

All around the viable systems model



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Introducing myself

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systems | cybernetics | complexity
business evolutionary | avid learner

Learn with me in the RedQuadrant tool shed

My recommended reading list <https://link.redquadrant.com/systemscomplexitycyberneticsreading>

All my links at antlerboy.com



www.publicservicetransformation.org



All around the viable systems model

Introductory

- I am a metarationalist (:- cybernetician)
- This thinking is dangerous
- Sensemaking: worlds
- The dynamics of worlds and the devil's bargain
- Seeing the system

VSM

- The viable systems model
- Using the vsm for diagnosis and prescription
- The scio organisational maturity model
- Case studies

My meta-applications and wider thinking

- Systems convening, change, leadership
- Bringing systems leadership to public services
- Services are bad for people thriving together is better
- Eight aspects of commissioning
- Ten principles for public service transformation
- standardise when you can customise when you should
- 'demand management'

Supporting outcomes in complex systems

- outcomes are the result of complex adaptive systems
- bubbles and what it typically looks like
- what is it we're doing here, and what are the implications
- how does it usually go? And how come?
- data and risk

Five core practices

- five core leadership practices
- 1) developing productive conversations
- 2) clarity practices
- 3) learning practices
- 4) culture as a complex adaptive system
- 5) intent: purpose and measures

Robust systems (Oshry and variety balances)

- encounters with the other and robust systems
- organise for human needs

Consensual co-ordination of the consensual coordination of action

- co-ordinated management of meaning
- Maturana's approach

My idea of core systems thinking

‘To understand is to know what to do’ Wittgenstein

‘I can only answer the question ‘What am I to do?’ if I can answer the prior question ‘Of which story or stories do I find myself a part?’ MacIntyre

So. In a world of complexity, with coexisting nebulousity and pattern, that can be interpreted in unlimited ways and only partially controlled...

- distinctions, framings, ways of seeing emerge and allow us to make sense of things,
- to make the complexity manageable,
- and generate meaning and value, purpose, and legitimacy, power, and ethics.

We shape our world, and our world shapes us.

- This means seeing what we see and don’t see, the (un)discussable, cues for behaviour, etc.
-

Yet, the complexity, nebulousity and pattern, and multiple interpretability remain.

- Feedback can create learning shocks – what we thought, was wrong.
- The natural development or results of our ways of seeing and being can seem undesirable.
- Our existing multiple worlds of meaning can create conflict, exploitation, and confusion.
- And people have agency; they can never be fully predicted or controlled.

We can learn. To act differently. To reframe. To change our identity.

systems | complexity | cybernetics is about working with this

Three quotes to keep in mind

- The tool for handling complexity is ORGANISATION. But our concepts of organisation belong to the much less complex old world not to the much more complex today's world: still less are they adequate to deal with the next epoch of complexification in a world of explosive change.
Stafford Beer
- Creativity and innovation, like freedom and liberty, depend not upon the soft pedalling of organisation, but upon the development of institutions with the kind of constraint and opportunities that can enable us to live and work together harmoniously, effectively and creatively.
Elliott Jaques

VUCA is an experience – not a condition of the world

You never understand a system until you start to try to change it **Lewin**

‘Cybernetics is not the banana’

This was a definition of cybernetics offered by Heinz von Foerster in a televised interview:

- ‘Imagine a chimp in a cage. In this cage is a banana on top of a large shelf, out of reach for the chimp. However, there is also a stick in the cage. Of course, the chimp will manage to get the banana using the stick. Cybernetics is not about the banana.’
- My view is that cybernetics is about the understanding of the situation – monkey, banana, stick, and shelf – the motivations and possibilities, and the ability to reconceptualise the situation. To make sense, in new ways.
- Most consultancy offers tasty bananas – solutions to situations.
- Teaching people to use the stick is a next step forward, but only works in that specific context, or other directly comparable situations.
- Teaching people the ability to reconceptualise situations (a particular type of learning) is, of course, much harder – particularly if you need to deliver in a programmatic way against a predetermined business case.
- And ‘opening the cage’ is the real goal, creating conditions where the organisation is able to fluidly define purpose and effectively achieve it.

A 'situation' – a patterning of possibility

Looking into a situation:

- What is the situation?
- Who are the actors?

What purposes

- are being sought?
- are being achieved?
- are being espoused?

Context cues and framing

- What are the boundaries of appropriate actions?
- How are they set?
- How are they enforced?

Affordances

- What actions are possible within the boundaries?

And what is the history?

Looking outside the situation.

How are these things established:

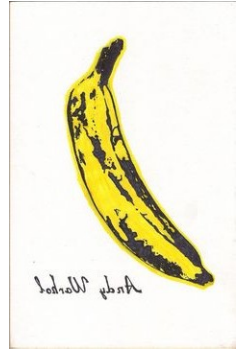
- Situation
- Purposes
- Context cues
- Affordances

What are the implications?

What is the patterning of power, what is the framing of power and powerlessness, what is the understanding of the normal and acceptable uses of power?

'One of the privileges of power, and an integral part of its rationality, is the freedom to define what counts as truth, and, More indeed, what counts as reality. The greater the power, the greater the freedom in this respect, and the less need for power to understand how reality really works.'

Bent Flyvbjerg



A definition of 'work'

- 'effort, to a purpose, using judgement and discretion, within boundaries, over time'

Purpose

A fundamental and powerful idea: the intent to achieve something.

Purpose depends on context, framing, understanding, level of thinking and much more.

The purpose and the context must be communicated and understood for work to be done.

Judgement and discretion

There's no 'work', no value of a human over a machine unless these are brought into play.

And that means freedom to act.

Freedom to act, if unbounded, is stifling and confusing and would create chaos.

Boundaries

Without boundaries, we have creativity, or expression – not work.

Judgement and purpose provide some inherent boundaries, but we too often fail to clarify the boundaries of the work we want to do.

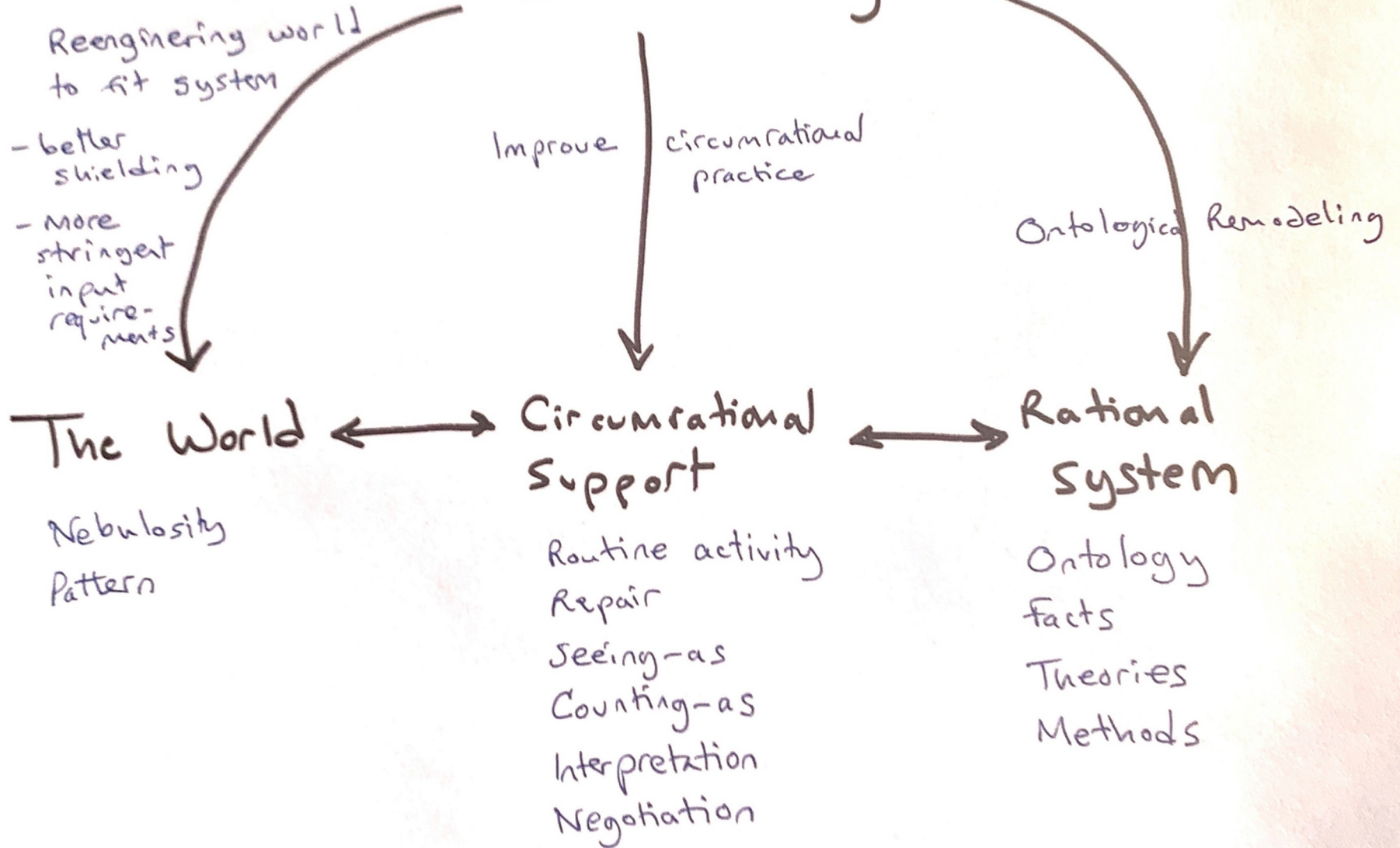
Boundaries protect the space for discretion and enhance effectiveness – they stop overreach and confusion and allow confidence in freedom to act.

The boundaries make the work make sense (from Elliot Jacques)



**I AM A METARATIONALIST
(.: CYBERNETICIAN)**

Meta-rationality



Metarationality

All rationalism is contextual and dependent.

‘Meta-rationality means figuring out how to deploy formal rationality effectively in particular circumstances. That can involve examining the specifics of the rationality/reasonableness interface in those circumstances; but it goes well beyond that.

‘Meta-rationality often involves ontological revision: re-thinking the categories, properties, relationships, and individuation criteria that you build a rational model on.

‘Neither reasonableness nor formal rationality involve explicit theories, criteria, or methods for that.’

David Chapman

How metarationality works

To work from facts and use theories, methods, and logic, we need to deal with the messiness of the world. So if we want to get something done, we need to think about meta-rationality.

- Roughly following David Chapman's scheme, we can think about the world as infinite nebulosity and limitless pattern.
- To 'make sense' of this in a rational system, we need 'circumrational support'.
- Think of a self-driving car. We can't, in fact, identify traffic lights: there is no rule set that will always identify a traffic light and never misidentify something which is not a traffic light.
- Therefore we need a whole set of support activity. We need to take the input to the car, and the context, and create a set of rules for what will be considered a traffic light, and what won't
- Much of driving is routine and predictable and that can be handled very well.

- But... confusion, improvisation, ways of seeing
- All of this is **before** we get to be able to do work with fact, theories, and approaches, before we've classified what we're taking in.
- And we're not talking about emotions or habit or embodied thinking – or the physical constraints on what we can take in. All of these are relevant.
- The magic is that although rational systems don't (and can't) contain their own foundations – in theory terms or in terms of engagement with the world – we can use our rational thinking to think about how we're creating the circumrational support to make sense of the world.
- If we want to get stuff done, we need to pay attention to that as well as the systems we use once that framework is in place and working.



