#### FORMS OF ORGANISATIONS

October, 2019

#### **OUR APPROACH TO INQUIRY IN THIS SESSION**

- Why study forms in relation to organisations?
- How can we understand organisations in greater detail?
- What are the interesting ideas around organisations in development sector?

#### **OBJECTIVES BEHIND TEACHING THIS TOPIC**

- Immediately: Equip you with a different sensitivity for RI.
- For the rest of ISDM curriculum: Enable you to better appreciate meta-skills like design and system thinking.
- Thereafter: help you put into practise some of the qualities of transformative leadership.

#### WHERE SHOULD YOU EXPECT TO BE AT THE END OF THIS DAY:

- I will be introduced to a slightly off-beat topic and gain an appreciation of it.
- While the topic may appear abstract, it actually a has a lot of practical utility.
- I will be motivated to explore it further on my own.

#### WHAT YOU SHOULD NOT STRESS YOURSELF ABOUT:

• I am not sure I can apply it in my RI immediately. Relax. It is good if you can and will not kill you if you cannot.

## SO, TRY TO LISTEN, PARTICIPATE AND REMEMBER.

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#### WHAT DO WE REFER TO AS ORGANISATIONS?

## WHAT IS THE FIRST THING WE SEE WHEN WE LOOK INSIDE THEM?

#### LESSONS

• We see that, first and foremost, organisations involve many different elements.

#### **EXERCISE ON COUNTING**

#### EXERCISE 1: COUNT THE SUM OF 1 TO 10.

#### EXERCISE 2: COUNT THE SUM OF 1 TO 20.

#### WHAT WAS THE DIFFERENCE YOU NOTICED BETWEEN EX.1 & EX. 2

#### DIFFERENCES

- The number of elements involved doubled.
- Did the amount of time required, mental effort spend double or more than double?
- Did your level of fatigue, boredom, tiredness increase slightly?
- Did your chances of making an error increase?

#### **BUT WHAT REMAINED THE SAME**

• Your approach to arriving at a solution remained more or less the same.

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- Change in complexity demands a change in approach to solutioning.

#### **BUT HOW CAN WE MODIFY OUR SOLUTIONS?**

#### THROUGH PATIENCE AND A GRADUAL CHANGE IN OUR THINKING.

#### BUT WHAT IS THAT WE REALLY NEED TO CHANGE ABOUT OUR THINKING?



#### WHAT IS DIFFERENT BETWEEN THIS CUP AND THE ONE YOU USE DURING YOUR TEA-BREAKS?

- Shape
- Arrangement
- Flow
- Rhythm
- Proportion
- Balance
- Sense of space
- Continuity
- Sense of restraint and timing.
- Refinement
- Subtlety

#### LESSONS

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- Change in complexity demands a change in approach to solutioning.
- Even if the function remains the same, a simple change in form alters our entire perception about the object.

#### IF WE CAN APPLY FORMS TO PHYSICAL OBJECTS WHY CAN'T WE APPLY IT TO THE WAY WE THINK?

#### **STORY ABOUT COUNTING (BETTER)**

About two hundred years ago, there were a bunch of noisy kids in a school in Germany. Their teacher was really tired, so to keep them occupied they were given an apparently tiring and boring task: calculate the sum of all numbers from 1 to 100.

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All kids go to work except one. This one stared towards the heavens for sometime and then wrote something down and submitted to his teacher. His was the only right answer. About two hundred years ago, there were a bunch of noisy kids in a school in Germany. Their teacher was really tired, so to keep them occupied they were given an apparently tiring and boring task: calculate the sum of all numbers from 1 to 100.

All kids go to work except one. This one stared towards the heavens for sometime and then wrote something down and submitted to his teacher. His was the only right answer.

#### How did he approach the problem?

#### **THE DIFFERENCE**



#### THE DIFFERENCE

- All the students except one saw the problem as an addition of **one hundred different numbers**.
- One student saw it as an addition of **50 same numbers**. Why?
- That One student simply **re-arranged** the
  - Composition,
  - Geometry,
  - Architecture,
  - Outline,
  - Arrangement,
  - Shape,
  - *Form* of the whole problem in his head.
- Btw, the name of the student was: Carl Friedrich Gauss. *Students of science or mathematics may have heard of Gauss's theorem*.

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- Thinking in terms of forms is a powerful tool to understand and solve complex real-world problems.

#### FORM LIKE THINKING IS MOST OBVIOUS IN

- Mathematics
- Physics
- Art
- Literature & Poetry
- Architecture
- Music
- Crafts
- Religious scriptures.

#### BUT IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE TO USE IT EFFECTIVELY IN UNDERSTANDING AND RUNNING ORGANISATIONS.

#### WHEN YOU WILL GO FOR RI

- You will see socieities organised in a certain way.
- They will show distinctive forms and patterns of how people and institutions interact with each other.
- Sometimes these patterns, shapes or forms will be obvious, sometimes very difficult to see.
- Making meaning of these forms of organisatiosn will reveal a lot about those societies you will be part of for the next 6 odd weeks.

