉ **Forward**

Human Dymensions Quarterly Newsletter
Culture, Learning and Risk
www.humandymensions.com

IN OTHER NEWS

Add a title

Enter your description

Understanding Emergence

The idea that organisations 'drift' into failure is not the language I would use to explain why things go wrong in organisations. Neither do I use the language or discourse of 'human error' or 'human factors' in explaining how humans in organizing tackle risk. The coupling of 'drift' and 'failure' sets a discourse for 'having arrived' as-if organisations are not capable of failing. Similarly, I don't use the word 'factors' because the language of 'human factors' understands humans as a 'factor' in a system, thus making the human an object. Neither discourse of 'drift' or 'factors' is helpful in understanding humans, organisations, decision making and risk. The concept of 'emergence' is a much more helpful way of understanding human organizing and risk.

Here are some straight forward propositions: the world is random, humans are fallible so there can never be any 'zero harm'. All human organising involves randomness and fallibility so there can be no perfect organization. No-one and no organisation in this world ever 'arrives', so there is no drift to failure, all human organizing fails because it never achives its goals. This is why organisations strategically plan, and when they don't achieve their plan, they plan again. All organisations accept randomness in the planning process and so prioritise resilience and adaptability.

Similarly, because trade-offs and by-products are a part of all decision making, all human organizing is paradoxical (See Raynor, M., (2007) *The Strategy Paradox, Why Committing to Success, Leads to Failure and what to do about it* (Doubleday, New York). It is a truism that learning requires risk and that risk aversion is anti-learning. Organising that seeks to eliminate risk also creates a dynamic of fear, anti-discovery, anti-innovation and anti-learning. The enemy of learning is risk aversion. The denial of paradox and wicked problems in human judgment and decision making is also the denial of life and living.

Tightly coupled systems in organizing make for organizational fragility (see Taleb, T., (2014) *AntiFragile, Things that Gain from Disorder*, Random House, New York) Loose coupling of systems in organisations enabled for greater resilience but less control (Further see Weick, K., (2001, 2009) *Making Sense of the Organisation Vols. 1 &2*, John Wiley, West Sussex). The nature of culture understood as the 'collective unconscious' also heightens the intensity of paradox in human organizing. So where is the balance?

A good place to start in understand organisations, leadership and randomness is in the work of Letiche, Lissack and Schultz (*Coherence in the Midst of Complexity, Advances in Social Complexity Theory*, (2011) Palgrave, Macmillan, New York).

The book starts:

'Although we write about change and coherence, emergence and experience, miracles and surprises, we do not and cannot rationize away change, surprise and chaos.'

As risk is: 'The uncertainty associated with human action and the trust and faith required to suspend uncertainty to take that action' then, all risk must embrace the reality of uncertainty, surprise, change, mystery and emergence. We understand the world through the lens of our faith, even our faith in the certainty of our expectations about risk and safety. The hope of safety in risk is essentially a metaphysical activity characterized by faith. The word 'faith' is rarely used in discourse about risk and safety yet it should be. There can be no discourse about risk and safety without ending up in thought about death, loss, fatality, harm, uncertainty and suffering. So we act each day as-if those things will not visit us, otherwise one wouldn't get out of bed. This is why Safety is best understood as an

Archetype (Jung **http://www.uiltexas.org/files/capitalconference /Twelve_Character_Archetypes.pdf**, **https://www.hccfl.edu/media/724354 /archetypesforliteraryanalysis.pdf**) that embodies the quest for innocence, perfection but ends up in denial.

Emergence is marked by complexity and wickedity that is, the dynamic of intractability and paradox (**https://www.wickedproblems.com/1_wicked_problems.php**, **https://en.wikipedia.org /wiki/Wicked_problem**). Wickedity is the energy embedded in wicked problems, evident in things that cannot be solved only tackled. This is why learning is fundamentally a dialectic, an emergence from the tension of opposites. The dialectic is held in tension between the object and the subject.

So, if human organisaing is an act of faith in the face of what is unseen and unknown, how do we juggle living? How does one prepare for the unexpected? (Weick, K., and Sutcliffe, K., (2001) *Managing the Unexpected.* Jossey-Bass, San Francisco). How does the quest to manage risk manufacture organizational fragility? Why do bad things 'emerge' in organisations that seem quite stable? How can one prepare for something entirely new that has never happened before?