THIS THINKING IS DANGEROUS

Four quadrants of thinking threats

Inclusive. Herd / group. Enthusiasm. MORE – influenced by the few. Dependence. Flighty/ short term.

Naïve enthusiasts
'This tool will change the world'

Wants: change
Will see you as: an inspiration or a killjoy
How to engage: ask naïve questions, draw them into the tougher challenges



'our tools are right'



Systems populisers
– oversimplifiers
'I want a following'

Wants: likes, shares, followers
Will see you as: a fan – or a source
How to engage: flatter, ask naïve questions, draw into the robust old stuff

'The right way to change the world'
(power to)

All four 'behaviour types' claim: **this is**
systems | complexity | cybernetics

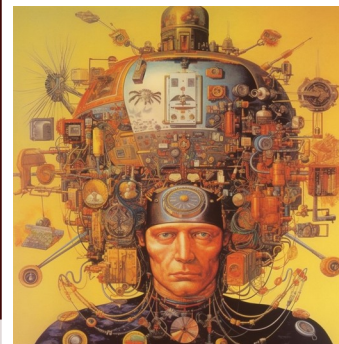
IP, money,
(power over)

Wants: people to stand there in their wrongness and be wrong
Will see you as: 'wrong' (or 'right')
How to respond: engage, talk about what works in context

Curmudgeons
Why don't people listen to me?



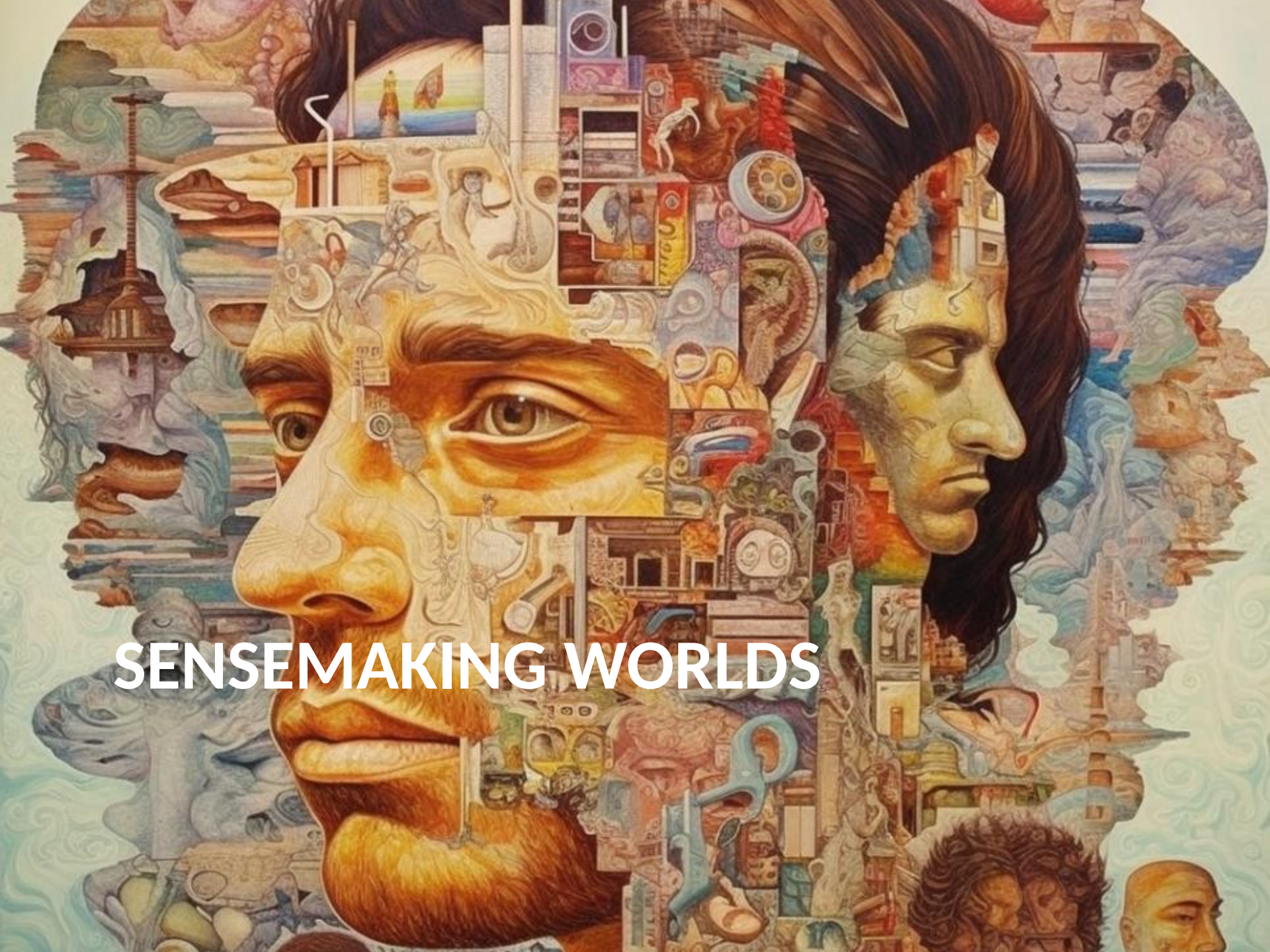
'your tools are wrong'



Wants: followers locked in, ground poisoned for anything else
Will see you as: a disciple – or a problem
How to engage: tease, never flatter, draw into the swampy lowlands of practice

Gooroos
'Intellectual property' and power

Exclusive. Individuals. Grumpiness. FEW, seeking to lead the many. Independence. Persistent / long term.



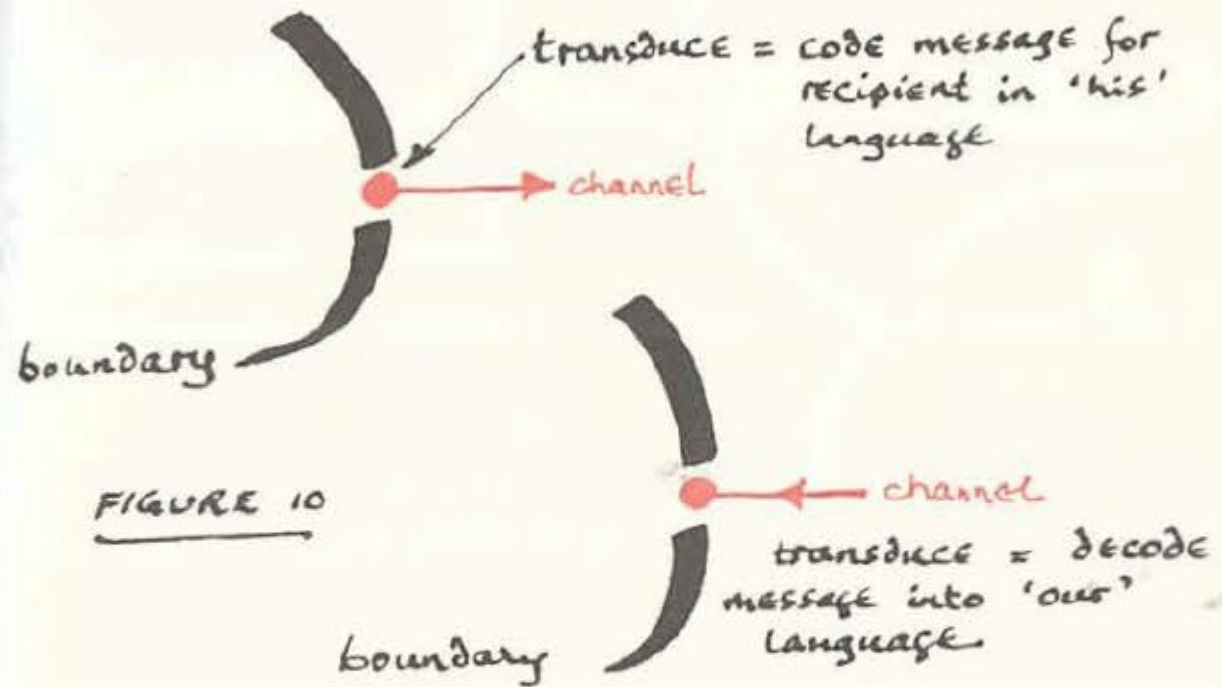
SENSEMAKING WORLDS

STAFFORD **BEER**



**DIAGNOSING THE
SYSTEM**
FOR
ORGANIZATIONS

TRANSDUCTION is the word we need: 'leading across'. Each red blob is a *transducer*, and it has this function:



The Third Principle of Organization

Wherever the information carried on a channel capable of distinguishing a given variety crosses a boundary, it undergoes transduction; the variety of the transducer must be at least equivalent to the variety of the channel.

What the Frog's Eye Tells the Frog's Brain*

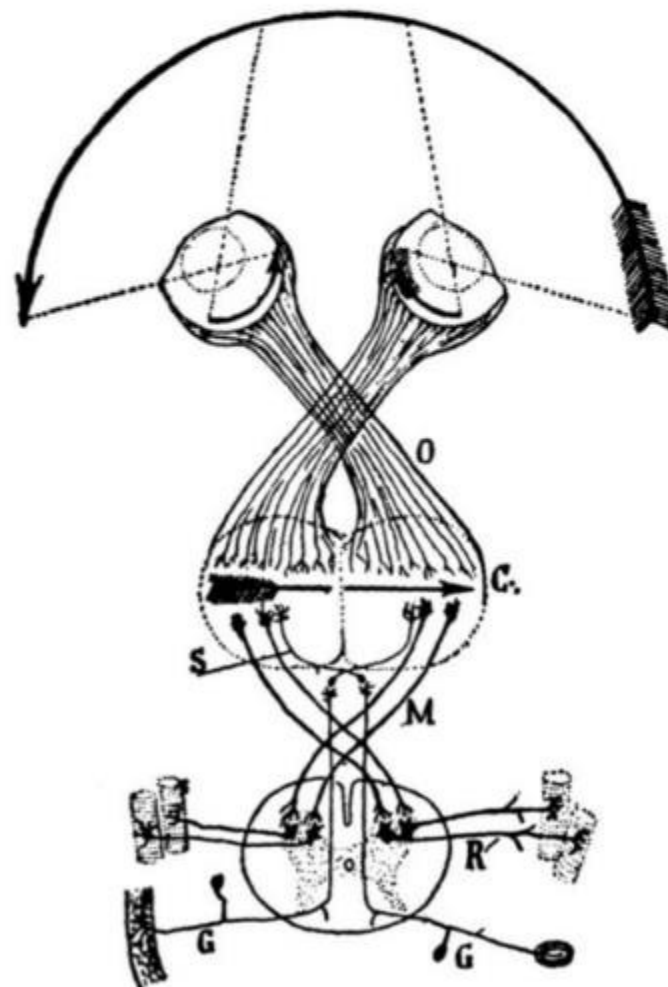
J. Y. LETTVIN†, H. R. MATURANA‡, W. S. McCULLOCH||, SENIOR MEMBER, IRE,
AND W. H. PITTS||

Summary—In this paper, we analyze the activity of single fibers in the optic nerve of a frog. Our method is to find what sort of stimulus causes the largest activity in one nerve fiber and then what is the exciting aspect of that stimulus such that variations in everything else cause little change in the response. It has been known for the past 20 years that each fiber is connected not to a few rods and cones in the retina but to very many over a fair area. Our results show that for the most part within that area, it is not the light intensity itself but rather the pattern of local variation of intensity that is the exciting factor. There are four types of fibers, each type concerned with a different sort of pattern. Each type is uniformly distributed over the whole retina of the frog. Thus, there are four distinct parallel distributed channels whereby the frog's eye informs his brain about the visual image in terms of local pattern independent of average illumination. We describe the patterns and show the functional and anatomical separation of the channels. This work has been done on the frog, and our interpretation applies only to the frog.

