Understanding the Squishy Stuff: Making Sense of Complex Conflicts

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IAP2 Webinar

August 15, 2017

My Biases

- Biases:
  - Rule of Law
  - Communications
  - User-Centered Design
  - Innovation
  - Collaboration
- Work:
  - Communications, Marketing, Advertising, Digital, Issues Management
- School:
  - BA (Economics), JD (Corporate), MBA (Marketing), PhD (Environmental Conflicts)

My Biases

- I want you to win.

Outcomes

1. A better way to make sense of complex conflicts.
2. Confidence in the face of complexity.

We've Got a Problem

We've Got a Problem

"We did everything right. We went by the book, we followed the law and regulatory process, we worked to make sure everyone benefitted. And it still went pear-shaped. What did we miss?"

- Project Proponent

We've Got a Problem

Symptoms

- Scale Deficit

http://i.cbc.ca/1.2983331.1425593693!/fileImage/httpImage/image.jpg_gen/derivatives/original_620/john-sylvan.jpg

We've Got a Problem

Symptoms

- Scale Deficit
- People feel left out

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We've Got a Problem

Symptoms

- Scale Deficit
- People feel left out
- People abuse the system

http://wpmedia.business.financialpost.com/2016/08/0829energyeast.jpg?w=620&quality=60&strip=all&h=465

We've Got a Problem

Symptoms

- Scale Deficit
- People feel left out
- People abuse the system
- Policy confusion

We've Got a Problem

Right Idea, Wrong Approach

1. Negotiations are not Conflicts
   - Interests vs. Values
   - Rational vs. Emotional
2. Complicated vs. Complex
3. Coherence Trap: Over-controlling the uncontrollable

Right Idea, Wrong Approach

1. Negotiations are not Conflicts
   - Interests vs. Values
   - Rational vs. Emotional

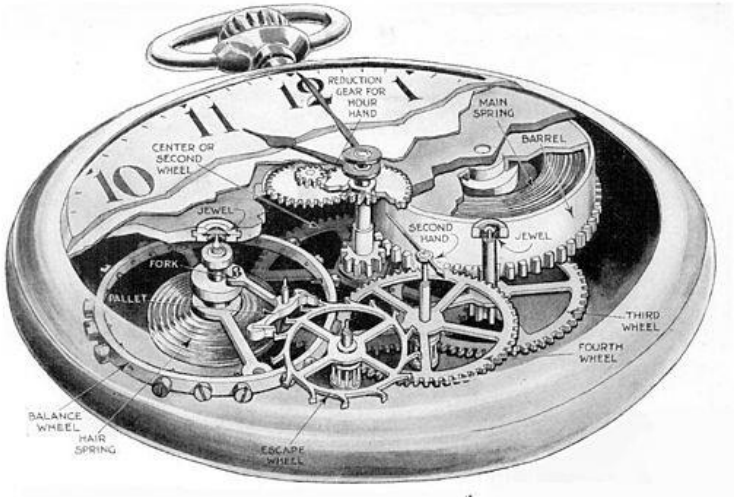
We've Got a Problem

2. Coherence Trap: Over-controlling the uncontrollable

- Identity: Environmentalist vs. Producer
- Characterization: Tree hugger vs. Climate denier
- Conflict: Regulatory vs. Social license
- Fact-finding: Empiricist vs. Traditional knowledge
- Social control: Experts vs. Public
- Power: Big money vs. Little guy
- Risk: Costs vs. Benefits

We've Got a Problem

3. Complicated vs. Complex



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We've Got a Problem

- Is there a better approach to making sense of complex environmental conflicts?
  - **Comprehensive**: sees the whole picture
  - **Strategic**: creates a process to follow
  - **Actionable**: points to practical steps
  - **Collaborative**: even when people hate each other

Nature is the Best Designer

Look deep into nature, and then
you will understand everything better.

