There is a common abstract model for groups of people who bear a shared exclusionary narrative, including conspiracy theories and political agendas. This leads to a common network notation we can use to describe the operational structure of any particular such group.
1/38

This operational structure identifies interactions that account for the group's cohesiveness. It is these interactions that suggest possible points of intervention.
2/38

Definition: A Cohesive Subpopulation is one (1)whose members act consistently in accordance with some common purpose, and (2)which makes it difficult for its members to depart from that purpose.

We're going to understand how it sticks together.
3/38

This definition can encompass anything from an infantry battalion to an otherwise unconnected group spreading a rumor. In fact it's just about any group of people with an identity.

So how do we make the definition useful?
4/38

I'm going to state a theorem that applies to all such groups. So it will be little more than a tautology.

But then I'm going to narrow the domain of interest to those groups that have been confounding today's politics, e.g.,
5/38

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a. Groups of people committed to a shared narrative that defies objective consensus observation, for example, QAnon, many cults, and the "Stop the Steal" faction of the current Republican Party.
6/38

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b. Any social movement with a mission to accomplish a contrarian, antisocial purpose, such as crippling vaccination and other public-health measures, limiting public education, undoing inclusive representative government, etc.
7/38

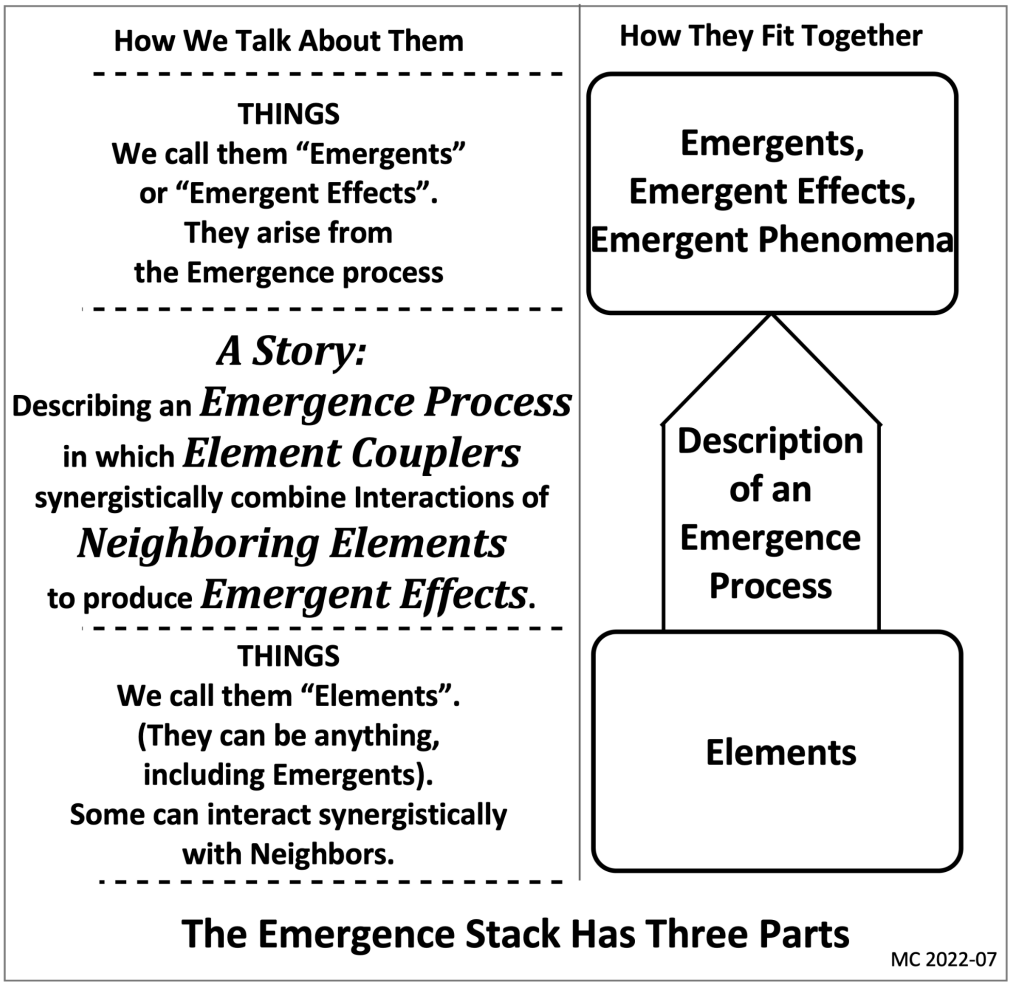
This restriction of the domain of study will lead us to something useful: guidance that can steer us to a new class of interventions.
8/38

