

Dealing with the blind, the hidden and the unconscious as sources for uncertainty in adaptive IWRM learning cycles

Track: 5. Creating Collaborative Social Technologies for Profound Social Innovation

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Abstract

The FP6 EU research project NeWater (www.newater.info) has developed a Management and Transition Framework (MTF) that include a double loop diagram targeting process management of subsequent action situations and in learning cycles (cross awareness, arena initiation, reframing, vision, developing paths, action, evaluation, developing coalition, implement pilots and build capacity, evaluation of viable pilots).

This NeWater collaborative social technology for adaptive Integrated Water Resource Management (adaptive IWRM) contains a guidebook for water managers including uncertainty guidance targeted water managers. As part of these and for dealing with emergent complexity & presencing (C.O. Scharmer) the concepts of *emergence* (autopoietic systems) and *situated in context* (tacit embodied knowledge) were of basic significance in contemporary process management, however now challenged by new concepts for leadership from the "source". In situations where complexity and uncertainty is high, people may experience behaviour unknown to the self but also unknown to others (tending to correspond to the lower right quadrant of the JOHARI window), where individuals are not explicitly aware of the nature, or the quality of the causes of their collaborative behaviour. How unconscious group processes actually "feel like" normally have been studied at group relations conferences, so the challenge is to build on and adopt such approaches for the NeWater uncertainty guidance and based on context experiences from the seven NeWater case studies (Elbe, Rhine, Guadiana, Tisza, Nile, Amudarya and Orange).

What is hidden, blind or unconscious for the participants of adaptive IWRM learning cycles, to a significant degree relate to non-rational phenomena that are part of 'organising structured collaborative innovation'. This means that

travelling the MTF - double loop diagram across a sequence of action situations may require some attention to a broader spectrum of matters, than what is "public" and what is "goal rational". Here the concept of the unconscious which lie at the centre of the psychoanalysis, and drawing on the Tavistock psychodynamic system theory of Rice and Miller, and contemporary thoughts and approaches as discussed by organisational psychologists like Susan Long, Larry Hirschhorn and David Armstrong and many others, could support ways of dealing with such uncertainties, at the edge of prevailing uncertainty concepts with focus on data, conceptual and multiple frame uncertainty. Since working in learning cycles and facing emergent complexity & presencing also include developmental understanding of how the self (individually and as a collaborative organisation) manage intra-psyching boundaries and development of an authentic self, theories of the Klein, Bion, Winnicott, Bowlby and Stern may inspire the NeWater uncertainty guidance to better address at least some of these difficult issues acting from "below the surface".

Possible ways for better understanding the blind, the hidden and the unconscious as sources of uncertainty when travelling the MTF double loop diagram and related to emergent complexity & presencing could consider organisation-in-the-mind and organisational role analysis, listening posts and social dreaming designs, as guidance and new tools for increasing the adaptive management capacity and for supporting development of a culture better navigating in waters exposed to the blind, the hidden and the unconscious as sources of uncertainty. The possible applicability and relevance for NeWater case studies contexts are discussed.

Keywords Adaptive IWRM, collaborative learning cycles, uncertainty, unconscious