Emergence is not the product of some linear algorithm. The reductionist assumptions of empiricism don't apply to the unseen that emerges with no foreseen indicators. Organisations don't 'drift' into failure rather, the unforeseen that is blinded by hindsight bias, 'comes from left field' without seeming cause and reason. So what can we do? Here are some suggestions:

1. The first thing we need to do is better understand the dynamics of emergence in organisations.
2. We also need to understand the nature of wicked problems and related issues of 'collective coherence'.
3. The next is to challenge the blindness of binary oppositionalism and the seduction of 'black and white' thinking.
4. Refocus energies away from absolutes and extremes like zero and reframe a focus on learning, resilience, relationships, wisdom, discernment and maturity.
5. Make trade-off and by-product thinking a core agenda in any conversations about risk and safety.
6. Shift away from rigid and closed systemic models in organizing to more open systems of organizing.
7. Resist linear 'engineering' type disciplines and move to a more trans-disciplinary approach to curriculum, knowledge and skill development.
8. Reclaim the nature of fallibility as an essential to learning, trust and the re-humanisation of risk.
9. Replace old and linear approaches to risk with a focus on affordances rather than measurements and numerics.
10. Place a new emphasis on the semiosphere and how this commands the formation of the collective unconscious.

New Human Dymensions Website
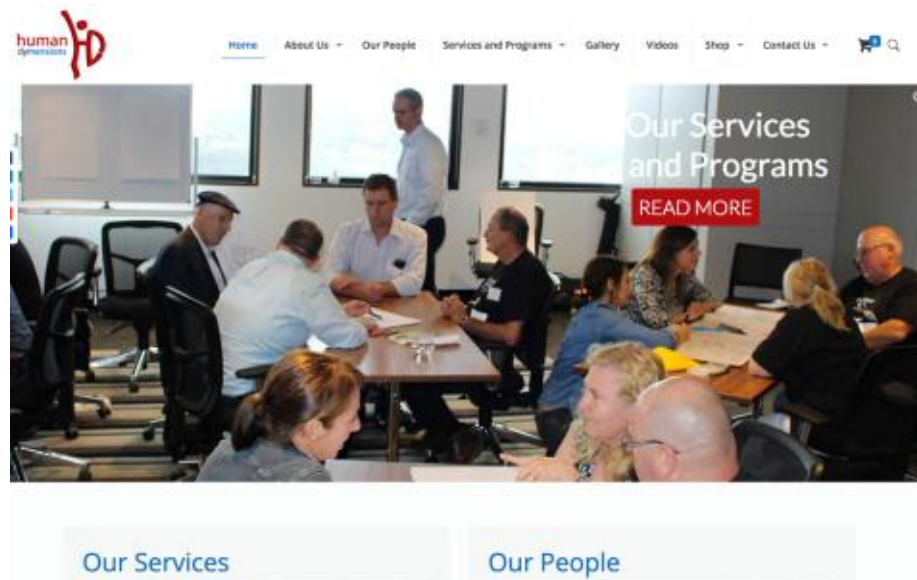
After 10 years the Human Dymensions website has finally undergone a 'revamp' check it out here: **http://www.humandymensions.com/**. And, there is much more to come.

We have a dedicated site for Centre for Leadership and Learning in Risk (cllr.com.au) and soon there will be a special dedicated website focusing on research in the Social Psychology of Risk (SPoR). Finally, there will be a dedicated site (RYSK) for those who become 'Masters' in the Social Psychology of Risk following the completion of eight or more units of study. The RYSK Group will work as a collection of associates and fellow researchers in advancing studies in the Social Psychology of Risk.

Podcast

Dr Long was recently interviewed by SafeWork Australia on 'Humanising Work, Health and Safety' and the podcast is available here: **https://seminars.swa.gov.au/humanising-whs-management**

Workshops/Studies Centre for Leadership and Learning in Risk

The next available Introduction to the Social Psychology of Risk will be in Auckland New Zealand and is scheduled as a two day workshop - 30,31 June and 1,2 July 2017.

The next scheduled workshop in Australia is on Semiotics and the Social Psychology of Risk for 5,6,7 April in Canberra and is currently heavily prescribed, very few places are left.

You can find out about all available workshops for 2017 here: **http://cllr.com.au/events/**

Big News About Books

To celebrate the new Human Dymensions website all Dr Long's books have been discounted by 30%. This means that books have been marked down from $29.95 to $19.95 with further discounts available for bulk purchases for study groups and work reading groups. This is a permanent pricing arrangement.

We also are starting the sale of other books in the Social Psychology of Risk discipline, these being Rob Sam's book *Social Sensemaking* and Michael Kruger's new book: *It Takes Two to Tango*. You can read a review of Michael's book here: **https://safetyrisk.net/it-takes-two-to-tango-reflections-on-safe-behaviour/** You can read a review of Rob Sam's book here: **https://safetyrisk.net/social-sensemaking-new-book-release/**

Soon we hope to have others in the group also publishing books and occasional papers on the new SPoR website.

How Many Tigers?

Time for your chance to win a complementary copy of *Risky Conversations, The Law, Social Psychology and Risk*.

This one isn't easy, you will need to work hard to get the right number. The question is: how many tiger heads are in the picture? The first 6 correct entries win a free copy of *Risky Conversations*, don't forget

that most prizes are gone in less than 30 minutes of posting the Newsletter and also enter by including your snail mail address.

