Organisational Cybernetics for the Future of Humanity

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Stafford Beer, the acknowledged father of organisational cybernetics, defined cybernetics as the science of effective organisation (Beer, 1975a, 1975b). His invention, the Viable System Model (Beer, 1979), was hugely important for organisational cybernetics but its significance to humanity is much wider than a model of an enterprise in an environment, and it is this wider understanding of organisational cybernetics that I want to develop in this keynote. Often much attention is paid to an enterprise's mapping in the VSM's systemic functions , S1, S2, S3, S4 and S5, and into the principle of structural recursion, and furthermore their significance in diagnosing and designing of organisations (Espejo, 2008). However important are all these aspects to our understanding of organisations, users of the model would benefit by a deeper appreciation of its meaning in a complex world, where environmental and contextual challenges pose problems far beyond the application of a model to an institution or enterprise.

We may recognise epistemological, ontological and methodological aspects, that need further clarification. Among others I want to highlight the following aspects:

1) Variety management (Ashby, 1964).
2) Residual variety and organisational systems as explored in (Espejo & Reyes, 2011)
3) Relationships of achievement, stretching and performance between an organisational system and its environment.
4) Relationships of cohesion, with particular reference to coordination of actions, trust, allocation of resources and adaptation
5) Relationships of structural stretching in the context of a demanding environment
6) Relationships of policy-making, in particular with reference to participants in processes of adaptation and cohesion.
7) Relationships of inclusion of the local in the global
8) Relationships of belonging to self-developing reflexive-active environments (Lepskiy, 2018).

The above aspects are fundamental to problem solving in an uncertain world that is demanding sustainability for the future of humanity. It is with these aspects in mind that I'm proposing an enterprise complexity model as an extension of the Viable System Model for emerging organisational forms (Espejo, 2020).

References

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