- Albert Einstein

http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/a/alberteins106912.html

Nature is the Best Designer

https://www.google.ca/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwjZ59_ugaTQAhUM4WMKHZ4IAr0QjRwIBw&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.pinterest.com%2Fvincent75%2Fmurmuration%2F&bvm=bv.138493631,d.cGc&psig=AFQjCNEWn2cQLBosRCRsqTh3PCLrPe8cCw&ust=1479067453580398

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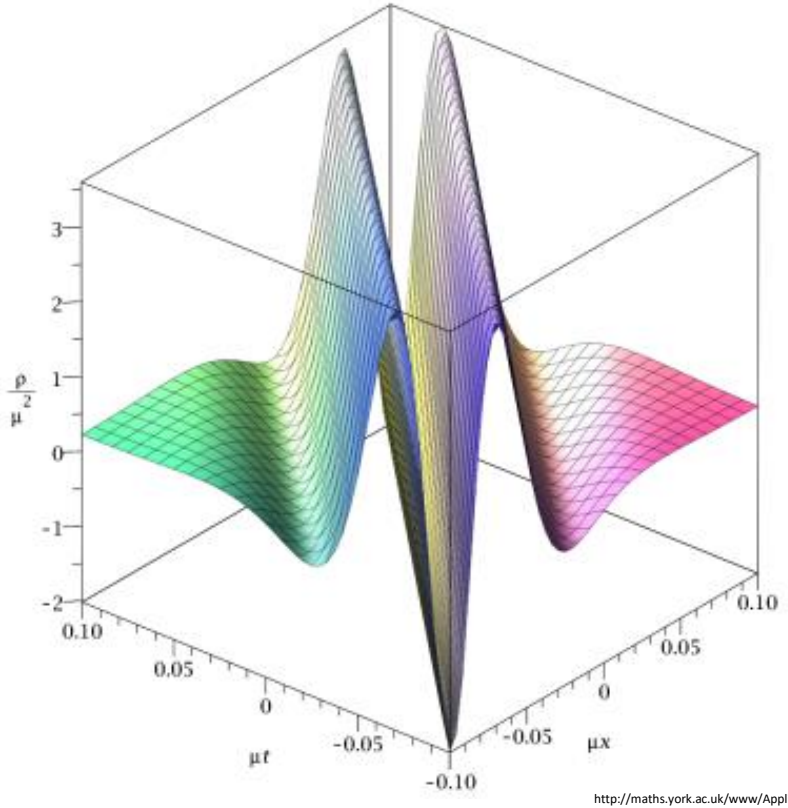
Nature is the Best Designer

