TameFlow Connection 28

Hello Friends of Herbie,

This week's *TameFlow Connection Newsletter* is shorter than usual, since I was busy both with the CCPM Conference and with my other businesses (with Blockchain technologies), and did not have much time for "TameFlow stuff."
In this issue we'll reflect on the relationship between the *Cynefin Framework* and the *TameFlow Approach*.

Upcoming Campfire Panel Discussion: December 3rd, 2020 at 20:00 CET

We will have the first ever **Campfire Panel Discussion** event on the *Campfire Talks with Herbie (No. 30)*. To make sure you don't miss this or any forthcoming *Campfire Talks with Herbie* events, subscribe to the Campfire Events Notification List, and you will receive the broadcast links ahead of the event.

The panel will be moderated by our very own Mark Jørgensen Chaudhry a.k.a "*Question Mark*" because when he is around, no question will be left unasked!

The topic will be: **Ready now for building the future-proof organization**. We will explore the future of organizations, touching on themes like: resilience, sustainability, diversity, social responsibility, power structures, hierarchies, networks, complexity, etc. and who knows how many other lines of thought will be developed. In addition to myself, the panel will include these great professionals:

- Niels Pflaeging, a leadership philosopher, management exorcist, speaker, author, advisor. Founder at BetaCodex Network. Thanks to Niels: the idea of this panel was first suggested and developed with his input!

- [Pamela Dukes OLY](#), an enterprise agile coach & trainer, and a Hall of Fame Olympic athlete who is focused on helping teams through servant leadership and self-reliance strategies;
- [Ritu Ward, FACHE](#), a Healthcare executive with success delivering quality, growth, and strategy while leading high performing teams;
- and last, but not least, [Nigel Thurlow](#), former Chief of Agile of Toyota and the co-creator of The Flow System.

The Cynefin Framework and TameFlow

[David Snowden](#) together with a *v e r y l o n g* list of friends has published the book [Cynefin - Weaving Sense-Making into the Fabric of Our World](#). Cynefin helps a lot in *"making sense"* of the funny world we live in.

I've always been very clear in stating how practitioners of the *TameFlow Approach* can make (sense of! :) the best of both Cynefin and TameFlow.

For instance in [A chat with Steve Tendon on Tameflow](#) where I was [John Coleman](#)'s guest (at around 2:20:14), I elaborated on how the **Constraint in the Work Process**, the **Constraint in the Work Flow**, and the **Constraint in the Work Execution** can be mapped, respectively, to the *Clear*, *Complicated* and *Complex* quadrants of the Cynefin framework. In other words, when you are dealing with one of those three *Constraints*, you are best equipped to think and act in terms of what the corresponding quadrants suggest. *This is an example of how Cynefin can help TameFlow.*

Another perspective relates to how you can employ the *Mental Models* and the *practices* of *TameFlow* when using Cynefin. I expanded on this in the [Campfire Talk 21](#) with [Cherifa Mansoura](#). There the observation is that no matter what Cynefin quadrant you are confronting, there is always an element of *Sense & Respond*. With the *TameFlow Approach*, and in particular with the **Informational Flow** and **Psychological Flow** elements, we can condition the organization to develop a more effective "nervous system," that can "sense" more finely what is happening (maybe capturing even *weak signals*), and "respond" more quickly. *This is an example of how TameFlow can help Cynefin.*

Now Dave's latest book is a collection of inspiring essays by many contributors (the friends), with all sorts of backgrounds and experiences - which in its own is a testament to the broad range of applicability of Cynefin.

One of such friends is [Steve Holt](#) whose contribution goes under the title: **Cynefin and Theory of Constraints: Allies or Adversaries?** If

you are keen on both Cynefin and the *TameFlow Approach*, then this essay is a must read.

Steve Holt ponders a lot on the different meaning of the word "Constraint" in Cynefin and TOC, and on the potential differences between the *Inherent Complexity* of Cynefin and the *Inherent Simplicity* of TOC. The conclusions are very compelling. Here are some of his insights :

- *"Cynefin and TOC are very much aligned, very consistent, and each can help the other."*
- *"TOC offers another means of making sense of what is happening."*
- *"TOCs Logic Trees provide the means to capture the theory behind the method so that it can be compared to context, and one can check for either applicability or the need for change."*
- *"Cynefin provides a valuable critical thinking check for TOC practitioners."*
- *"TOC practitioners can use the Cynefin Framework to check their own understanding, and help the client understand what is happening, and why this approach will work."*

Steve Holt's concluding remark reads: *"I see TOC and Cynefin as not just allies, but catalytic allies. Each can benefit the other and I strongly encourage the use of both."*

Since the *TameFlow Approach* is fully embracing TOC, this remark can equally apply to TameFlow and Cynefin.

One interesting reflection I like to make is about how TOC came into the *TameFlow Approach*. The classification of any situation according to the four quadrants is a highly *subjective* matter and it is highly influenced by the **Mental Models** that we entertain, and through which we interpret reality.

For example, it is well known that the *Kanban Method* has outright rejected the feasibility of *Constraint Management* in knowledge-work. David J. Anderson is known for having stated that it is "materially impossible" to reason in terms of the Constraint in knowledge-work. That's why he resorted to proxies (as represented by the use of *Column WIP Limits*), to try to indirectly detect the effects of any Constraint or impediment.

Clearly, with this perspective, the Constraint is escaping investigation, and would be classified as being in the Chaotic quadrant of the Cynefin Framework - so fundamentally unmanageable.

Now consider: with the *Mental Models* provided by the *TameFlow Approach*, we have a means of systematically framing the presence

of a Constraint in the three quadrants - Clear, Complicated and Complex - and thus make its presence manageable.

By introducing "enabling & governing Constraints" (as understood in Cynefin), which are represented by the MOVEs, the metrics, the buffers and all other elements that we typically resort to in managing **Operational Flow**, we are able to identify the *Constraint* (as understood in TOC), and thus perform **STEP 1** of the *Five Focusing Steps* even when we are handling the evanescent nature of knowledge-work.

Perspective and framing can change your perception of reality. Thus, I reaffirm the importance of selecting the more powerful *Mental Models*; and especially *Mental Models* that can be used in synergy, where the outcome is greater than the sum of their parts. I think that the Cynefin Framework and the Theory of Constraints and the *TameFlow Approach* are synergistic in such a way!

New Re-Read Saturday Series with Tom Cagley

Last weekend, [Tom Cagley](#), the host of the *Software Process and Measurement Cast*, in his weekly [Re-Read Saturday](#), finished his series of re-reads of my [Tame your Work Flow](#) book and gave us his [Final Thoughts](#).

This week, Tom is starting a [new series of Re-Read Saturdays](#). He will look into [Jeff Dalton](#)'s book, [Great Big Agile: An OS for Agile Leaders](#). Since I know Jeff is an original thinker, I might be following along in Tom's Re-reads; and maybe cross-check notes.

That's it for this time. Have a great week!
Steve

P.S.

The **Cyber Monday** special offer to get a copy of *Tame Your Work Flow* book is running out soon. If you don't have the book yet, take the chance to get it at a crazy discount here: [CYBER MONDAY SPECIAL](#). Spread the word and tell your friends and colleagues about this too!

website or made a purchase from us.