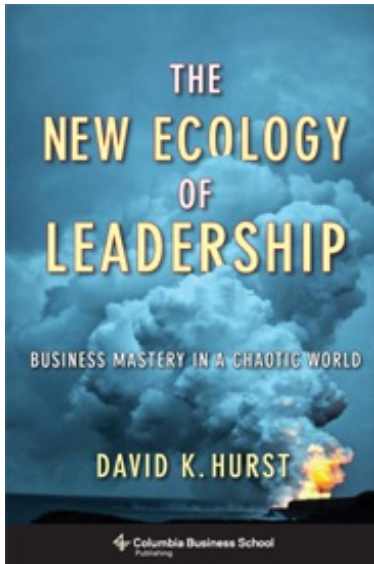


Articles from Integral Leadership Review

David K. Hurst, *The New Ecology of Leadership: Business Mastery in a Chaotic World*

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David K. Hurst. *The New Ecology of Leadership: Business Mastery in a Chaotic World*. New York: Columbia Business School Publishing, 2012.

David Hurst gets it. Apparently not directly influenced by integral theory or Spiral Dynamics, David Hurst gets the importance of context. After all, that is a core contribution of integral theory – identifying the relevance of interiors, exteriors, collectives and individuals in any phenomenon. Hurst takes as his culprit for our not having more consistently accounting for such a range of variables neoclassical economics. The book opens,

The root cause of the inability of management thought to grasp the relationship between stability and change, as well as that between reason and emotion, is clear. It is its academic aspiration to be a science in the mold of physics, which dates back to the 1950s. Flowing from this is the increasing influence of the last fifty years of neoclassical economics. (17)

He goes on to address the fragmentation of the social sciences and constriction of business schools, both of which are related to the splintering of the academy into disciplines. In the study of organizations and management he offers an ecological framework that recognizes that managing is a practice embedded in every day living. By taking an ecological approach, combined with evolutionary psychology, moves us away from the assumptions of rationality in neoclassical economics. Making this shift

is critical to our ability to extract patterns from our experience, to create mental models, and to anticipate and recognize contexts. (26)

Our meaning making involves continuing processes of abstraction, creating fragile abstractions to guide our actions. This makes applying theory to practice difficult. That is because our knowing is relative to space and time. As change occurs the contexts of space and time change. Our principles and practices learned yesterday may be useless today. Thus, the importance of context.

The implication of this work supports the idea that we can make distinctions among concepts, but definitions are contextual, due to time and space variability. Hurst's model of stability and change reflects the lenses we use to see what is happening:

- Change is ongoing at all scales; whether you detect it is only a question of scale in space and time.
- Change is smooth, slow, and linear when growth processes are at work, but rapid and nonlinear when the destructive counterparts are in operation.
- Self-organizing processes are key...
- Complex structures develop from resilient, small-scale, fast-moving systems to efficient-but-brittle, large-scale, slow-moving ones. (43)
- Creation requires destruction to break down old hierarchies, create the open patches from which innovation can emerge, and restore resiliency to the system.(44)

These are but sample of the principles he offers. His approach is supportive of seeing the movies of human systems, not just the snapshots.

His model of the organizational ecocycle (47) rests within the dynamics of three contexts: trust, logic and power. For example the climate of an organization is rooted in the level of trust and confidence among top management. Logics of cause and effect "are well understood and people in both their management and leadership roles understand what to do and how to do it." (47)

Eureka. Hurst gets it! Manager and leader are roles. Individuals move in and out of those roles as contexts change and time passes. The logic of management and the logic of leadership are different. The former is the logic of systems; the latter is the logic of people.

Power is about power over as a means for success. The dilemma for people in organizations is that as context changes, so do the requirements of power.

In his treatment of leadership, Hurst notes that leadership is "values-based, a social 'ecologic' of people." It is about the recognition of the complexity of human nature. "The logic of leadership recognizes that we act our way into better modes of thinking even more readily than we think ourselves into better ways of action." (110) Leading requires being in tune with changing contexts and adapting to new requirements while letting go of old habits. It is about aligning intentions. The "heroic" leader (my term) has the role of creating communities of trust and the innovative dynamics related to trust.

Hopefully these comments whet your appetite for more of the excellent work.

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