INTRODUCTION

Behavior of a Frog

A FROG hunts on land by vision. He escapes enemies mainly by seeing them. His eyes do not move, as do ours, to follow prey, attend suspicious events, or search for things of interest. If his body changes its position with respect to gravity or the whole visual world is rotated about him, then he shows compensatory eye movements. These movements enter his hunting and evading habits only, *e.g.*, as he sits on a



Report

How *Much* the Eye Tells the Brain

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Michael A. Freed,¹ Michael J. Berry II,²
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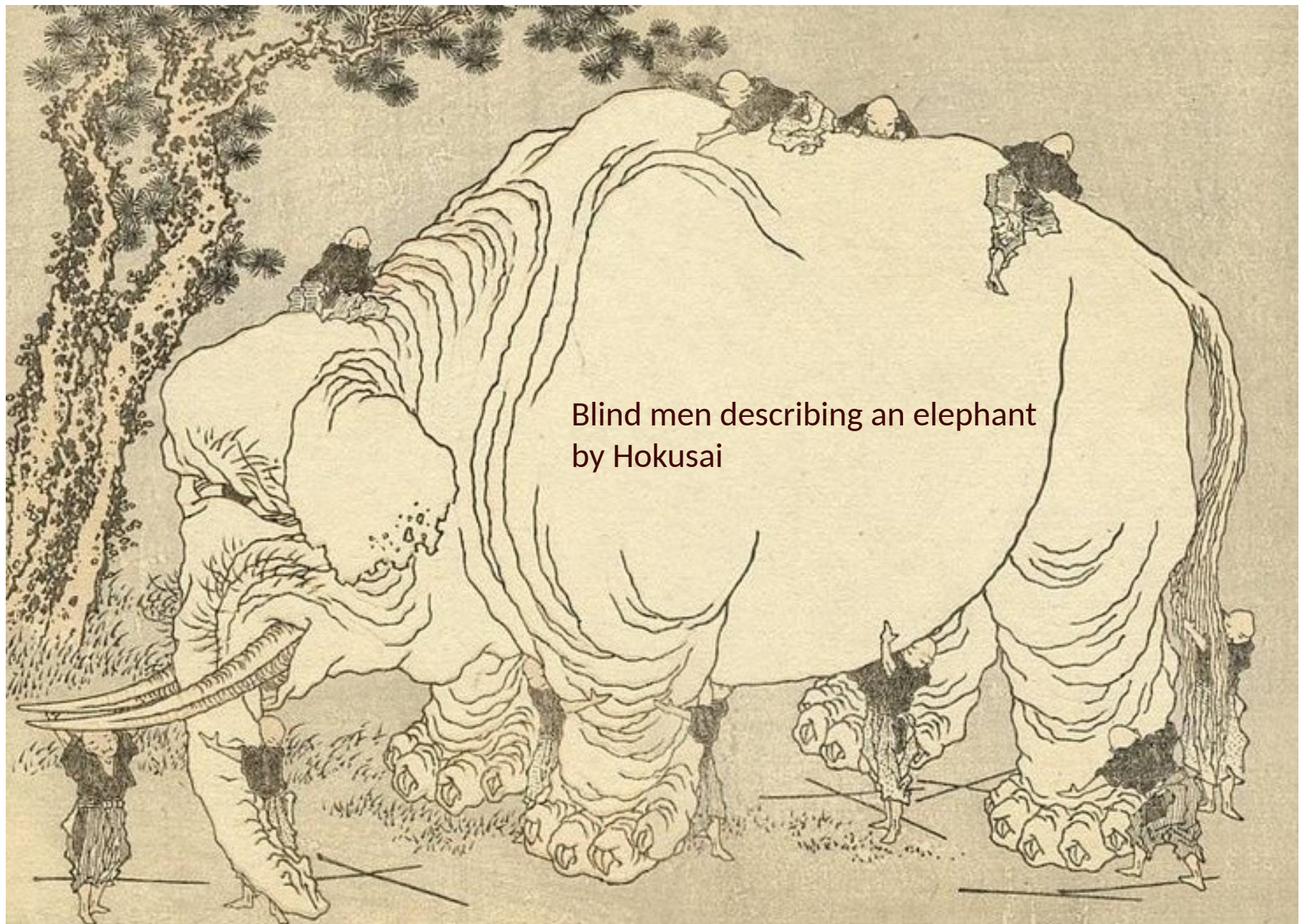
Summary

In the classic “What the frog’s eye tells the frog’s brain,” Lettvin and colleagues [1] showed that different types of retinal ganglion cell send specific kinds of information. For example, one type responds best to a dark, convex form moving centripetally (a fly). Here we consider a complementary question: how *much* information does the retina send and how is it apportioned among different cell types? Recording

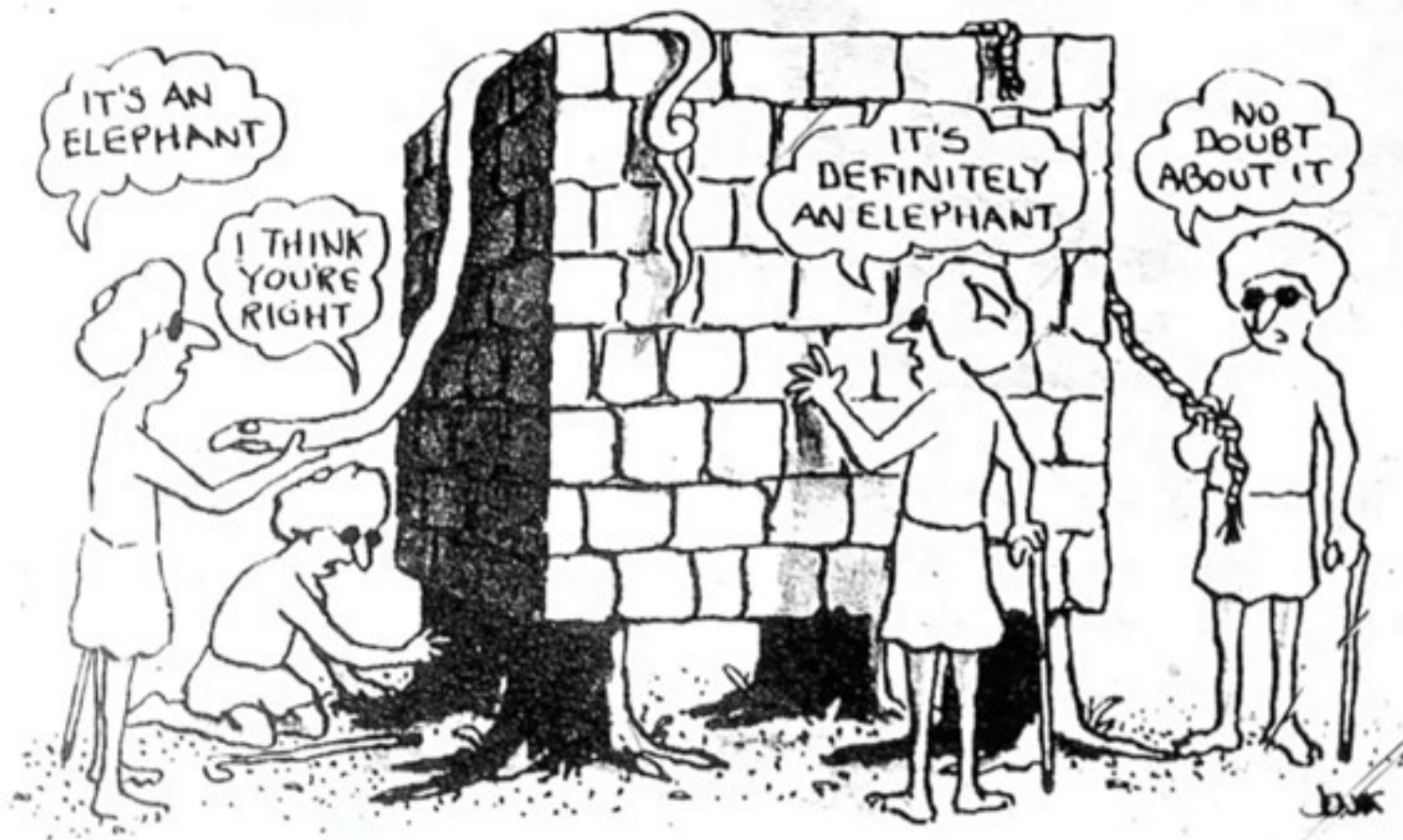
motion, and fixational eye movement. For these stimuli, the intensity distributions and the spatial and temporal spectra differed strikingly from white noise (Figure 1). Instead, like the distributions typical of natural images, they were skewed toward low intensities and low spatial and temporal frequencies.

