Introduction

A brief explanation of the Cynefin framework. It includes a theoretical explanation along with guidelines how it can be applied.

The Cynefin Framework identifies different types of problems (problem domains). Every problem domain has its own solution methodology. Applying a solution methodology to a different problem domain is rarely successful. Indeed, in most cases this has catastrophic results.

Understanding of the Cynefin framework leads to an effective way of dealing with the dynamic complexity in our organisations and society.

Cynefin

Cynefin describes 4 types of problem domains: Obvious, Complicated, Complex and Chaotic.

Obvious problems are problems, whereby cause and effect are close together. There is a direct causal link. 'Everyone sees' the solution.

In the case of complicated problems, this causal link between cause and effect is also present but it is hidden. An expert is required to analyse the problem and to define a solution. This expert proposes a solution based on earlier similar problems: 'good practice'. Quantified goals can be used to manage the solution approach.
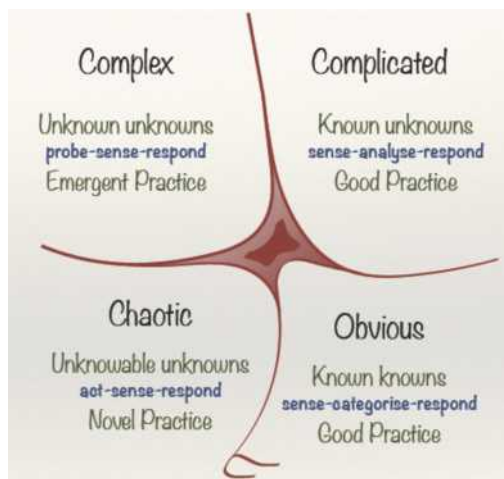
This is a fundamental difference to Complex problems, where it is not possible to apply previous solutions. The circumstances are too volatile for this. In the case of complex problems, there is no prior causal link to point to between cause and effect. This could, at the very most, be done in retrospect. Analysis is meaningless. I will also talk about how to deal with complex problems.

In the case of chaotic problems, action is taken first. Depending on the particular domain you find yourself in, a follow-up step is determined. This is based on the problem domain where you arrive at from chaos.

Complicated and obvious problems are forms of ordered and closed systems. Via these features, methods such as 6Sigma work very well to get an understanding of the problem during the analysis phase and step by step work towards a defined solution.

Complex and chaotic problems are forms of open and disorganised systems. Virtually all systems involving people are open and disorganised in nature. The unpredictability means that the only possible approach is to listen to (small and quick) feedback as a result of decisions and actions. Short feedback loops without filtering engender rapid insight as a basis for the decision-making process.

Several solutions are therefore possible for uncertain complex problems. No single solution can be evaluated beforehand (via analysis) in terms of possible result/outcome. In practice, this means that there is no other option than to choose an approach 'at random' and according to instinct.

> In complex environments the possibility to reuse previous experiences in a new setting is absent by definition. This must be accrued anew owing to the absence of historical references.

The mistake that is then often made is to label this solution as the only correct solution. As a consequence, the decision makers and implementers are taking a big risk and responsibility. After all, what can be done when circumstances change? What if it emerges that the chosen solution is not so good after all at the time of implementation? Flexibility and realism decrease. Reputations are brazenly protected, lies are told, things are manipulated and innocent employees are punished because they are ultimately responsible for the outcome.

Agile Sensing: fine-tuning agile transitions via insight in impact

An approach of the above theoretical explanation is Agile Sensing. Agile Sensing consists of a methodical approach specifically for challenges in the complex domain. Tooling supports large-scale and ongoing transitions. This results in more committed employees, more rapid insight and lower costs.

Below the four steps of the Agile Sensing approach.

Sharing

1. Participants share their experiences from their own perspective. They share what is important to them
2. Next, they add context of this experience. This way, they ensure a correct interpretation and prevent bias in the reader
3. In so doing, we collect qualitative data and quantitative data

Learning

1. In small concrete steps the personal experiences are converted into a shared view of reality (challenges & possibilities)
2. This shared view leads to insight into the underlying topics and improvement proposals (concrete actions or experiments
3. The undercurrent (hidden, non-tangible aspects like trust, empowerment, of expectations) is visible and made practicable

Changing

1. Experimenting and carrying out decisions
2. By collecting ongoing experiences 'being unrelenting towards change', we can see what works and what is not working so well. We can strengthen what is going well and make any adjustments for what is not (yet) working out

Learning Organisation - Business Agility

1. By continuously collecting experiences and visualising these in a dynamic dashboard, the change mindset in the organisation becomes visible and practicable
2. The organisation is continually resilient, a learning organisation
3. The organisation constantly perfects its own agility based on its own values, norms and challenges

The table below is a summary of a number of crucial differences regarding traditional methods and Agile Sensing

Agile Sensing	Traditional	Added value
Real-time tracking progress of programme	Static information, limited in time span	Timely identification and intervention
Profound context-rich insights into all dimensions of the project	Guiding questionnaires, statistical averages, weak signals invisible	Substantive rationale/underpinning, all signals detected
Highly adaptive capacity, in case of complex reality	Static models, inflexible	Pattern/trend recognition, aligns with human behaviour
Interventions can be traced back to narrative accounts, statistics as indication for primary context	Correlation instead of causality, statistics without context	Broad support, interventions recognisable for employees
Sharing views with one another, raw data	Interpretation of researcher, employees not always informed	Energy and commitment, ownership