

Two Kinds of Coherence

(From Coherence in the Midst of Complexity by Letiche, Lissack, Schultz)

Characteristic	Ascribed Coherence (Agreement with Label)	Resilient Coherence (Agreement with Present Context)
Reaction to “Many”	Complicated - unfold	Complex – observe weave
See Pattern	Provide a Label	Observe Affordance
Adjacent Possibles	Predict	Explore
Weak Signals	Reject as Noise	Investigate for Resonance
Multiple Signals	Frame/ Bracket	Dialogue Amongst
Multiple tasks/roles	Compartmentalize/deny	Awareness of active role playing
Role in a Conversation	Speak	Listen
Tone in Conversation	State Facts	Ask Questions
Focus of Efforts	Efficiency	Resilience, Creativity
Inspiration	Machine	Environment
Type of Speech Act	Monologue	Dialogue

Coherence is regarded by many psychologists as critical to day to the day productivity and effectiveness of individuals. Both scholars and managers have adapted this belief to the world of management and organizations. Coherence is regarded as a sign of a well-run organization. But, the concept of a coherent thought defined as how well an idea holds together as a single entity gradually breaks down as the scale shifts to individuals, groups, and ultimately larger organizations. Adapting to and dealing with emergence is perhaps the most important task facing managers and organizations. Coherence as traditionally defined interferes with that task. By restricting the concept of coherence to ascribed coherence managers and organizations implicitly are restricting their ability to deal with the unknown, the uncertain and the emergent. The task of the modern manager is to explore how to expand that understanding to include resilient coherence.