Responses Depended on Cell Type

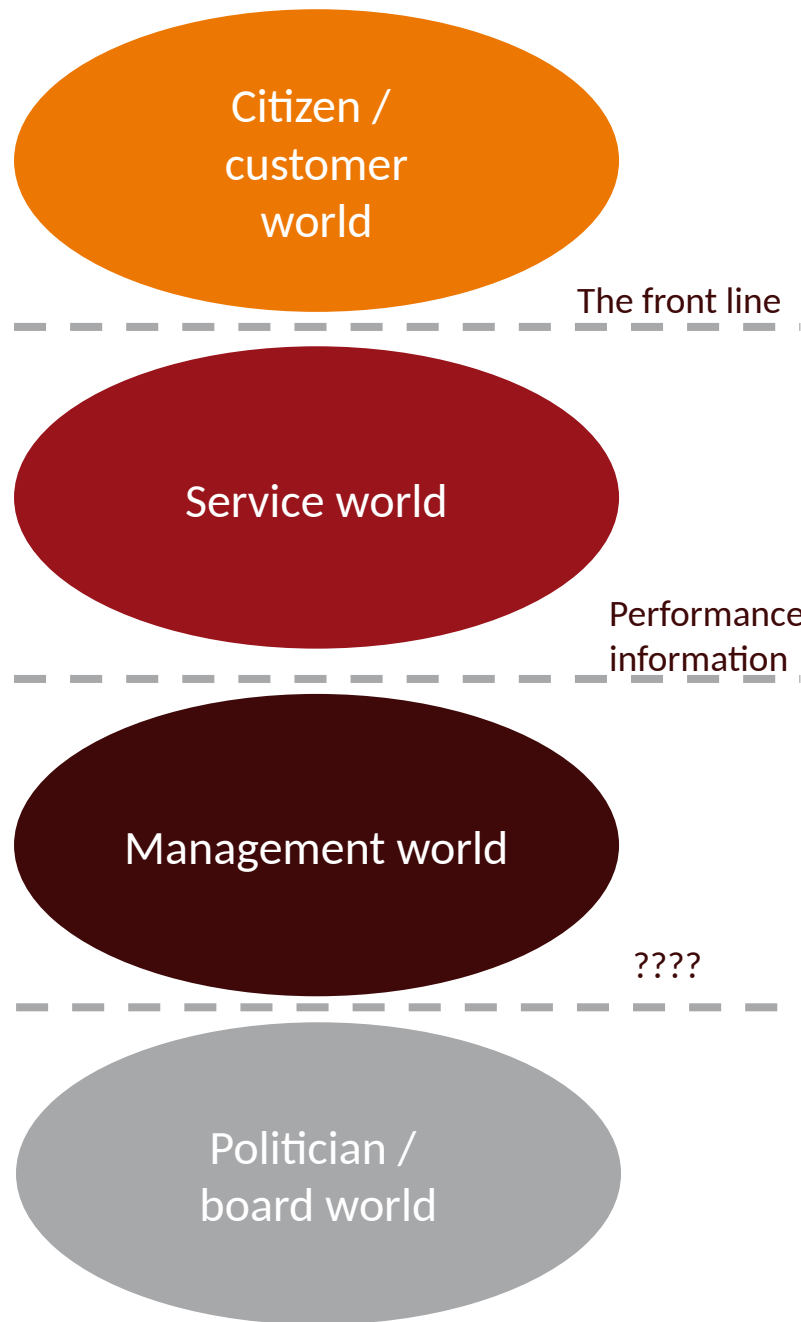
Various cell types were recorded simultaneously on a multi-electrode array [7] or singly with a loose patch electrode [2] and identified by their characteristic reverse correlograms and autocorrelograms (see Figure S1 in the Supplemental Data available with this article online) [8–10]. Comparing responses to a given stimulus across seven cell types, we found a characteristic response pattern for each type (Figure 2). For example, in response to the saccade stimulus, brisk-transient cells (both ON and OFF) fired spike bursts that peaked high in the PSTH ($>300 \text{ spikes} \cdot \text{s}^{-1}$), whereas brisk-sustained cells (both ON and OFF) peaked lower ($\sim 150 \text{ spikes} \cdot \text{s}^{-1}$) and fired for longer periods (Figure 2). ON-OFF direction-selective cells fired with low jitter in spike timing across trials, whereas local-edge cells fired with considerable jitter (Figure 2 saccade, standard deviation of



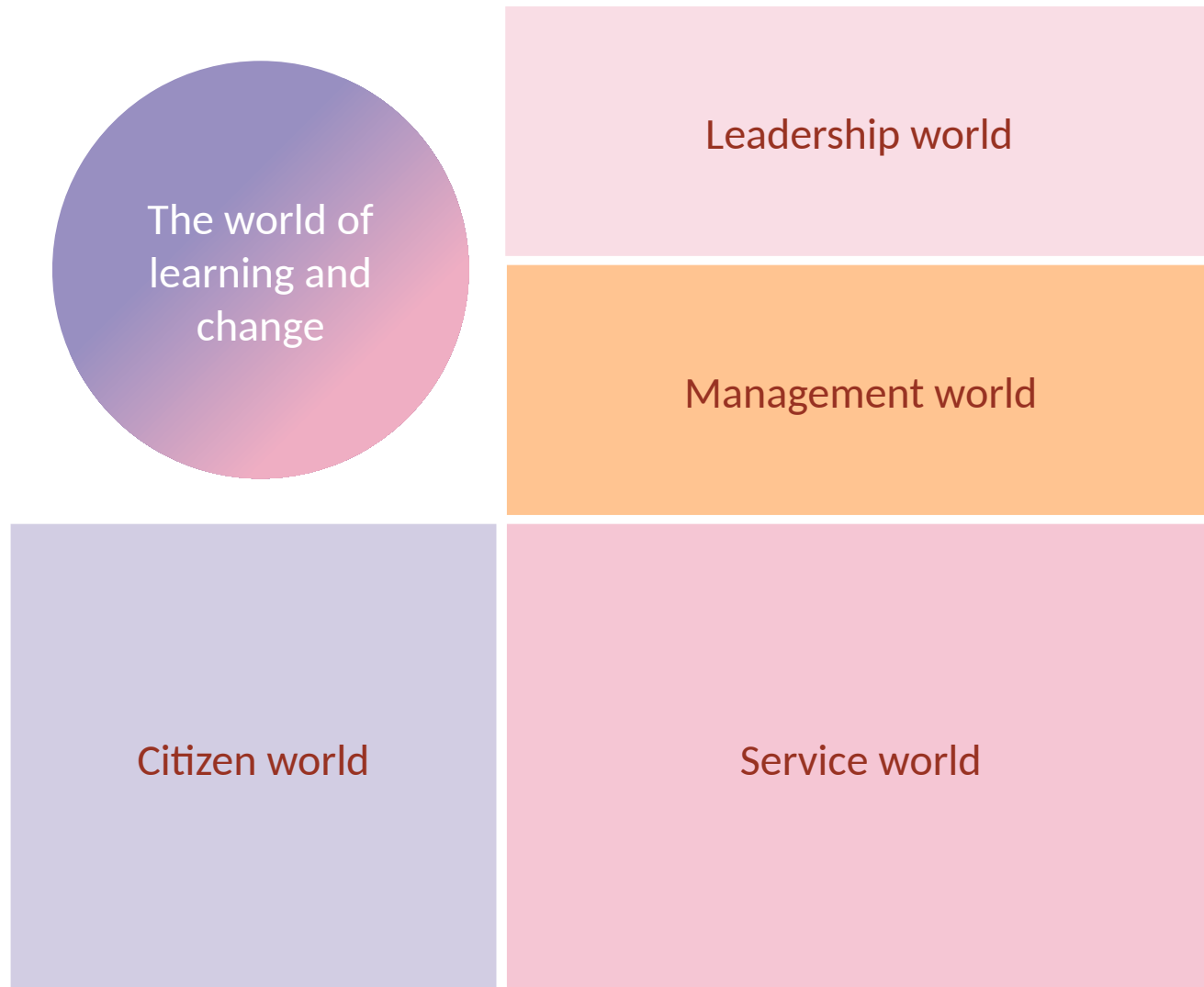
Blind men describing an elephant
by Hokusai



Worlds matter

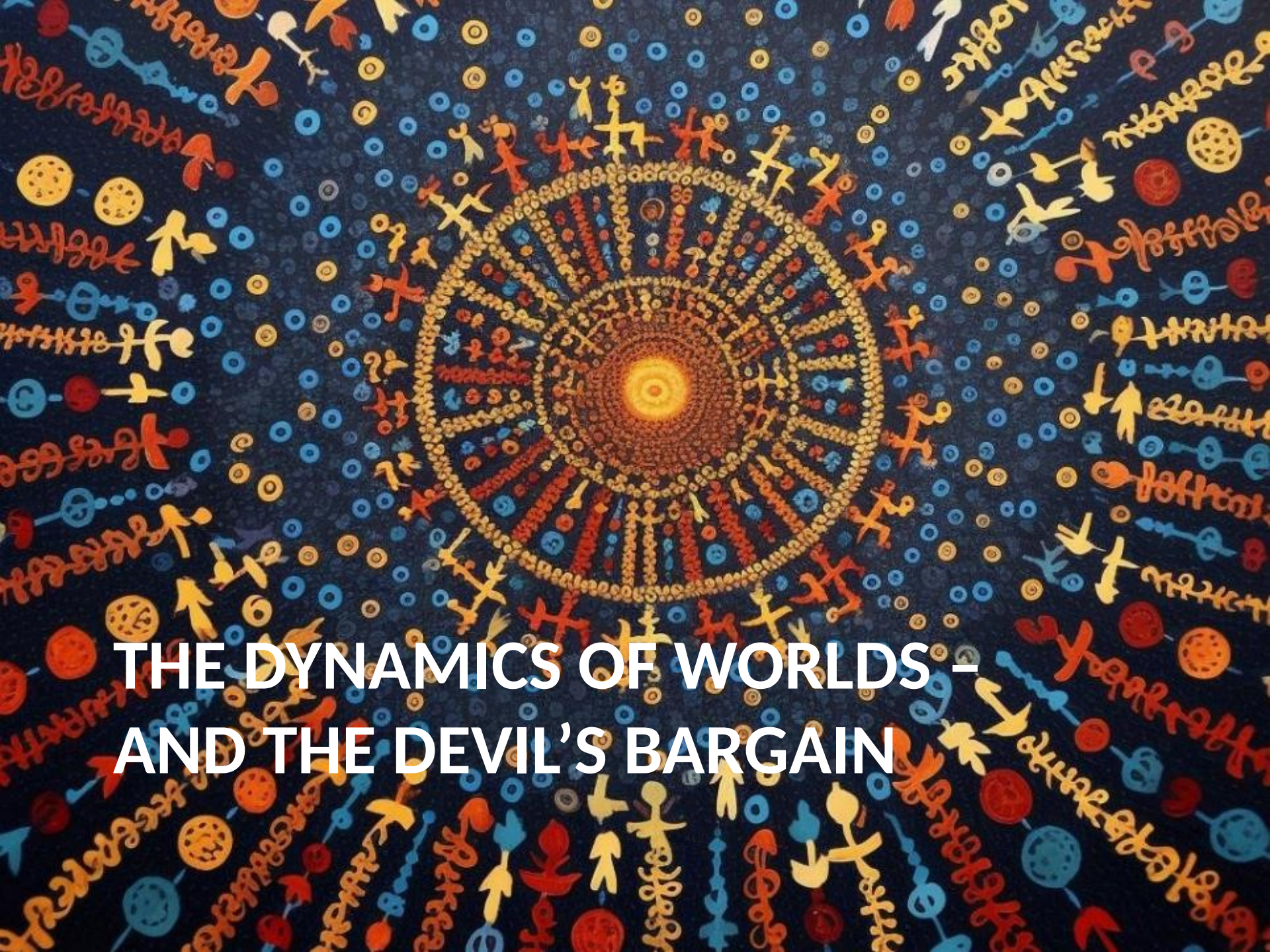


Five worlds



Worlds and context markers

1. 'Worlds' are meaningful because they are self-contained, highly behaviour-driving contexts.
2. In Barry Oshry's elegant language, the conditions of the space are real, and they exist. And it becomes *immediately and inherently clear* what your appropriate reaction is – what your job in that world is. And – guess what? – the instinctive reaction turns out to exacerbate both the conditions of the space (driving a positive feedback loop), and the interactions between the space or world and the other spaces or worlds (driving a positive feedback loop).
3. So staying in the language, context, and behaviours of the worlds is instinctive, and easy (and generates the kind of stories which give you social capital and the ability to drain energy from others). Changing behaviour and going against the tide of the world you are in is really hard.
4. It doesn't take much to 'mark' a world: dogs bow to signal play



THE DYNAMICS OF WORLDS – AND THE DEVIL'S BARGAIN

Customer



Customer



Top

Middle

Bottom

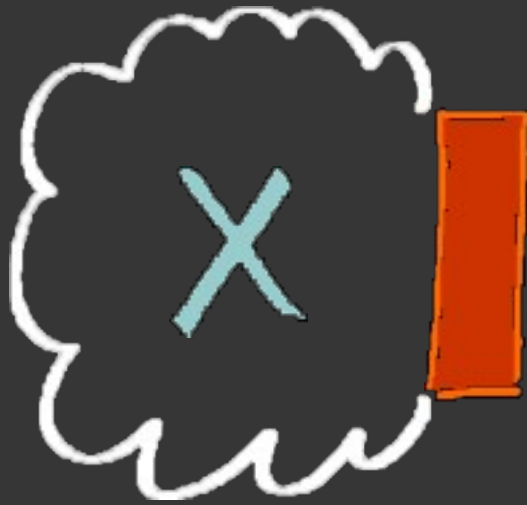
Customer



Customer



In an organisation, we
don't know what is
happening in other
people's worlds



First rule of organisational life:

'Stuff' happens!!!