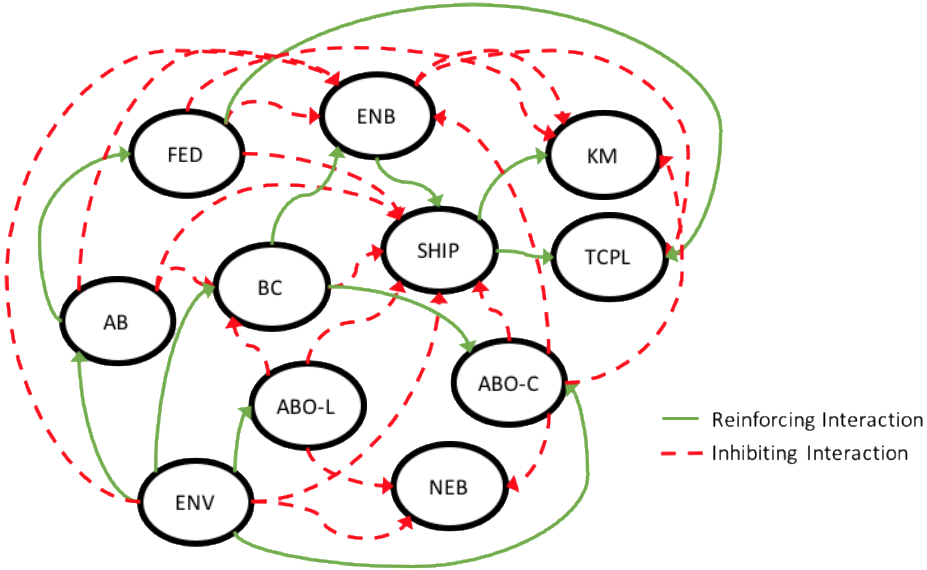


http://maths.york.ac.uk/www/Applied

Nature is the Best Designer

Environmental Conflicts

- Complex
- Non-linear
- Dynamic
- Emotional
- Systems



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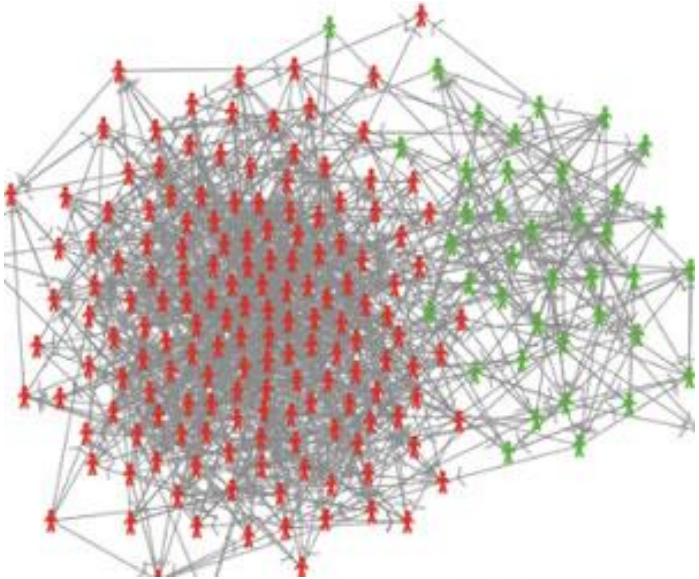
Design New Patterns of Interaction

Agent Based Modeling

- Simulates complex environments
- Used to study natural phenomena
- Shows outcome of patterns of interaction



Design New Patterns of Interaction

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Design New Patterns of Interaction

http://www.festivalsherpa.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/mosh-pit1-1112x520.png

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Design New Patterns of Interaction

"Design is the action of bringing something new and desired into existence—a proactive stance that resolves or dissolves problematic situations by design. It is a compound of routine, adaptive and design expertise brought to bear on complex dynamic situations."