#### WHAT DO WE MEAN BY MAKING OF MEANING OF FORMS OF ORGANISATIONS?

#### **CASE STUDY : DEMONETISATION.**

• Let us say you are accountable for governance of economics affairs of India. You are not a trained economist. In fact, you understand very little about economics. But you still have a decision to make in front of you: to enact domentisation or not? How can a sense of forms help you?

- Like Carl Friedrich Gauss, you first stare outside your window into the heavens.
- The society at large comes in front of you.
- You start seeing how people connect with each other through many-fold economic processes:
  - Employer Employee
  - Buyer Seller
  - Purchaser Vendor
  - Retailer Distributor Wholesaler
  - Contractor labourer
  - Producer Consumer
- Based on your own lived experience, you see many patterns of economic organisations across different sectors:
  - Agriculture
  - Construction
  - Textile and various kinds of handi-crafts
  - Gems & Jewellery
  - Retail
  - Auto

#### YOU DISCERN THE OUTLINE OF A COMPLEX SOCIO-ECONOMIC ORGANISATION



#### YOU REALIZE IT IS LIKE A LIVING, BREATHING ORGANISM.



#### **THE QUESTION COMES TO YOU**: WHAT HAPPENS IF I APPLY A SHOCK TO A COMPLEX, LIVING AND BREATHING ORGANISM?

## **THE ANSWER LIES IN THE QUESTION ITSELF:** THE ORGANISM WILL BE BADLY WOUNDED.

Some wounds may heal immediately.

Some may heal much later and

Some may never heal. That is, some economic relationships may be permanently ruptured and will be very difficult to join again.

#### AS STUDENTS OF ISDM YOU ADD A SYSTEMS THINKING LENS: YOU REALIZE THE DECISION IN FRONT OF YOU CAN ALTER THE VERYFORM OF THE ENTIRE SYSTEM WITH UNPREDICTABLE AND UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES.

#### **HENCE**, YOU CONCLUDE THAT THE COSTS OUTWEIGH ANY POSSIBLE BENEFITS.

#### What did we just do?

- Did we use any specialised thinking from economics, finance or social science?
- We used only what was easily observable and extracted the form / pattern of organisation out of it.
- Using that form, we applied some intuitive concepts related to systems.
- Based on that we were able to reach a **reasonable common-sensical** conclusion.
- How could we decide without having any specialised expertise in the subject?

#### BECAUSE, WE MADE MEANING AT THE LEVEL OF THE FORM OF THE PROBLEM WITHOUT GETTING TOO LOST IN THE DETAILS.

#### LESSONS

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- Even a slight increase in number of elements increases the complexity of the situation disproportionately.
- Change in complexity demands a change in approach to solutioning.
- Even if the function remains the same, a simple change in form alters our entire perception about the object.
- Thinking in terms of forms is a powerful tool to understand and solve complex realworld problems **BECAUSE forms hide a lot of meaning within them which often goes unnoticed.**

#### IN SUMMARY,

- A real world organisation is a complex response to some complex problem. To design, understand and run organisations well therefore requires you to develop appropriate thinking tools.
- An ability to understand underlying patterns is one of the most powerful tools that is practised across disciplines, and there is no reason, why you as individuals in development sector, should not fully deploy it in your own work.
- But to be able to do that you have to really understand in some depth what do organisatiosn really mean, and how can we analyse them using the language of forms.

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### PLEASE RE-ORGANIZE YOURSELF IN YOUR RI GROUPS.

#### ONCE AGAIN, WHAT IS AN ORGANIZATION?

## **EXERCISE 3**: IMAGINE YOUR RI COMMUNITIES & WRITE DOWN ALL ORGANISATIONS YOU COME TO YOUR MIND (5 minutes).

#### QUESTION: WHAT LESSONS CAN YOU DRAW BASED ON THE LIST ABOUT THE NATURE OF ORGANISATIONS?

#### **EXERCISE 4**: CAN YOU GROUP THESE ORGANISATIONS? PLEASE USE ANY SCHEME OF CLASSIFICATION YOU FEEL APPROPRIATE (10 minutes).

#### QUESTION: WHAT CLASSIFICATIONS DID YOU CONSIDER AND WHY DID YOU CHOOSE ONE OVER THE OTHER?

#### UNDERSTANDING BUILD BLOCKS OF ORGANISATIONS

• We identified a few dimensions. What do these dimensions show?

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- We identified a few dimensions. What do these dimensions show?
- Two basic building blocks of an organisation: relationships and boundaries.
- They fundamentally determine the form of an organisation.

# **EXERCISE 5:** WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT FORMS OF ORGANISATIONS IN DEVELOPMENT SECTOR THAT YOU HAVE READ ABOUT OR HAVE WORKED WITH OR EXPERIENCED INDIRECTLY?

## **EXERCISE 6:** COMPARING AND CONTRASTING TWO FORMS OF ORGANISATIONS.

## **QUESTION:** CAN WE SUMMARIZE WHAT WE HAVE LEARNT SO FAR?

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#### **INTERESTING PERSPECTIVES**

- Maira
- Senge
- Lalou

#### DISCUSSION

**QUESTION:** After coming across these three authors, has how you look at organisations undergone a slight change? If so, what is it?

**QUESTION:** Does it give new meaning to the terms scale, sustainability and leadership? If yes, how? If no, why?