From Google: Sense-Making

In organization studies, the concept of sensemaking was first used to focus attention on the largely cognitive activity of framing experienced situations as meaningful. It is a collaborative process of creating shared awareness and understanding out of different individuals' perspectives and varied interests. The work of [Weick](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_Weick) [[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sensemaking#cite_note-Weick1988-3)[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sensemaking#cite_note-Weick1993-4)[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sensemaking#cite_note-Weick1995-5)[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sensemaking#cite_note-Weick2005-6) in particular has dealt with sensemaking at the organizational level, providing insight into factors that surface as organizations address either uncertain or ambiguous situations. This is what leaders, both formal and informal do—they help the group, department, unit, etc. make sense of the organizational reality. And, as you will read in the Competing Narratives paper, there will be competing narratives in any organization in which other formal or informal leaders will be trying to make sense of things.

Sensemaking has seven properties (See Weick, K. (1979). *The Social Psychology of Organizing*. New York: McGraw-Hill.):

1. **Identity** and identification is central – who people think they are in their context shapes what they enact and how they interpret events (Pratt, 2000, Currie & Brown, 2003; Weick, [Sutcliffe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kathleen_M._Sutcliffe), & Obstfeld, 2005; Thurlow & Mills, 2009; Watson, 2009).
2. **Retrospection** provides the opportunity for sensemaking: the point of retrospection in time affects what people notice (Dunford & Jones, 2000), thus attention and interruptions to that attention are highly relevant to the process (Gephart, 1993).
3. \*People **enact** the environments they face in dialogues and narratives (Bruner, 1991; Watson, 1998; Currie & Brown, 2003). As people speak, and build narrative accounts, it helps them understand what they think, organize their experiences and control and predict events (Isabella, 1990; Weick, 1995; Abolafia, 2010) and reduce complexity in the context of change management (Kumar & Singhal, 2012).
4. Sensemaking is a **social** activity in that plausible stories are preserved, retained or shared (Isabella, 1990; Maitlis, 2005). However, the audience for sensemaking includes the speakers themselves (Watson, 1995) and the narratives are ‘both individual and shared...an evolving product of conversations with ourselves and with others’ (Currie & Brown, 2003: 565).
5. \*Sensemaking is **ongoing**, so Individuals simultaneously shape and react to the environments they face. As they project themselves onto this environment and observe the consequences they learn about their identities and the accuracy of their accounts of the world (Thurlow & Mills, 2009). This is a feedback process so even as individuals deduce their identity from the behaviour of others towards them, they also try to influence this behaviour. As Weick argued, “The basic idea of sensemaking is that reality is an ongoing accomplishment that emerges from efforts to create order and make retrospective sense of what occurs” (Weick, 1993: 635).
6. \*People **extract cues** from the context to help them decide on what information is relevant and what explanations are acceptable (Salancick & Pfeffer, 1978; Brown, Stacey, & Nandhakumar, 2007) Extracted cues provide points of reference for linking ideas to broader networks of meaning and are ‘simple, familiar structures that are seeds from which people develop a larger sense of what may be occurring." (Weick 1995: 50).
7. People favour **plausibility over accuracy** in accounts of events and contexts (Currie & Brown, 2003; Brown, 2005; Abolafia, 2010): "in an equivocal, postmodern world, infused with the politics of interpretation and conflicting interests and inhabited by people with multiple shifting identities, an obsession with accuracy seems fruitless, and not of much practical help, either" (Weick 1995: 61).

Each of these seven aspects interact and intertwine as individuals interpret events. Their interpretations become evident through [narratives](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narrative) – written and spoken – which convey the sense they have made of events (Currie & Brown, 2003).