



ATTRACTORS
INFO-LETTER OF THE
HUMAN SYSTEMS DYNAMICS INSTITUTE
VOLUME 1.5
DECEMBER, 2004

This is the season when we reflect on the old and prepare for the new year. End-of-year evaluation has been more difficult for me this year than before. Why? Perhaps it is the number of projects we are pursuing at the same time, or the fact that we are in the middle of projects, or the emerging patterns are too complex for me to comprehend. Perhaps I'm just tired. Do you experience the same challenge to get your arms around something that is complicated and dynamic? If so, HSD can help.

One powerful HSD tactic comes from the idea of scaling or fractals. If you focus on a part of a complicated landscape, patterns you recognize there may be replicated in the whole. If you understand the micro, you'll know how to think about the macro.

The part I choose for this fractal journey of year-end reflection is a recent meeting with Consulting Associates. Eight of our colleagues met via telephone to explore our emerging learnings. During the call, I was engrossed in the flow of the conversation and paid little attention to the patterns that emerged over time. Looking back, though, meaningful patterns begin to emerge. These are the patterns I see reflected in part and whole.

We are establishing human systems dynamics as a field of research and practice.

One of the most exciting aspects of the call wasn't apparent to me until after we hung up. On reflection, the stories made it clear that Associates had established a voice for human systems dynamics in their own locales. In consulting relationships with clients, by writing or publishing, and during informal conversations, each Associate was "showing up" as someone who values and continually inquires into the complex dynamics of human systems.

Though it is more difficult to see such a pattern in the larger context of the Institute as a whole, we are seeing signs that the same coherence is beginning to emerge. Consulting engagements, unsolicited inquiries, and invitations to speak and write indicate that people are growing more curious about the theory and practice of HSD.

We are an interesting and diverse group.

The call brought in voices from across the country and across a wide spectrum of practice areas. We had coaches, trainers, academics, and consultants. We came from different organizational contexts and professional backgrounds. The differences among us are many, but (except for the physical distance) they are not large. The differences provide the raw material for individual and institutional learning and growth.

We find this pattern in the Institute as a whole, too. People come to the network from across the country, around the world, and down the street. In many ways we connect people across differences for shared learning. For example, in 2004 Special Interest Groups (SIGs) have emerged to help kindred spirits come together on more or less regular basis for focused conversation.

Each of us has much to share.

In spite of our diversity, we are each on a journey of developing theory and practice in human systems dynamics. Each of our projects opens an opportunity to build and test hypotheses about how human systems behave. This powerful pattern was quite evident in the phone call, when check-in reports sparked questions and promises to exchange materials. Each one had learned lessons that needed to be shared.

This same pattern appears in the Institute as a whole when we come together in inquiry. In addition to learning from each other, we also share our learnings with others. We teach and write and consult as we teach and learn about this exciting and emerging field.

Into the New Year . . .

By focusing on the part to learn about the whole, we use HSD to comprehend a complex environment. This is only one way that the principles of human systems dynamics can improve your capacity to adapt in uncertain times. Give us a call, and our team will help you explore adaptive options for action. We hope your new year is full of satisfaction and success!

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