The theorem employs a concept of Emergence that is not widely accepted as being ubiquitous (but I do accept its ubiquity); in order to avoid that issue you should ignore any controversy and stay within the definitions.
9/38

The definition of Emergence is contained in the essay at https://melconway.com/Home/pdf/social_emergence.pdf.
That essay is largely tutorial, so if the concept is unfamiliar you can find its model and examples useful. The examples begin at 13/56. The video at 22/56 will be a source of insight.
10/38

The diagram (at 25/56) of the three-part “Emergence Stack” will be key to the argument, so even if it doesn’t make complete sense you should become familiar with it.

Here is that diagram.

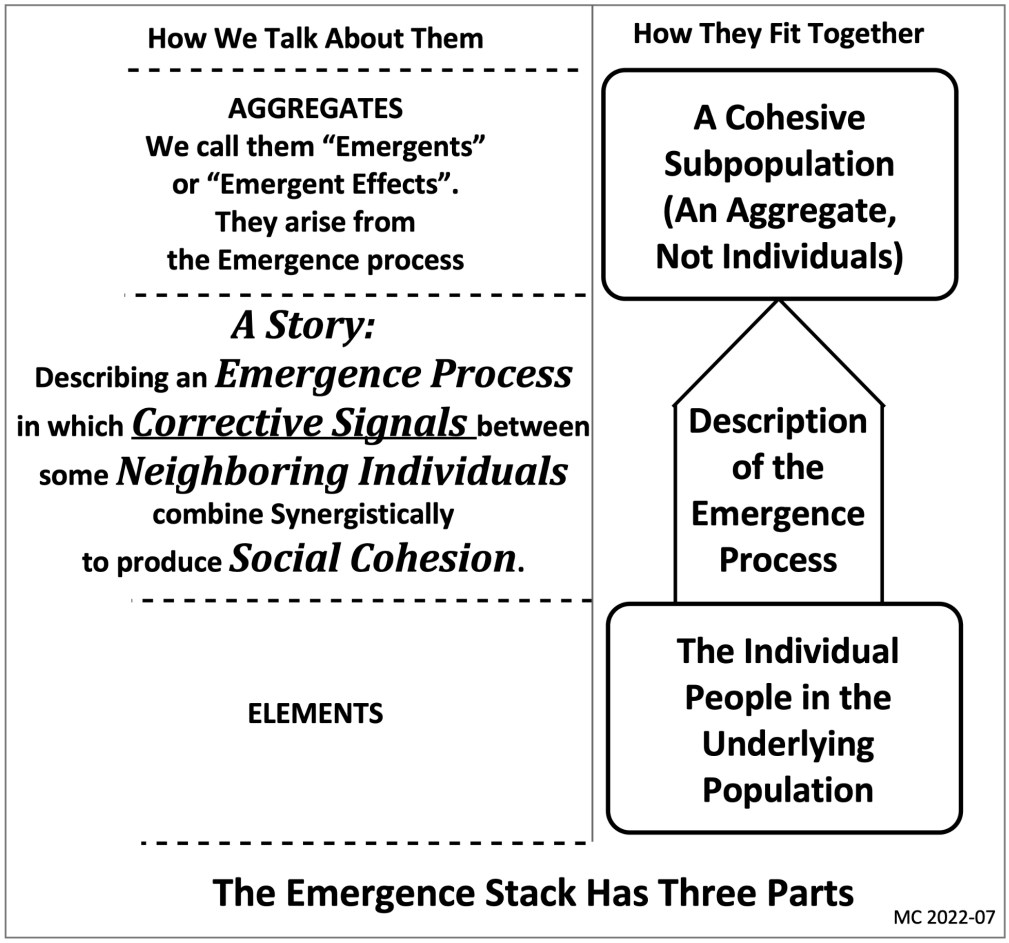


11/38

All the interesting stuff is in the Element Couplers, which are different for each example. You’ll see a variety of examples in 30/56 through 51/56.

12/38

Here is the same diagram with the language specialized to apply to the present argument. Note that the things named in the rounded rectangles are in two different categories: people and aggregates of people.



13/38

The key to emergent behavior in cohesive groups is Corrective Signaling, which keeps individuals in line with the common purpose.

