September 29, 2007 – University Seminar on Complex Systems

Susan Turnbull – Mapping science, network science, Katie Borner at Indiana University KM, ontologists, second life, 20 communities of practice. She is a senior program advisor in the U.S. Office of Intergovernmental Solutions.

Evan Faber – Interested in supervenience.

Neil Padukone, student.

Lowell Christy – C words cybernetics Club of Rome, chaos, complexity, culture. The Macy Conferences were concerned with issues arising from WW II. DOD has developed war machines, robots. Much knowledge of cybernetics has been lost. The Bretton Woods Institutions were intended to stabilize and rebuild – IMF, WB. At the Cultural Strategies Institute one question is, How do we address a complex problem like international affairs? We are planning a series of conferences leading up to the next election. The intent is to change the basis of how we conduct foreign policy using a “tree tops organization”: Robert Galvin, Motorola; Dee Hock, Visa; George Soros; Austin Kiplinger.

Bill Halal – The current GM strike is a result of international competition.

Bill Smith – In the Middle East there are deep roots to the difficulties, a gordian knot.

Stuart Umpleby – I am wondering what underlying trends are giving rise to these difficulties – technology, rising levels of education, population growth, pollution of the environment.

Evan Faber – Spiral dynamics, and the work of Ken Wilbur.

LC – Cultural identity is at the core of current conflicts.

ST – Some microbes do not exist as individuals. They move from group to group. Second Life is a practice space for new behaviors.

BH – cells form communities and transform themselves.

ST – Seek a quorum.

LC – African termites form a critical mass. A sycamore tree has a sense of wholeness. We need a concept of downward causality.

BH – Consolidation. What is the content of prescriptions?

LC – George Kennan, who invented the containment strategy re the USSR, suggested that if there are two competing systems, the most adaptive system will win. Hence,
containment. G. Bateson – CIA after the war grew out of the Office of Strategic Services. In a memo Bateson said the U.S. needs to know the enemy (USSR) or we will breathe our fumes and blow ourselves up. New Guinea tribes were committing suicide. Gen. MacArthur read Ruth Benedict’s The Sword and the Chrysanthemum about Japanese culture.

BH – The Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) policy did work. But now we have many nuclear powers.

LC – Gen. Ruppert Smith said there will be no more wars (instead asymmetric warfare) in his book Utility of Force. Paul Yinling wrote the recent article “A Failure of Generalship.” We can handle current terrorists. But our actions create new terrorists. Win over the people, and they will extinguish their bad ideas. A recent effort gathered huge amounts of anthropological data. Situational awareness – who is married to whom, cousins, place of birth. See Katherine Dibble, University of Maryland.

BS – Design of engagement, Eric Trist, top, bottom, L, R.

LC – We need a public administration academy to help in rebuilding after a conflict, similar to the military academies. There are many think tanks in US.

EF – The Center for Collective Intelligence at MIT studies networks of humans and computers.

BS – Thinking is only an input. Engagement goes beyond thinking.

BH – Values and visions.

SU – Participatory Strategic Planning is a different way of holding meetings that is proving useful in the post-communist countries – What is our vision? What are the obstacles to achieving the vision? What are strategies for removing the obstacles? What are actions that will implement the strategies? What actions should be taken in each quarter of the coming year to implement the strategies? I received an email from an Australian man working in Kuwait. He is working to create a new kind of project management – cooperation among government, business, and international partners to create an environmentally efficient and responsible society.

BH – Connection to microbes.

BS – Possibility of transformation, Ionesco’s rhinoceros.

LC – Marlow’s hierarchy reversed. Meaning is needed. The US had no message after the Iraq invasion. What is the problem we are dealing with?
BH – Societies are not growing, are in decline. They are ridden with conflicts. The U.S. as a super power is seen as being preoccupied with sex and materialism. Societies need to redefine their civil institutions. In some countries charging interest is not permitted. Behavior starts with beliefs and values.

Neil P – Many conversations on religions. But problem people will not go.

BS – A neutral street was created between Catholic and Protestant gangs in Liverpool.

NP – Spent summer in Pakistan.

BH – All planning methods start with goals and values. This shows the power of a domain beyond knowledge – spirituality.

BS – Human interaction, engagement goes beyond thinking.

ST – How might we reenact the Liverpool story for communities around the world? The film A Thousand Suns is about Afganistan. Child actors have been removed so the story can be told without repercussions on them.

LC – Japan now has a warrior economic culture rather than a military culture.

EF – Acting for personal pleasure is not effective.

Anne Washington – People consult wikipedia.

BH – Knowledge is losing its authority.

BS – Doug Englebart said that computers should connect people so they can solve problems.

LC – How do we harness our intellectual power? Universities are not engaged. Need to understand change. There were unintended consequences of the shock and awe strategy in Iraq.