Don McNeil
P.O.Box 312
Wyalusing, PA 18853

Dear Don,

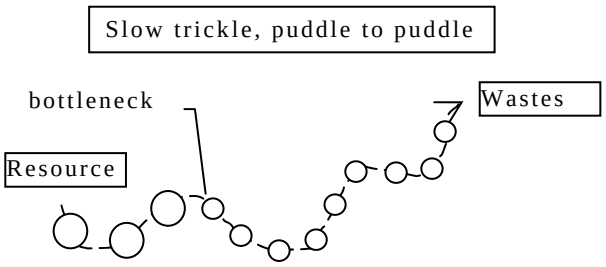
Thank you so much for reminding me of how remiss I've been in responding! There is so much our approaches share, like the purely ridiculous notion to many others that systems might be individuals as well as wholes. I think our differences are fruitful too. For one thing I've been trying to bring attention to the whole system issues (Gaia's pain in the ass) leading toward our collapse. The most fun I've had had to do with making some progress on why human minds so misconstruct the nature of our world. I've dropped out even further as I saw the collapse coming and all my close friends, family and colleagues endlessly dodging the evidence I kept trying to point out to them. It's just amazing that our snap judgments are so self-satisfying that otherwise competent people can't be convinced that increasing the scale of things changes their behavior and new stereotypes are needed. No one says "are you sure?" or "how do you know?" when saying that the sign of natural limits and the failure of growth is the rise of cost and complications of finding new resources and the external or internal conflicts that comes from that, etc. etc. I did a nice paragraph on 'General Learning Limits' at, http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Learning_curve and circulating the one that sort of sums up the evidence for how our world is not responding to increasing demand and so prices are rising to shed markets… http://www.synapse9.com/issues/92-08Commodities2-sm.jpg

A lot of our blinders come from our inability to watch change, and whatever happens keeping the same stereotypes for changing things anyway. Another part is just that people don't see systems as individual things, and attempt to have a 'theory of everything'. Then I noticed that the individualism of the parts is always lost when you make self-consistent sense of them together, as 'explanation' requires!! So it's the cellular form of cybernation, how they originate, develop, dance with the world and leave it enriched to look at. That can only exist as individuals sharing a self-inconsistent environment. I can't draw a spatial diagram quite the way you do since it's hard to represent the way process cells can overlap extensively, and employ that to point to the active phenomena around us. So I keep relying on my phase change diagram to help point back to the best of all models, the "in-physico" one of the thing itself. I do have two other things to share, the paper enclosed and thought sketch below. The paper is just published in the journal Stan is on the board of, Cosmos & History, in their special issue on "What is Life". fyi the link to the issue is: http://www.cosmosandhistory.org/index.php/journal/issue/view/13 with my contribution near the bottom of the long list. The editor received it very well, noting that Rosen, Cord and I have related approaches to what prevents science from studying life. Rosen objects to models without "divergence", Cord calls it missing the "quickness" of life and I the "eventfulness" or "divergence". I suggest switching to a general idea of individuals exploring their environments, rather that being controlled by them, and letting the differences between our models and nature help draw our attention to that by contrast. Perhaps you'll have some comment.

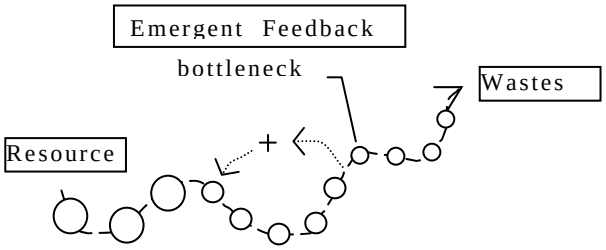
P. F. Henshaw 680 Ft. Washington Ave, NY NY 10040
pfh@synapse9.com (212) 795-4844

The sketch is of an idea of one kind of circumstance where a feedback loop might occur as a kind of a kink or a recycling on an otherwise linear flow. Just a kind of loose notion not connected to much of anything else for consideration. It may be about how waste products of stages along a linear path that become resources for complex cells developing along it.

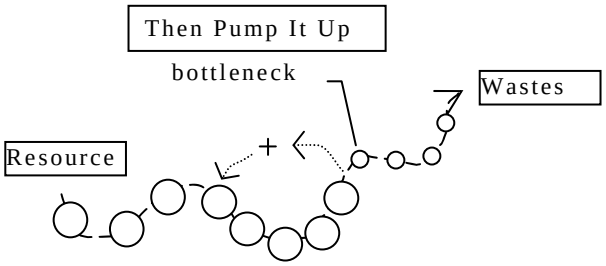
1. Start with a leaky gradient



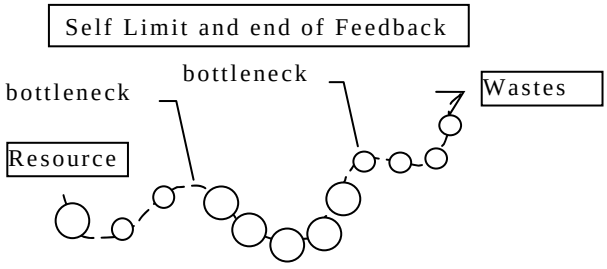
2. Something along the way makes a loop



3. And builds the passageway



4. Growth limit disconnects feedback



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All the best,

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