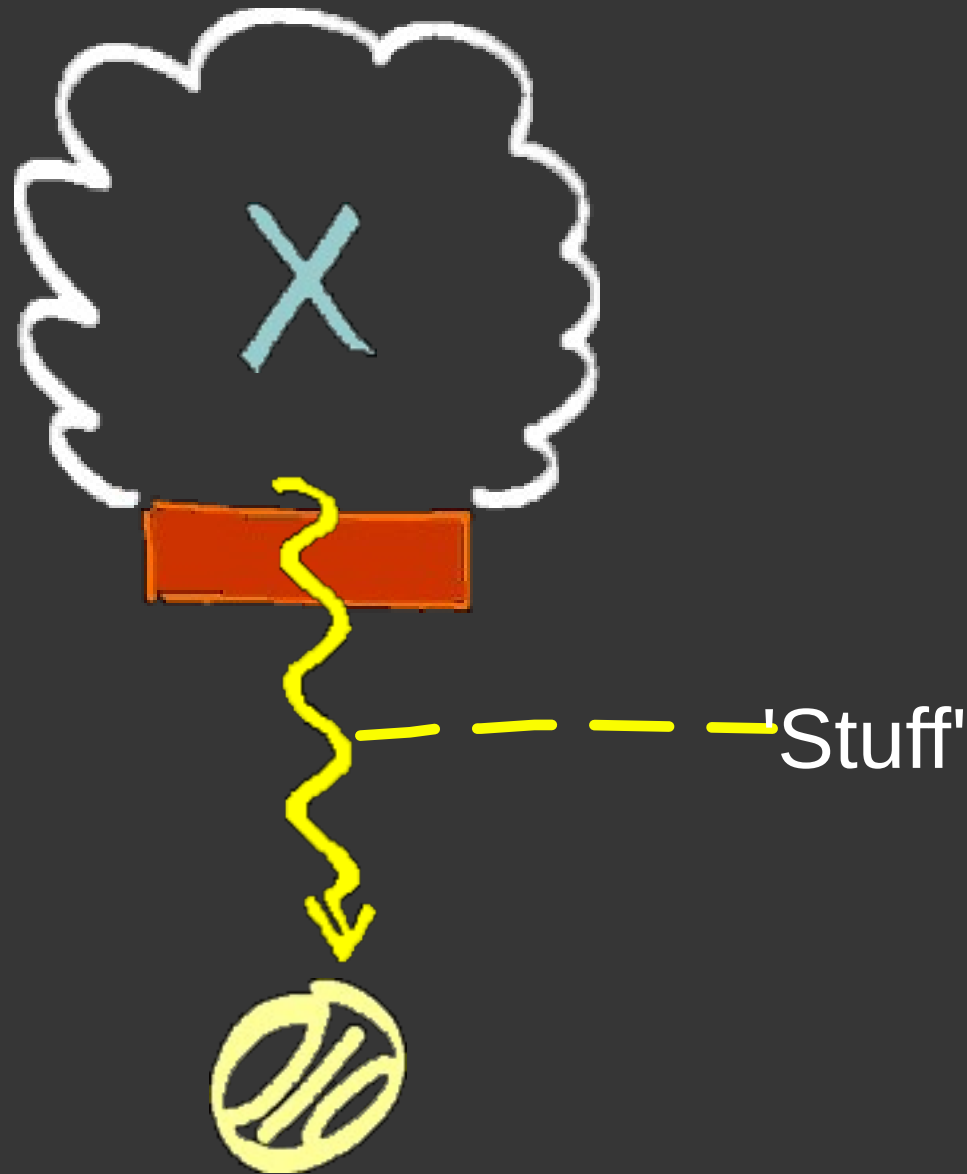
sometimes **good**
stuff...

sometimes **bad**
stuff...

sometimes
mysterious stuff...

sometimes **bad and**
mysterious stuff...

sometimes nothing:
minus stuff...



When **stuff** happens, we **react**:

(What role do we give
ourselves in our stories?)

⊕ Make up a story
Evaluate the others

Malicious

Insensitive

Incompetent

Take it personally

React

Get mad

Get even

Withdraw

Lose focus

Partnership



Customer



Customer



Top

Middle

Bottom

Customer

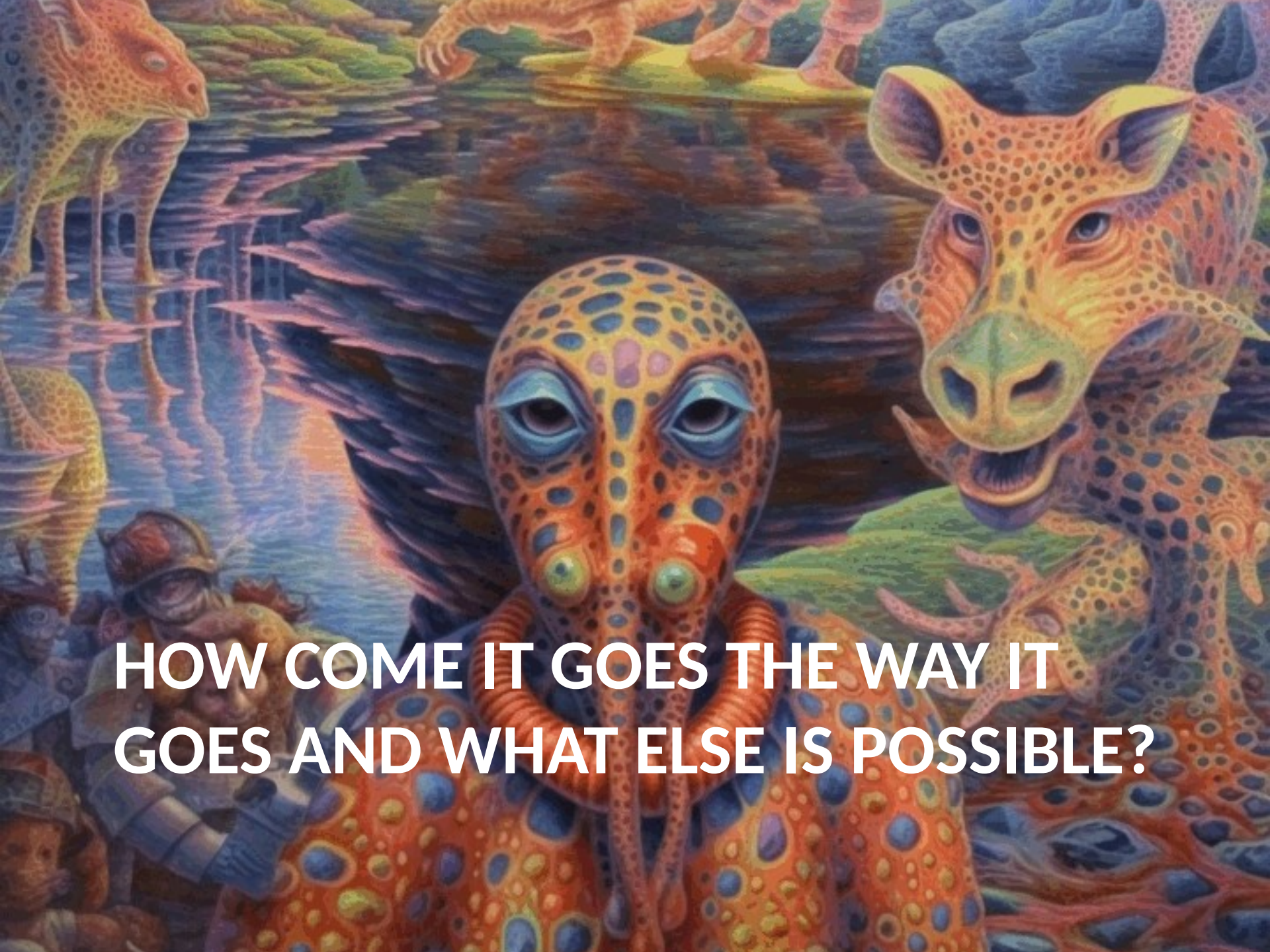


Customer



The side show is predictable,
but not inevitable.

The center ring is not predictable,
but it is a human possibility.



**HOW COME IT GOES THE WAY IT
GOES AND WHAT ELSE IS POSSIBLE?**

Tops... live in a world of complexity and accountability.

How will inputs likely be received in top world?

As more **complication**.

And how are we likely to react?

By **falling out of partnership**

Middles live in a world where they are **torn** between top and bottom.

How will inputs likely be received in middle world? **More tearing**

And how are we likely to react?

By **falling out of partnership**

Bottom world is a world of **vulnerability**.

How will inputs likely be received in bottom world?

As more **'being done to'**.

And how are we likely to react?

By **falling out of partnership**

Customers live in a world of neglect.

How will inputs likely be received in customer world?

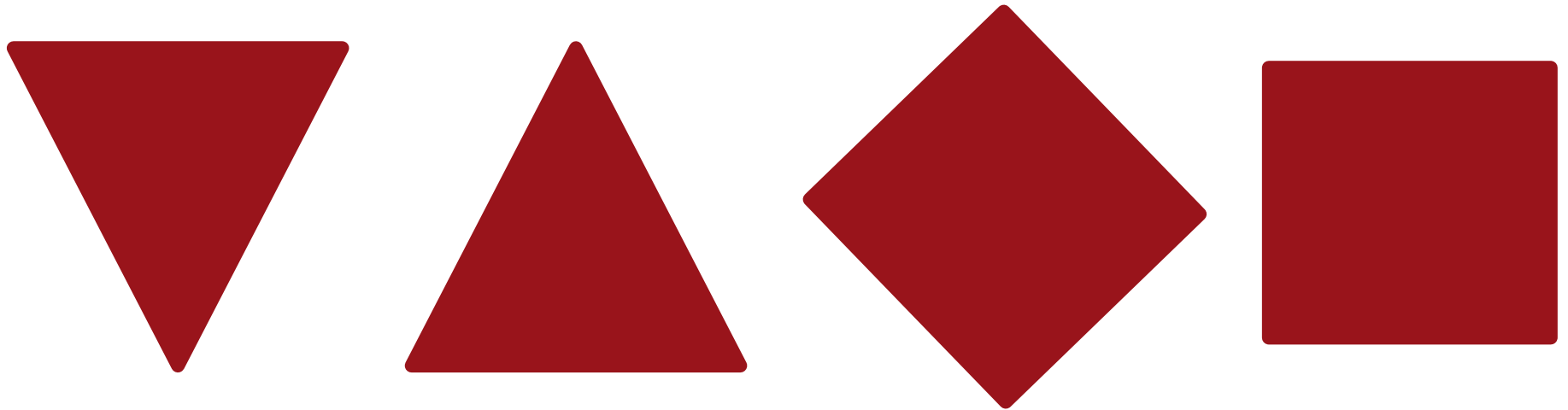
As **an irrelevant insult**.

