



HSD Theory of Change

Traditional change was mechanical and predictable. When something happened, you could trace it back, effect to cause and cause before that, to find the “root” cause. You could also plan change with great detail because you could predict consequences of your actions. **A** causes **B**. **B** causes **C**. Do **A** and get **C**. That logic works great, when it works. The problem is that causes and effects are not so easy to track in complex human systems.

HSD offers a logic that reaches beyond simple cause and effect to capture the complex interdependencies, multiple causes, and open boundaries that are so common in human systems. We call this way of thinking and acting Pattern Logic. It isn't very simple, and it isn't predictable at all. It never repeats, and every person may have a unique view of what is real. Still, it is the logic that is useful when simple cause and effect are impossible. The picture on the following page captures the parts of the theory of change and relationships among them. It has three major components.

- The environment consists of complex adaptive systems (CAS). Things interact, they create patterns, and the patterns influence how the things interact in future. It is a loop, where every cause is an effect and every effect is a cause. These processes of emergent change happen all the time, in all places, and across scales from personal feelings to global markets.
- At the same time, the conscious human being is busy creating meaning. He or she inquires about the world by asking, “What?”; Makes meaning by asking, “So what?”; and moves to action with, “Now what?” This is the cycle we call Adaptive Action, and every person is doing it all the time. People who are conscious of the cycle are much better at it than those who are not conscious.
- As a person observes emerging patterns in a CAS and makes meaning, he or she will take action to influence the agents in hopes of shifting the pattern. That is the third cycle of the Theory of Change and accounts for the ability of people to influence each other and their environments.
- The final part of the Theory of Change includes a variety of Models & Methods that the person can use to improve how they see, understand, and influence. The Adaptive Actor takes out a tool, uses it, improves it, and puts it back into the tool chest. Over time, individuals and groups get better and better at using tools, completing Adaptive Action cycles, and influencing patterns that emerge in the world.

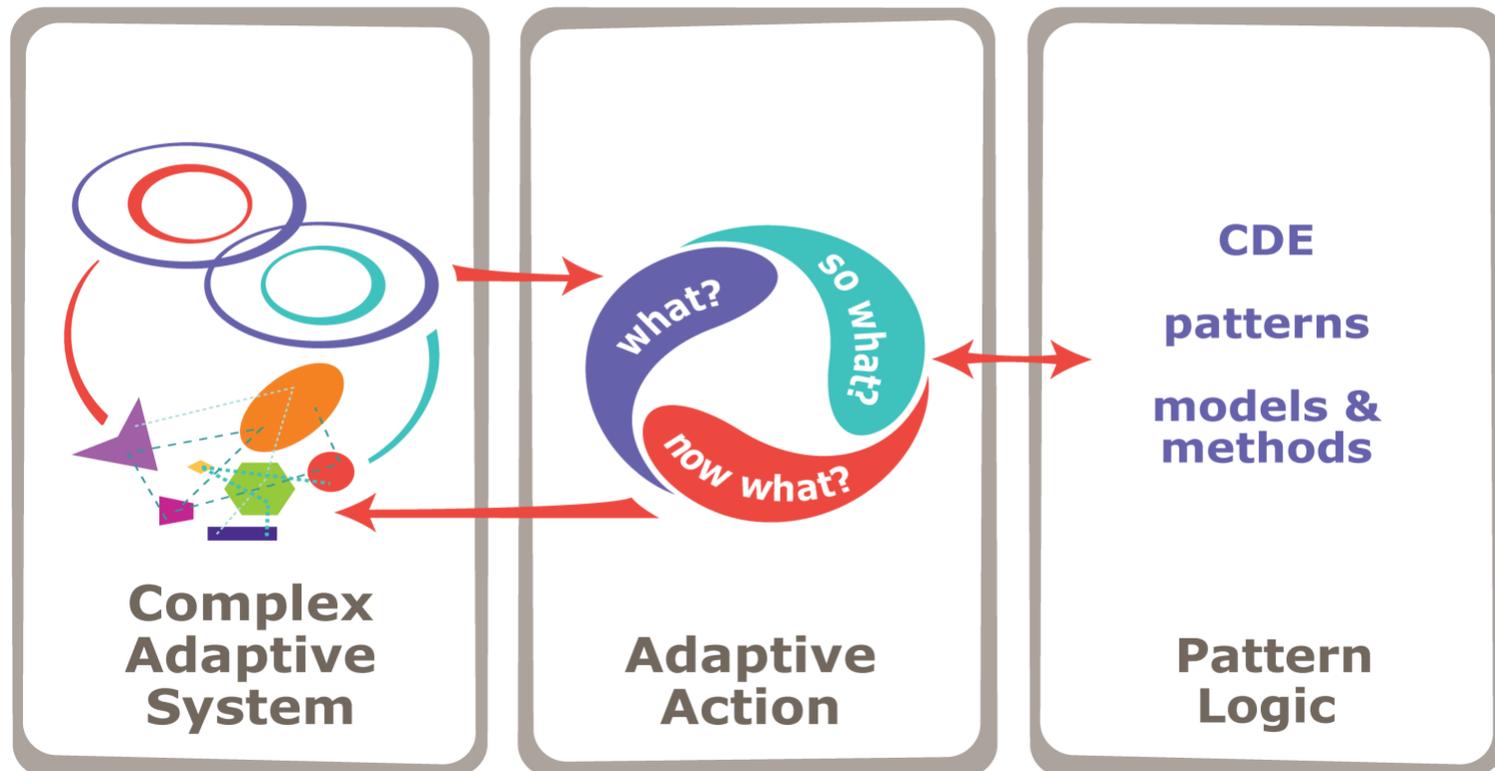
This is the way change happens in the theory and practice of human systems dynamics.

Nothing is intractable.



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