Associates and Links

One of the strengths of the Social Psychology of Risk is the depth of expertise and support available across the SPoR Community. The following people have all studied extensively with Dr Long and have consultancies in leadership, risk and culture in the tradition of the Social Psychology of Risk. Please contact each directly if interested in work in your area. Alternatively, write to Dr Long (rob@humandymensions.com) for a recommendation for your next presentation or workshop/advising needs.

Craig Ashhurst (Canberra) Wicked problems, Leadership and Risk
http://www.nichethinking.net.au/Home.html

Gabrielle Carlton (Canberra) Reslience, Organisational Maturity and Risk
http://resilyence.com/

Hayden Collins (Melbourne) Critical Thinking and On-Site Practice
http://www.riskintelligent.com.au/

James Ellis (Sydney) Work Life Balance, Injury management
http://www.frameworkgroup.com.au/

Max Geyer (Newcastle) On-site Coaching, Mining
http://www.viamaxconsulting.com/

Dee Henshall (Brisbane) Oil, Gas, FIFO, Organisational Well Being
http://humankonnexions.com.au/

Dennis Millard (Brisbane) Safety, Risk and Leadership, Heavy Industrry
http://www.humanrysk.com.au/

Rob Sams (Newcastle) Manufacturing, Construction, Sensemaking
http://dolphyn.com.au/

Dave Whitefield (Brisbane) Culture, Risk, Organising, Presentations
http://www.peopleandrisk.com/

We also fly to you and work in collaborative teams on large projects, JVs and alliances.

New Video on Cognitive Dissonance

Rob has been requested a number of times to explain cognitive dissonance and so has made a brief video for this purpose: **https://vimeo.com/202589604**
You can also read a blog about cognitive dissonance here:
https://safetyrisk.net/risk-and-safety-starts-with-being/

New Human Dymensions Gallery

People often wonder what we do at Human Dymensions and the best way to get an idea of what we do and what we can offer your organization is through the new picture gallery on the new site here: **http://www.humandymensions.com /gallery/**

Or by looking at our "Services and Programs Map:
http://www.humandymensions.com/services-and-programs/

What is missing - From VUCA to WUFA

The acronym VUCA stands for Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous. The populist acronym has been about for a while and recognizes the reality of organizing and living in the

real world. You can read about VUCA here:
https://en.wikipedia.org /wiki/Volatility,_uncertainty,_complexity_and_ambiguity

However, VUCA doesn't really capture the extent of the human organizing in 2017, the VUCA movement still holds out hope and faith for solutions. As the world increases in hyper-complexity more problems have become 'wicked problems': **https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wicked_problem** also read further Safety - A Wicked Problem: **https://sia.org.au/downloads/news-updates/safety_a_wicked_problem.pdf** That is, some problems cannot be 'fixed' they can only be 'tackled' and improved'.

The reality is that life is more Wicked, Uncertain, Fallible and Ambiguous (WUFA) than ever. In response, we are far better served by understanding emergence, paradox, wisdom and maturity than by holding to some idea that the solution to everything is measurement (attribution), mechanics and 'fixing'. The greatest impediment to learning is binary naivety and the wish for simplicity.

You can read more about VUCA here: **https://hbr.org/2014/01/what-vuca-really-means-for-you**

You can read more about 'Wicked Problems' here:
http://www.enablingchange.com.au/wickedproblems.pdf
http://www.cognexus.org/Rotman-interview_SharedUnderstanding.pdf
https://hbr.org/2008/05/strategy-as-a-wicked-problem
http://jburge.faculty.wesleyan.edu/files/2015/10/DCC14_WP_final.pdf

Culture, Leadership and Risk Program

Given the nature of this newsletter and the discussion of emergence, VUCA and risk, you may be interested in The Human Dymensions Leadership in Risk Program. If so, request an outline from: **admin@humandymensions.com** or download from here: **http://www.humandymensions.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Human-Dymensions-Leadership-Program.pdf**

The Human Dymensions Leadership in Risk Program has a special focus on the social psychology of risk, culture and learning.

Wicked Problems Workshop

If you are interested in learning more about wicked problems and the challenges for leadership you can request more information at: **admin@humandymensions.com** or Download an overview here: **http://www.nichethinking.net.au/Home_files /Wicked_Problems_1.pdf**

The Program is presented in collaboration with Craig Ashhurst (currently competing his PhD in Wicked Problems at ANU).

Craig is also Director of Studies at the **Centre for Leadership and Learning in Risk.**

Contacts

You can contact here: **admin@humandymensions.com**

Websites

Human Dymensions
http://www.humandymensions.com/

Centre for Leadership and Learning in Risk
http://cllr.com.au/

Edit your subscription | **Unsubscribe instantly**