—Harold Nelson, *The Design Way*

http://www.creativityatwork.com/design-thinking-strategy-for-innovation/

Find the Real Problem

Conflict vs. Influencer

Gather All the Inputs

Find Coalitions

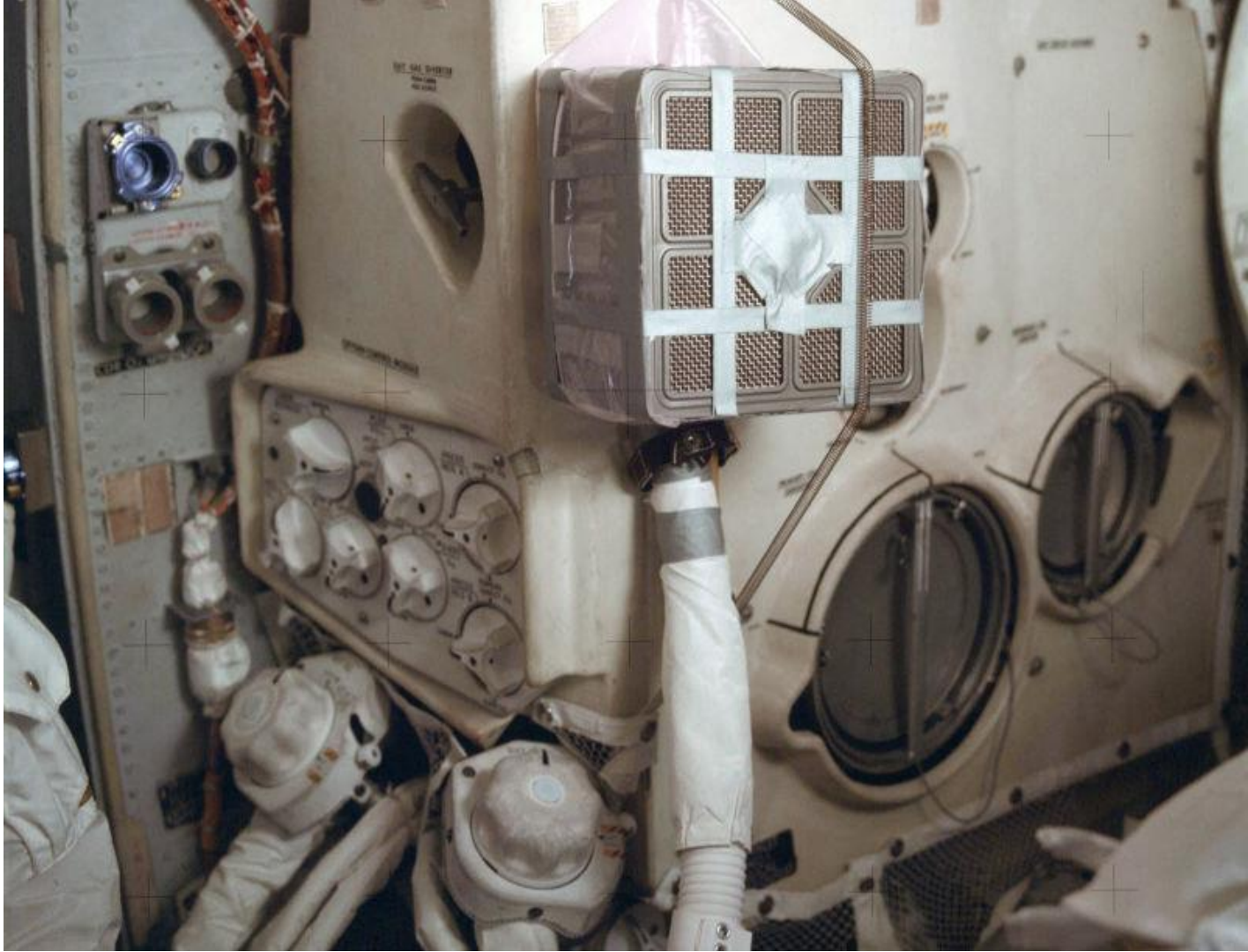
Individuals Create

Prototype
Future
States

Group Evaluates

Develop Persuasion Strategies & Tactics

Repeat



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Design New Patterns of Interaction

- Who is actually in conflict, right now?
- Who are merely influencers?
- What are the possible influencer coalitions?
- What are the common elements?
- Who needs to be persuaded, right now?

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Design New Patterns of Interaction

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Design New Patterns of Interaction

