



Dave Snowden

November 3, 2013 0 Comments Categories: Reflections

Symbiosis: scaffolding



I'm continuing the lichen pictorial theme for these posts in which I am exploring a definition of a new type of service based organisation for which Cognitive Edge is hopefully an early exemplar. In yesterday's post I have some of the background in DataSciences's Genus Programme and I now want to move on to think about the architecture of a complexity informed organisation. My more **recent thinking on architecture and design** has been much influenced by Ann Pendleton-Julian and her use of scaffolding, which in turn builds on one of my earlier inspirations namely the philosopher Andy Clarke who uses the same word to describe some of the ways in which our consciousness extended beyond the physical brain.

The key thing to understand about scaffolding is that it creates a construct which supports the emergence of something which can sustain its identity once the poles are removed. Now this is critical if you are going to take the position (which I do) is that applications and capability should be the emergent property of the interaction of people and their artefacts within constraints. The scaffolding provides the constraints which need to be strong enough at the start of the process but should evolve to be a part (albeit a stabilising part) of the evolving identity of the organisation.

Now I am not talking about software design here but organisational design. We are also dealing with a complex adaptive system so the scaffolding needs to be made up of:

- A coherent narrative to provide a sense of direction
- Constraints (boundaries)
- Probes
- Amplification and dampening strategy
- Supporting processes

Now this is initial thinking, it will develop over the next month and end up in day three and four of the accreditation programme – **first showing in London shortly** for those who want to be in on the start of the process.

Now interestingly the first two are both narrative based, constraints are best provided in a human system by negative stories about what you are not and where you don't want to go. Direction is more parable and heuristics. I'll pick up on both of those in the next blog in this series. There will be a bit of retrospective coherence here but I will do it by reflecting on Cognitive Edge's history as I see it.

Share this blog:



0 Comments

Cognitive Edge

 Login ▾

 Recommend

 Share

Sort by Newest ▾

Start the discussion...

Be the first to comment.

 Subscribe  Add Disqus to your site [Add Disqus Add](#)  Privacy

DISQUS

[Symbiosis: the back story](#)

[Previous](#)

[From Chester to Bangor](#)

[Next](#)

Latest blogs

Options in uncertainty
By Dave Snowden

Pathways with purpose?
By Dave Snowden

Boundary conditions
By Dave Snowden

Latest despatches

Friday Five – Week 21
posted January 6, 2017

Friday Five – Week 20
posted December 16, 2016

Friday Five – Week 19
posted December 9, 2016

Upcoming events

SenseMaker® Environment –
Jan-Jun 2017

January 2 @ 8:00 am - June 30 @

8:05 am

Cynefin & Sense-Making –
resilience, complexity,
knowledge and narrative –
Helsinki, Finland

January 23 @ 9:00 am - January 26 @

5:00 pm

SenseMaker® Signification
Design – February Online
session

February 1 - March 1

Dave is speaking at

Cynefin & Sense-Making –
resilience, complexity,
knowledge and narrative –
Helsinki, Finland

January 23 @ 9:00 am - January 26 @

5:00 pm

[Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [LinkedIn](#)

Copyright © 2017 **Cognitive Edge** | [User agreement](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | Website by **Studio Drieluik**