And how are we likely to react?

By **falling out of partnership**

These are relational not role-based

Which pattern of top/middle/bottomness is your life usually in?



But of course roles shape patterns of interactions!

How come it goes the way it goes?

Predictable condition	Predictable response	Familiar realities	Leadership stands
Top overload	 Suck it up	Burdened by circumstances	Be a top who creates responsibility throughout the organisation
Bottom disregard	 Hold them responsible	Oppressed by them	Be a bottom who takes on responsibility not only for your condition but for the whole thing
Middle crunch	 Slide in between and get torn	Torn between them and them	Be a middle who maintains your independence of thought an action
Citizen neglect	 Stay aloof and hold it responsible	Righteously screwed by the delivery system	Be a citizen who gets in the middle of delivery processes and helps them work for you
Helper ignorance and multiple expectations	 To be of immediate value as expert of servant	Abused and misused	Say no to being of immediate value. Develop a co-learning relationship

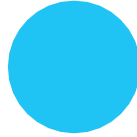
And what else is possible?

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The space of service

Predictable Condition	Predictable Response (DOOR A)	Familiar Disempowering Experience	DOOR B
Ignorance (There is much about this system that I do not understand.) Multiple Expectations (There are likely to be lots of different people with lots of different agendas.)	To be of immediate value as either: ‘Expert’ (I am the solution to your problems, the answer to your prayers.) Or ‘Servant’ (You ask, I do.)	Abused and Misused	Say no to being of immediate value. Develop a co-learning relationship with the Customers. (Using your separate areas of expertise.)

Is the blue dot stuck in one place?



In the dance of responsibility, look out for the old familiar patterns.

Am I feeling:

Overwhelmed? Am I being Top – taking on all the responsibility and disabling the system?



How can I change the responsibility dance?

Disappointed, angry, resentful at 'them'? Am I being Bottom – holding them responsible, holding myself outside the system?



How can I make this a project I can take on?

Unsupported? Am I an End and holding the Middle responsible for solving the problem I have with the other End?



How can we do it ourselves?

Can't please anyone? Maybe I'm a Middle, taking responsibility for THEIR problems?



How can I maintain my independence of thought and action, and help them to sort out their problems?

Unfairly judged? Am I taking responsibility for making the Customer happy?



How can I involve them more in their delivery process?

Neglected and done to? Righteously screwed? Have I abandoned all personal responsibility for getting the service I want?



How can I get more involved in helping the system give me what I need?

The background of the slide is a complex network diagram. It features numerous nodes of various colors (orange, green, blue, yellow, red, and grey) and sizes. These nodes are interconnected by a web of thin, brown lines, creating a dense, interconnected pattern that fills the entire frame. The nodes are stylized, some with small circles above them and short vertical lines below them, resembling simplified human figures or data points. The overall effect is one of a highly connected system.

SEEING THE SYSTEM

The possibility of a systemically informed approach

If you can see the system, three levels of systems intelligence are possible:

1. Tactical
understand their world, don't take it personally, emotional intelligence
2. Strategic
make your request such that it makes their world easier
3. Systemic
make the future relationships between your worlds better in future

Reflection:

- Do you recognize these dynamics?
- What is the appeal of the side show?
- What are the system consequences of the side show?
- What do we have to give up, let go of in order to move from the side show to the center ring?

Why isn't it easy?



Sources, over time:

- Patrick Hoverstadt
- Diane Bowling
- www.systemspractice.org
- Trevor Hilder
- Geoff Elliott
- Jon Walker and Angela Espinosa
- Steve Brewis

THE VIABLE SYSTEMS MODEL

Approaching the VSM

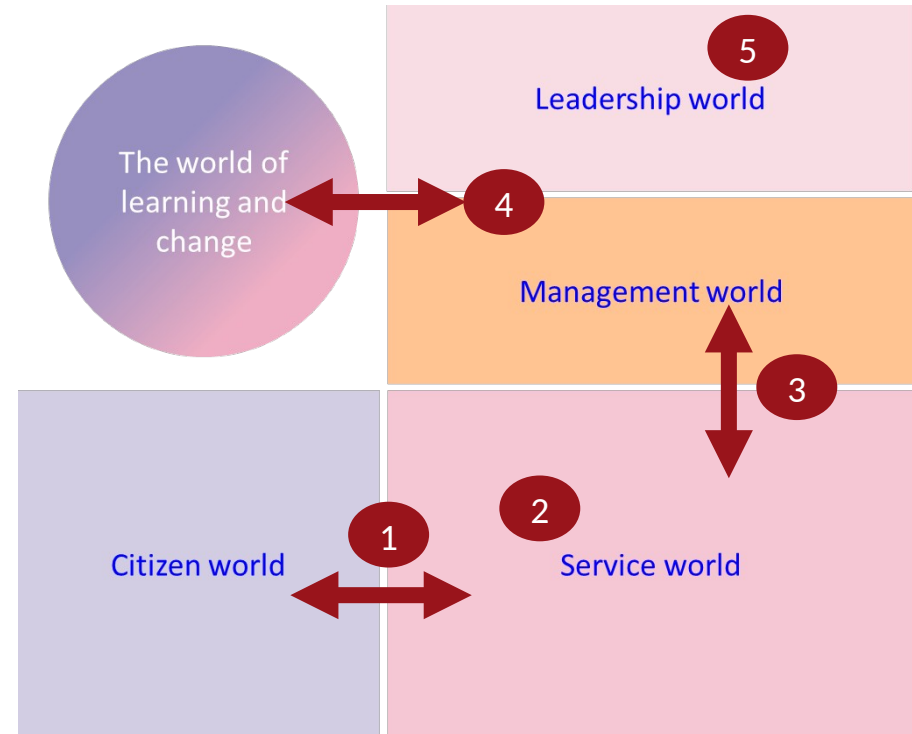
- Someone will give you examples all built around transduction – amplification and attenuation
- Someone else will give you examples built around variety engineering of systems 1
- Someone else will give you system 3-4-5 homeostat examples
- Etc etc...

Dense, core, *underlying*

Organisations need to deal with complexity

Capacity, capability, connectedness and *variety* to understand and respond to:

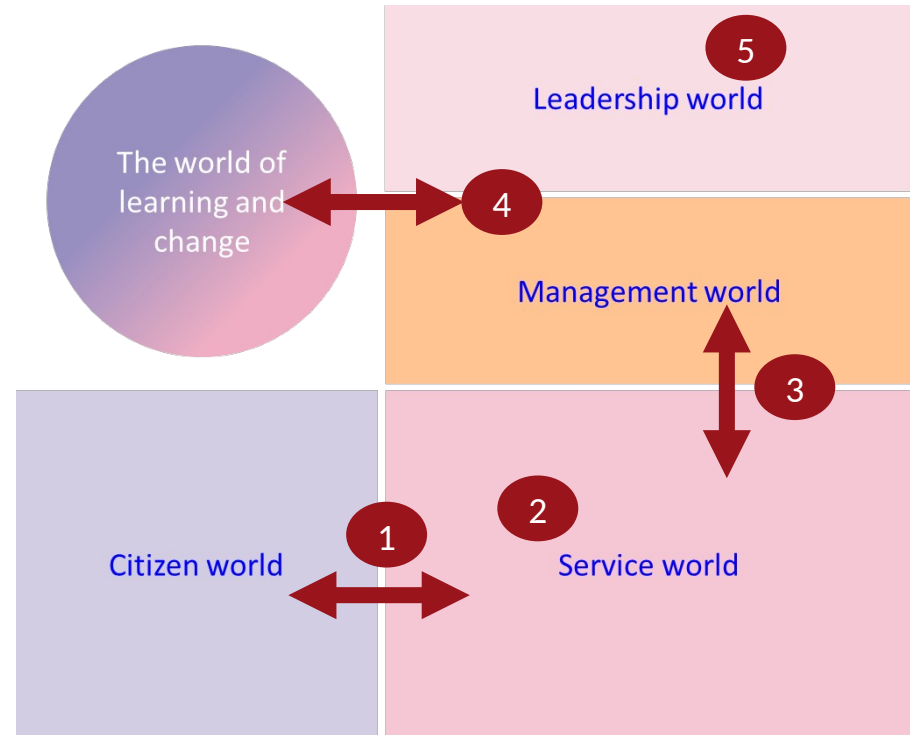
1. The complexity of the world
2. Day-to-day work and turbulence
3. The complexity of the organisation
 - How the work works
 - Where to put the resources
 - Accountability
 - Change
4. What will be demanded of us in the future
5. Who we are, what our role is, our legitimacy, and balancing the needs of now and the needs of the future



As interveners, are we only *in* the system? Or are we different?

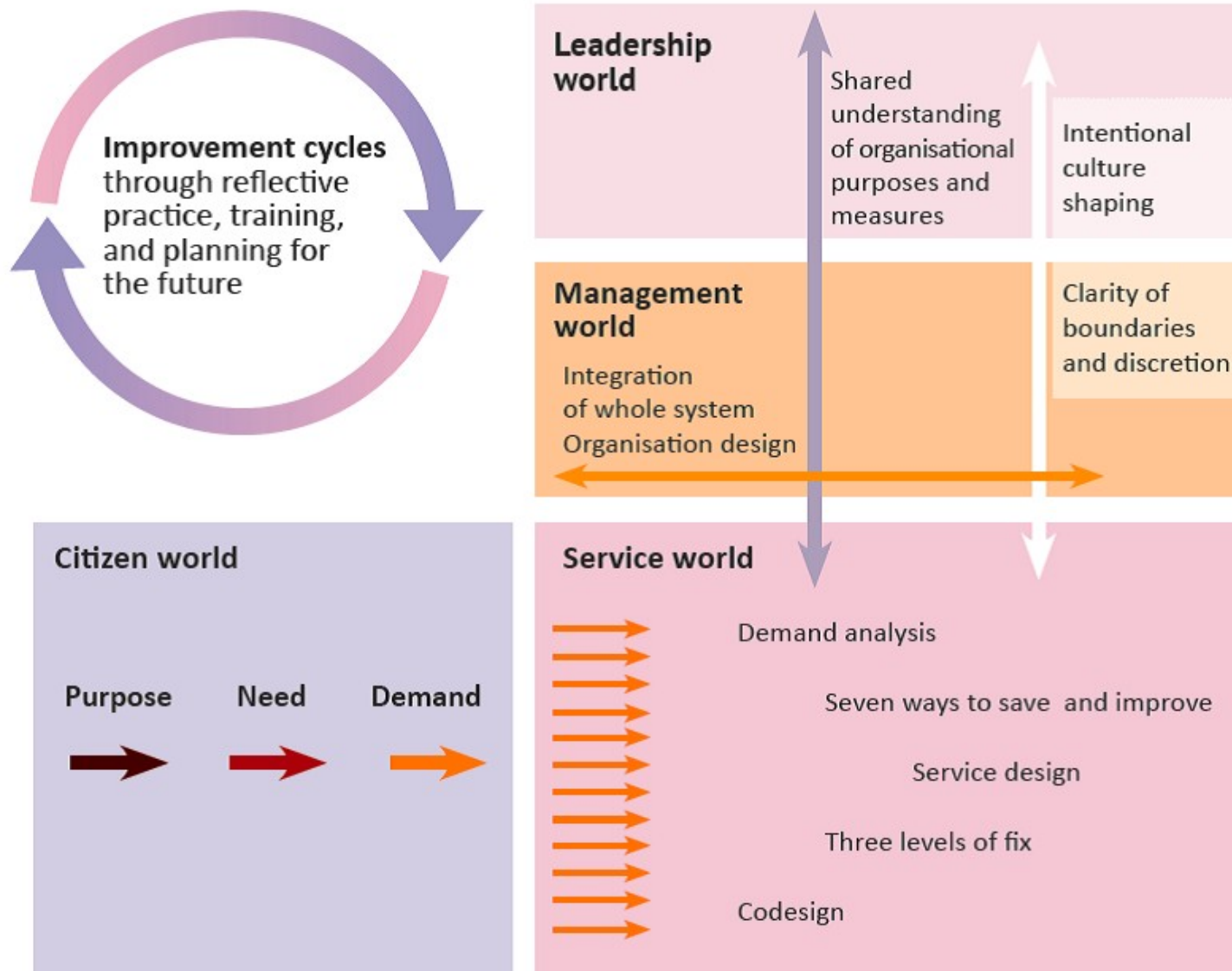
See the system

1. Are the right interventions happening in the system?
2. Are those doing the intervening working together, day-to-day?
3. Are system resources being put intentionally in the right places?
- 3* Are we achieving effective results, and do we understand why (not)?
4. What will the system need to adapt to in the future?
How does the system need to change?
4. What will it need to *do* and *be*?