“Neighboring” individuals are individuals between whom corrective signaling pathways exist. (No notion of geographic space is implied.)
14/38

Corrective Signals can be positive (attaboys) or negative (threats). They reinforce each other using the model-specific “force multipliers” in Element Couplers, adding up to something big and new.
15/38

This is the very role in the model in which the tiny forces between water molecules combined to break the Titanic. (See pp. 10-11 of https://melconway.com/Home/pdf/social_emergence.pdf.)

This reinforcement of local interactions is the essence of emergence.
16/38

This emergence model makes clear how our social hyperconnectivity enabled by the Internet has changed politics by enabling the expansion almost without practical limits of the number and extents of Neighborhoods.

We now have “network effects” with a vengeance.
17/38

The intimidation force multiplier is typically a layer of *anonymous intermediaries* that fan out the signaling pathways, e.g.:
1. To politicians (from donors, via advertising, to voters),

2. To school board members (from party operatives, via social networks, to parents),
18/38

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3. To election volunteers and officials (often via private militias), and
4. To politicians (from party operatives, via private militias and motivated voters).

If you doubt these last examples, consider the reporting of these two journalists.
19/38

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a. @brianstelter (CNN):
https://twitter.com/brianstelter/status/1526582205459349504
20/38

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b. @CarolLeonnig (Washington Post):
At 09:00 (sorry about the advertising);
https://www.msnbc.com/deadline-white-house/watch/was-dozen%20or%20soh-post-s-leonnig-says-she-s-spoken-with-republicans-who-are-afraid-to-say-what-they-think-in-their-own-districts-109693509618
21/38

This fanout layer tells us we need to be careful using “great man” language. For example, Donald Trump is a key part of the Republican story, but his coupling to the damage being done is indirect. We need to pay more attention to the fanout.
https://twitter.com/conways_law/status/1291359021019136000

22/38

So we have arrived at a Theorem of sorts:

A Cohesive Subpopulation is an emergent effect of the underlying population, in which element coupling is via corrective signaling.
23/38

Using this theorem will focus the discovery of interventions by directing researchers of a particular cohesive system to its force multipliers: element couplers and corrective signaling.
24/38

The work can be further focused by employing the software-development abstraction technique of Design Patterns described in this book.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Design_Patterns
25/38

The book teaches us that there is a relatively small set of stereotypical abstract patterns that, if we try to build our artifacts on variants of the members of this set, we work more efficiently. This is fundamental within software design practice.
26/38

More importantly to the present argument, using this approach gives us deeper insight into the common underlying structures of cohesive organizations.

Our society is floundering in this regard and badly needs such insight.
27/38

Using the Design Patterns technique we can model a cohesive organization as a network of roles (the nodes) and signals (the branches). (This is in contrast to classes and messages, as in the original software method.)
28/38

My conjecture is that almost all conspiratorial organizations, such as the few I have listed here https://twitter.com/conways_law/status/1536754371039571968, employ variants of a small number of crime-syndicate models.
29/38

A year and a half ago (before the design-pattern approach suggested itself) I mapped out several examples of crime syndicates here: https://twitter.com/conways_law/status/1336372786424582145
30/38

The simplest form is perhaps a Mafia-style protection racket, whose structure is shown in this diagram: https://twitter.com/conways_law/status/1336372790367293454
31/38

Another finding: a shared lie can create the stickiness characteristic of a cohesive organization. Read 3/15 thru 12/15 here:

https://twitter.com/conways_law/status/1285990005270290436
This is going on in the Republican party now.
32/38

Reading on about the crime model, you see in
https://twitter.com/conways_law/status/1336372796994314240
that in much current party politics the process is driven by donors.
(I have since abandoned Shared Psychotic Disorder.)
33/38

An important source of data supporting the role of donors in the model is @JaneMayerNYer's "Dark Money".
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dark_Money_(book)
34/38

The theorem suggests a research strategy:
1. There is a simple network notation that, using roles and signals, describes the structures of all cohesive social systems.
35/38

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2. We can derive a small set of stereotypical Design Patterns to describe all of these cohesive social systems.

If we want to develop interventions for a particular system we will need to diagram its model. This is where the work occurs.
36/38

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3. Using the emergence-stack model (see the diagram above) and data derived from research we can locate the element couplers, specifically the sources of corrective signaling.
https://melconway.com/Home/pdf/social_emergence.pdf.

4. These are the potential points of intervention.
37/38

Request: This approach needs to be tested against existing populations, and developed.

That work needs an institutional home that will support a research community to carry it forward.

If you can help to find such a home please contact me. My DMs are open.
38/38