Northern Gateway

GHG Emissions

Douglas Channel Protection

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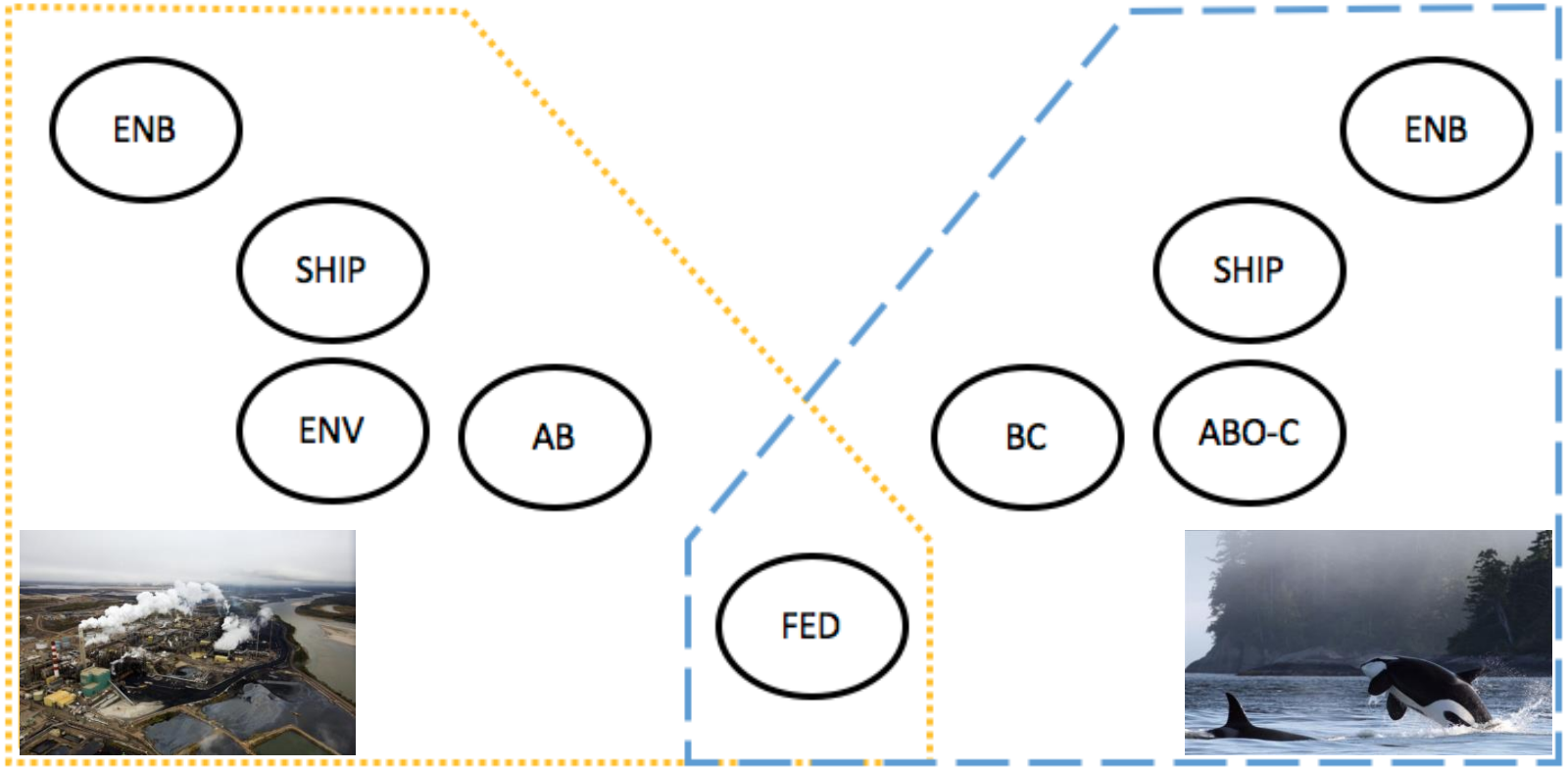
Design New Patterns of Interaction



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Design New Patterns of Interaction

This approach is hard

- Goes against our natural urge for coherence
- Requires comfort level with uncertainty
- Requires collaboration
- Requires humility
- Requires persuasion

Design is Normative

When you decide what should happen, not everyone will like it.

Design is Disruptive

Change is hard.

https://www.google.ca/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwjz2PPJgaTQAhUTzWMKHTkCD_YQjRwIBw&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.discoveringthearctic.org.uk%2F&bvm=bv.138493631,d.cGc&psig=AFQjCNFM1d-PU_8BeXX00ry3kfPEb74vA&ust=1479066775182418

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