What relationship do systems interventionists have to the system?

RedQuadrant transformation approach



VSM: what is it?

- It's a theory about the way viable organisations work.
- Its focus is organisational structure.
- It's a diagram which encapsulates
 - the parts of a viable systems
 - the relationships between the parts
 - the relationships with the environment
- It's a language for discussing organisational issues
- It's a tool kit which enables you to diagnose problems and to come up with solutions.

It's practical and **useful**

Organisations need to deal with variety

- Ashby's law – requisite variety: ‘only variety can absorb variety’
- Control can be obtained only if the variety of the controller is at least as great as the variety of the situation to be controlled
- ‘The larger the variety of actions available to a control system, the larger the variety of perturbations it is able to compensate.’
- Conant-Ashby: ‘every good regulator of a system must be a model of that system’
- Patrick Hoverstadt: ‘your ability to manage your organisation depends on how good your model of your organization is’

So:

- In order to cope with its environment, the Operation needs to match its variety to that of the Environment
- In order to manage the Operation, Management needs to match its variety to that of the Operation

Cybernetics: A New Management Tool

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATION. Organizational effectiveness is a function of the balance maintained along two dimensions:

1. **Autonomy** of organizational units versus **integration** of the business as a whole.
2. **Stability** of operations versus **adaptation** to changing conditions.

NOTES

Too much **autonomy** of organizational units results in lack of overall purpose, loss of cohesion and synergy, loss of identity, and typically generates a demand for 'centralization'.

Too much **integration** results in loss of flexibility and initiative by the units, much red tape, loss of morale in the units, and typically generates a demand for 'decentralization'.

Too much **stability** results in an organization that is increasingly obsolete.

Too rapid a pace of **adaptation** results in chaos and massive inefficiency.

Barry Clemson, 1984

Systems laws (Hoverstadt)

- **Conant-Ashby theorem**
- Feedback Dominance Theorem
- Redundancy of Potential Command Principle
- 2 'Black Box principles'
- 2 Laws of circular causality
- Recursive Systems Theorem
- Darkness Principle
- Network Instability Principle
- Viability Principle
- **Ashby's Law of Requisite Variety**

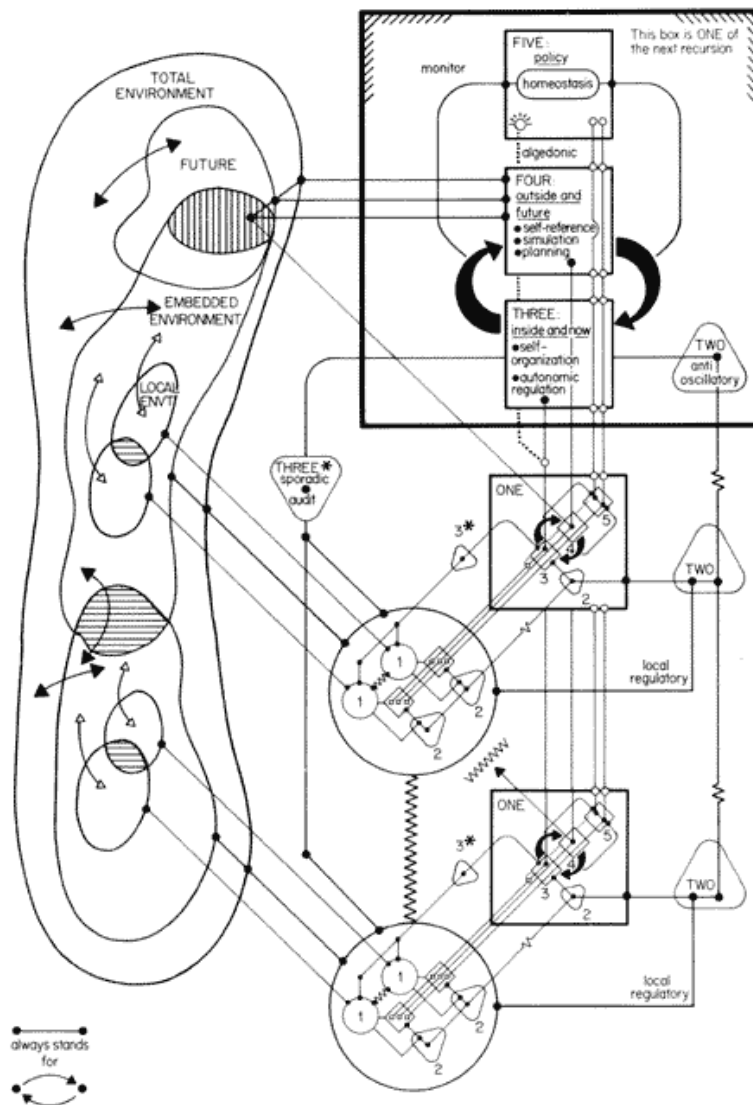
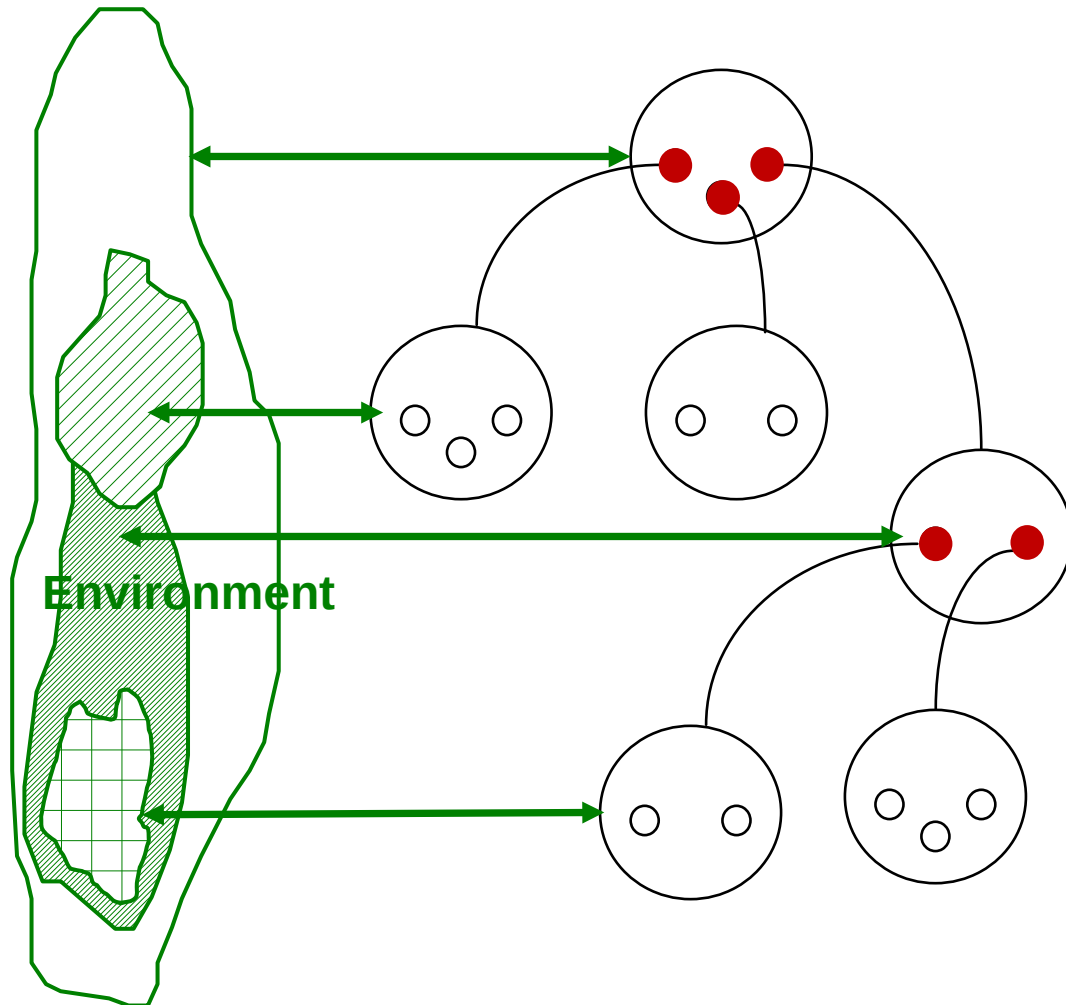


FIGURE 37

THE VIABLE SYSTEM
- Stafford Beer

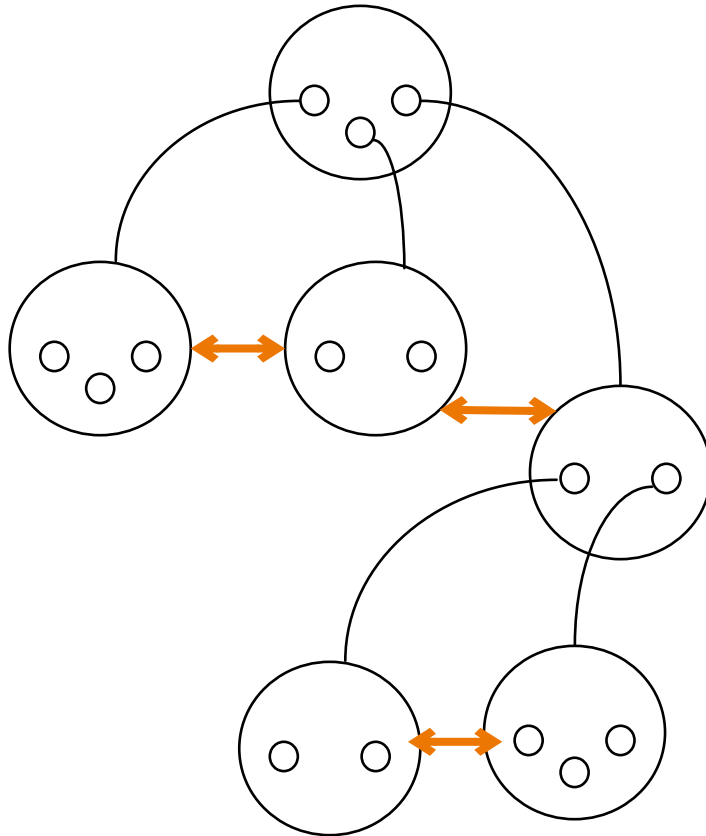
- A continuous, whole, continually interacting system
- Recursive at every level!
- (Did you know your spine has brain cells?)

