

NETWORK-RELATED CONCEPTS :

A VOCABULARY ADAPTED TO SOCIAL COMPLEXITY AND SOCIAL PROCESS.

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In working with different types of social entity or social phenomena, whether international organizations, world-wide problems or key concepts, it is often difficult to express relatively simple notions about the interrelationships between such entities. The interrelationship may be basically structural when such entities form complex networks of characteristic shapes, or else the interrelationship may be dynamic when the flows between the entities are important, when the network is growing, or when the network is evolving into some new shape with different structural characteristics.

Because clear and simple concepts are lacking, together with the appropriate terms, discussion of such social complexity can only be accomplished, if at all, by the use of extremely cumbersome and lengthy phrases which tend to create more confusion than they eliminate. A vocabulary is required which is adapted to complexity. In the absence of such a vocabulary, debate tends to avoid discussion of issues which emerge from such complexity and concentrates on issues which can be adequately expressed via the existing vocabulary. This creates the illusion that the issues which can be discussed are the most important because of the visibility accorded them by the vocabulary at hand.

There is therefore a real challenge to the social sciences to identify concepts associated with complexity and to locate adequate terms with which to label them. The development of such a vocabulary would provide a powerful means for objectifying and de-mystifying the complexity of the organizational, problem and conceptual networks by which we are surrounded and within which most of our activity is embedded.

A good point of departure is the "network". In a number of domains, particularly outside the social sciences, network-related terms are in frequent use. The structural and dynamic concepts associated with these terms may be converted for use in connection with social complexity. In the following sections a first step has been made in this direction. In many cases the relative simplicity and lack of ambiguity of the concept would emerge much more clearly if diagrams, or in some cases sequences of diagrams, could be provided. (Contacts have already been made with a view to producing a film to give clarity to this new vocabulary as a support for textual definitions of the different concepts).

The special advantage of this particular strategy is that the point of departure, network, can be considered as interrelating a great variety of can be considered as being composed of a great variety of social entities and links. It is the focus of concern on the conception and definition of these partial features of the social fabric which is a cause of much of the communication difficulty with regard to social structures and processes. There may therefore be much advantage to be gained by focusing on a "fabric-oriented" concept like network which by-passes many relatively trivial difficulties (without imposing an unsatisfactory solution) and stabilizes discussion at a new and more fruitful level.

Structural relationship to environment

international network	unrepresentative network
symbolic network	
enclosed network	isolated network
disguised network	constrained network
structural violence	invisible network
token network	ritual network

Network control

regulated network  
 controlled network  
 undirected network  
 autocoordination  
 autoactivation  
 spastic network  
 focused network

Operational relationship to environment

commensal network	network erosion
synnecrotic network	coopting network
symbiotic network	catalysis
predatory network	problem/organization mismatch
extractive network	problem/concept mismatch
supportive network	absorptive network
inputting network	facilitative network
variety-suppressing network	catalytic network
network destruction	prosyletizing network

Properties / Conditions

residual network	potential network
undeveloped network	networked problem area
crisis network	open network (to inputs)
passive network	closed network
active network	networking
wild network	spastic network
turbulent network	undifferentiated network
conscious network	
blind network	organizational network
inadequate network	
unstable network	
metastable network	
stable network	static network
potentially explosive network	dynamic network
	temporary network
	knotted network
introverted network	leaking network
extraverted network	network shock
socialized network	fibrillating network
politicized network	
personalized network	
working network.	

Structural characteristics.

hierarchized network	network directedness
bureaucratized network	undirected network
floating centre network	network duration /durability
network short circuit	network intensity / transaction flow
network fragmentation	network frequency
intra-organizational network	blocked network
	layered network
transorganizational network	network horizontal extension
inter-organizational network	network articulation
open network (i.e. not dense)	
coarseh linked network	
finely linked network	
closed network (impen.)	
network centrality	
network coherence/intercon- nectedness/density.	

Change over time/ Flow characteristic

network short-circuit	network reactivation
network flows	network clogging/noise
network duration/durability	concentrating network
network intensity/traumatic flux	dispersing network
network frequency	overloaded network
	underloaded network

Relationship to another part of network

organizational counterpart  
functional substitution  
network inconsistencies  
distorted network

Growth over time

network emergence	explosive differentiation
network complexification	imposive simplification
networking	network rigidification/crystallization
network retraction	network reactivation
network diversification/diffe- rentiation	network elaboration
imploding network	démantèlement des réseaux
exploding network	declining network

Substrate

fund-supported network  
information-supported network  
concept-supported network  
information system supported network  
person-supported network

Response characteristic

network response time  
high threshold network  
low threshold network

Scope / Coverage

governmental network  
mixed network  
trans-modal  
uni-modal  
multi-modal  
cross-modal  
trans-category

Other headings

evolution of network  
generation  
inter-network

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