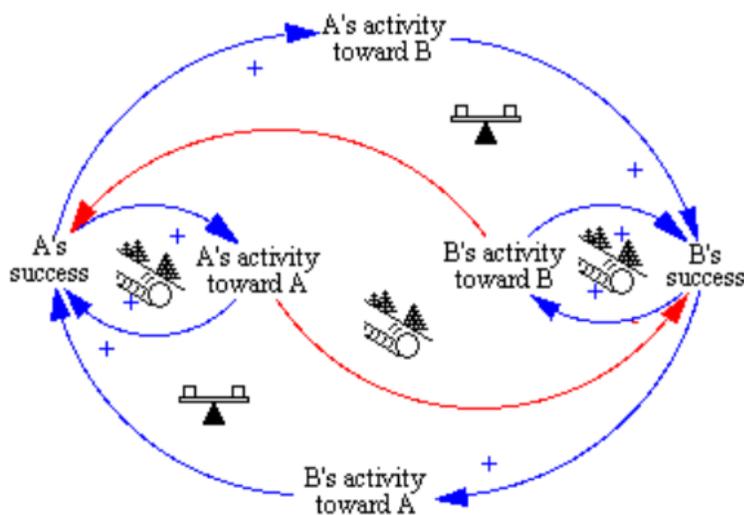


NEW MATERIAL

<http://www.systems-thinking.org/theWay/saa/aa.htm>

"The Accidental Adversaries structure is composed of four [reinforcing loops](#) and two [balancing loops](#). Overall system growth is driven by a global reinforcing structure. Two local reinforcing structures create balancing structures which then limit the growth of the overall system. This is by far not one of the easiest archetypes to understand, so it is presented in pieces."



Source: <http://www.systems-thinking.org/theWay/saa/aa.htm>

I am not ready to attempt to make a full explanation of the visible model above, not am I able at this time to draw such models. But the gist of it is as follows.

Organization A and organization B have working relationships in an area of public policy. They are probably not in direct competition with one another. They may, for example, sometimes refer clients to one another. They are RELATED MISSIONS, but probably not identical missions. Some clients may depend on each of them, but for different things.

They each strive to do good work within their respective specializations. The two organizations have no reason to hurt the other.

Naturally, the employees in organization A are going to do their best to advance the success of organization A. Some outcomes of their "looking out for A" indirectly contribute to the success of organization B. (And vice-versa, B to A.)

BUT THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES of some the things that organization A does (rightfully to promote its own worthy success) "injure" organization B -- either immediately or in time. (And vice-versa, B to A.)

A simple linear model of reasoning about relationships in the world does not see these indirect patterns of causation.

(As an aside, I think this was an inadequacy of former president's Trump's "American First" perspective. But it "sells" more easily to many Americans than the idea that the solution to massive immigration from south to north may involve helping the governments of nations in the south.)

Stroh cites Senge in making one of Stroh's major points in our textbook. The point is the WE are part of existing systems and that to some degree or another (and in some way or another) WE are part of existing problems.

I suppose this is the reason some Republican leaders insist that global warming is not of human origin. Stroh would say that until we accept that we are probably complicit in the problem it is unlikely that we participate in finding a policy solution.

In other words, systems thinking begins with a deep understanding of relevant reality. WE are part of that reality. We are responsible for our perceptions and our interpretations of what we perceive. I am not arguing that everything is subjective. The point is, I think, that if we want to change the world we should understand that world and realize that we are a part of it. We may not have directly caused the problem, but (directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally) we are likely contributing to the problem.

And perhaps more importantly, the "injections" intended to become a solution, may well have undesired effects.

And given that "government" is so vast government initiatives are surely deeply entangled with today's "wicked" policy problems. The more government interventions there are the more likely it is that government(s) will exacerbate existing problems and/or create new problems.

## CONCLUSION

I am not suggesting that we/government should do nothing because we might possibly do harm. As a species we are way beyond being able to declare ourselves innocent from the actions of humanity.

Systems thinking can inform democratic decision making. But the wisdom of democracy is constrained by the level of thinking among the majority of citizens and the maturity of the media.

Whether wise leaders can emerge in a democracy and an administrative state from a population of citizens who are not inclined toward systems thinking (or even science), is another question.

## CLASS ACTIVITY IN BREAK-OUT GROUPS

Identify two organizations in the public sector (which includes nonprofits) that are not "natural enemies" but are likely to become "accidental adversaries" because they have similar missions or similar clients, or similar networks of relationships with other organizations. Identify the two organizations and

explain the ways in which they are likely to undermine the interest of each other, when the situation is viewed from a systems perspective.