

From Chaos to Order

Many of the organizations I experience are impressive fortresses. The language of defense permeates them: in CYA memo-madness; in closely guarded secrets and locked personnel files; in activities defined as “campaigns,” “skirmishes,” “wars,” “turf battles,” and the ubiquitous phrases of sports that describe everything in terms of offense and defense. Many organizations feel they have to defend themselves even against their employees with regulations, guidelines, time clocks, and policies and procedures for every eventuality....

I am weary of the lists we make, the time projections we spin out, the breaking apart and putting back together of problems. It does not work. The lists and charts we make do not capture experience. They only tell of our desire to control a reality that is slippery and evasive and perplexing beyond comprehension.

– Margaret Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science*

Systems move through.....

Structuralizing Phase	Chaos* Phase	Emerging Order Phase
Recurring behaviors: a system's culture.	Trickster manifestations, oscillations.	New emergents.
Boundaries, roles and rules defined.	Worsened by neg. feedback attempts.	Mandalic strange attractors.
Subsystems and flows organized.	Structures break or dissipate.	New myth/meaning/vision.
System archetypes form.	Unbalance restructures or kills system.	Senge's “learning organizations.”

* Khaos: first of the primordial Greek gods.

As complexity increases, precision and meaningfulness become incompatible. While precision thrives on stable (fixed) meanings, the fuzzy meanings are unstable - they can simultaneously relate to several attractors and express specific types of meaning-generating crises. Instability of the fuzzy meanings make them flexible for interpretation and open for evolution and transformation. And these are precious qualities necessary for understanding social complexity.

– Vladimir Dimitrov, “Strange Attractors of Meaning”