S1 Structuring the work



- Activities which deliver value to customers
- Each level is part of a larger activity
- Interacting with different parts of the environment
- Grouped by:
 - Task
 - Customer
 - Geography
 - Time

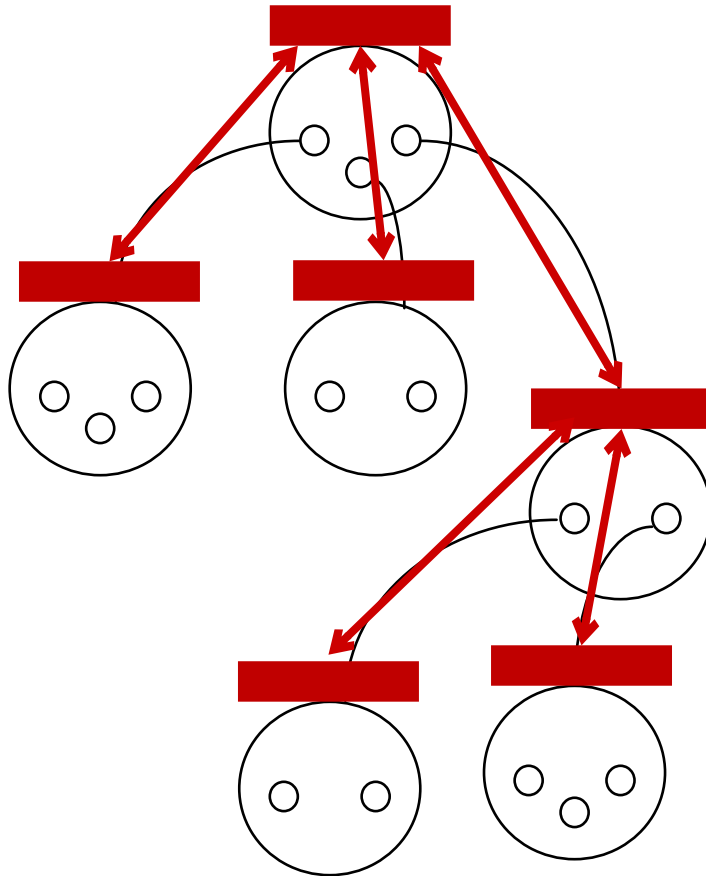
S2 Coordination



Ways of working to smooth interactions between peer teams:

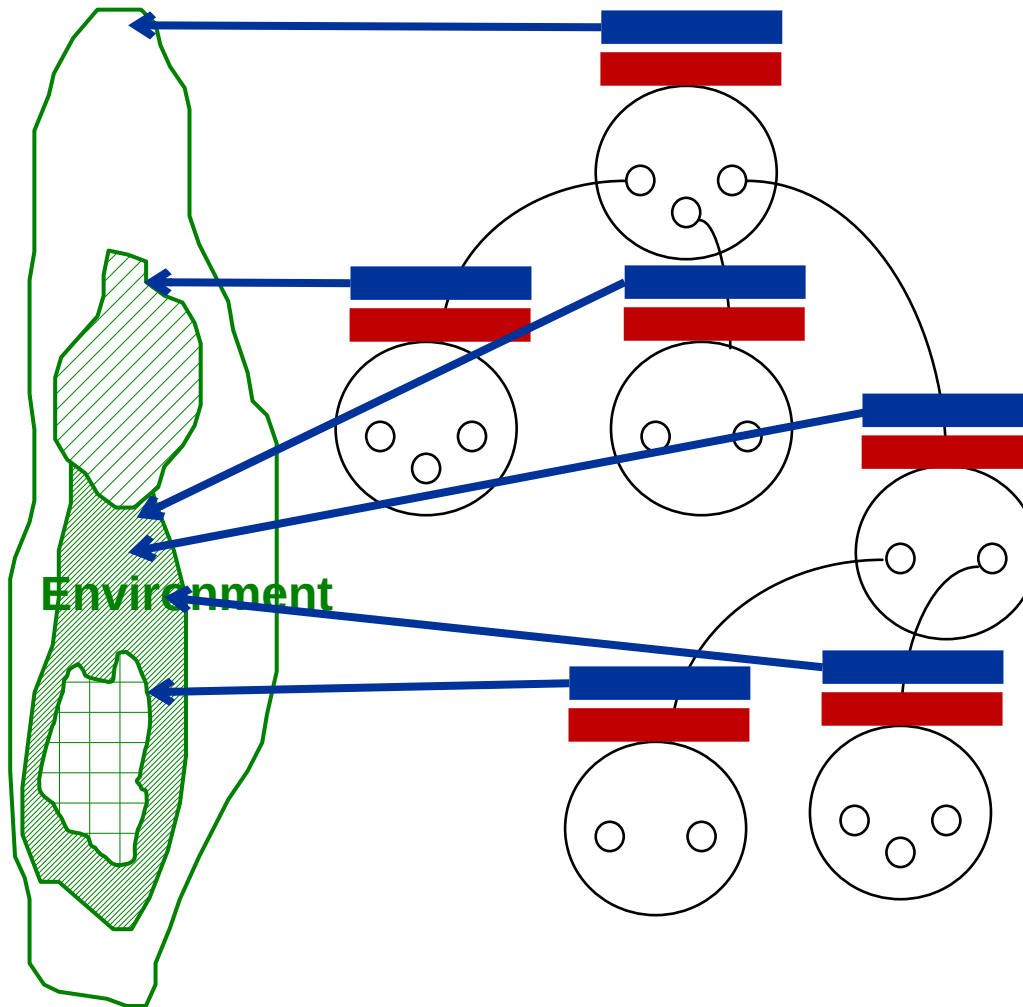
- Protocols
- Schedules
- Common standards
- Common languages
- Mutual agreements

S3 Directing and managing performance



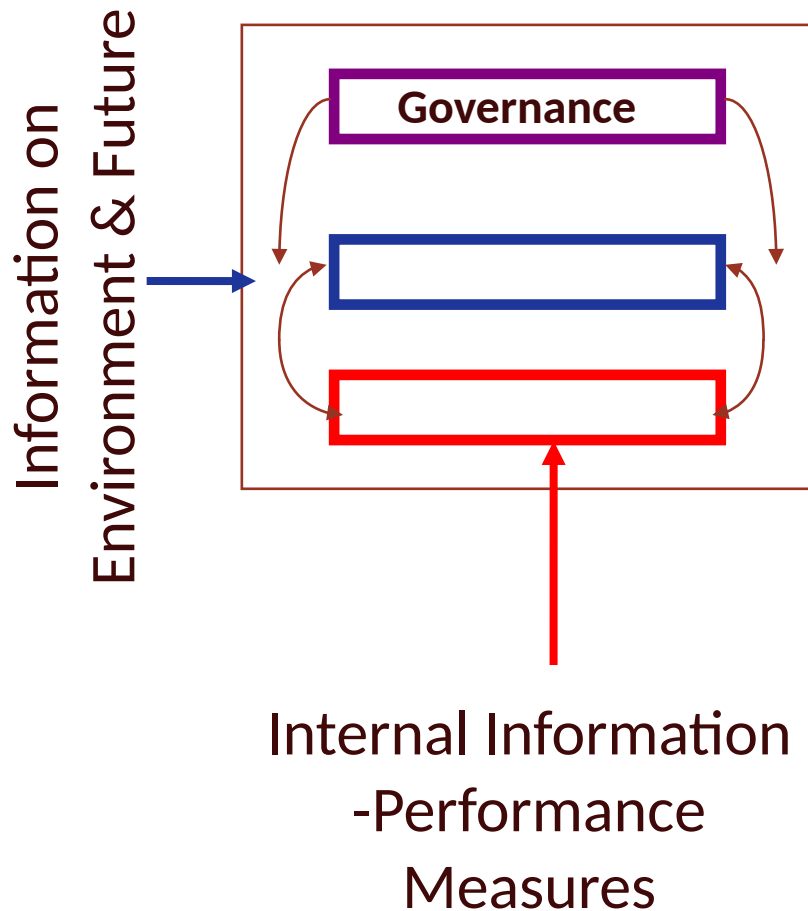
- Specific
- Agree performance
- Measure performance
- Resource bargaining

S4 Intelligence and change



- Interact with different parts of the environment
- Survey technical, competitive & market developments
- Perform R&D and innovation
- Assess strategic risk
- Predict, plan, create the future

S5 Governance

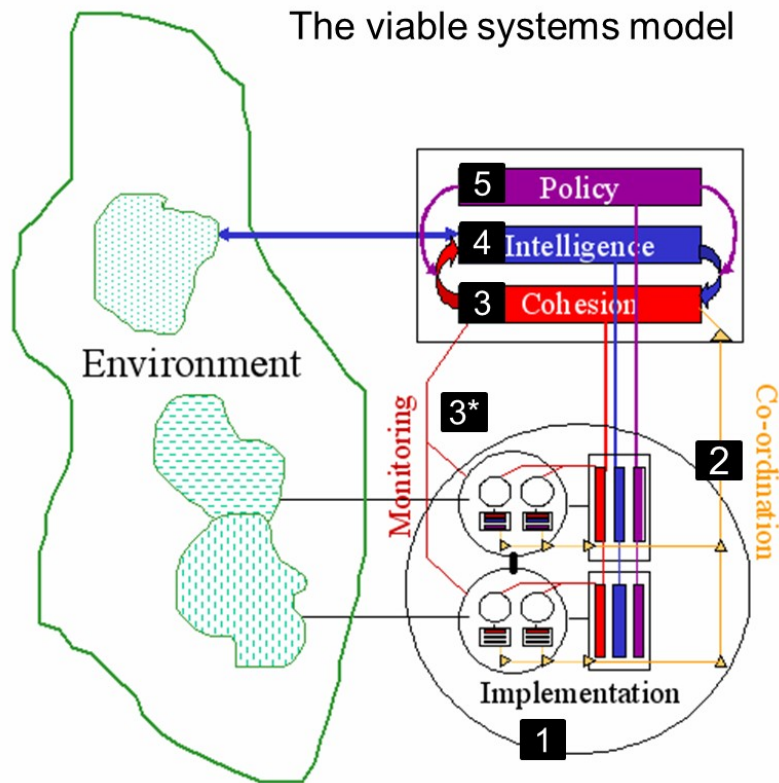


- Maintain balance between:
 - External & Internal
 - Future & Now
- Decide:
 - Whether to change
 - What to change
 - How fast to change
 - In what direction
- Balance:
 - Autonomy with cohesion
 - Stability with change
- Articulated throughout the organisation



USING THE VSM FOR DIAGNOSIS AND PRESCRIPTION

Using VSM for diagnosis



1. Map the relevant recursions
2. Identify the problem recursion
3. Map the system-in-focus
4. Look for weaknesses (gaps) in the five systems
5. Examine the information flows
6. Make a diagnosis
7. Change everything !
8. Monitor, review, re-think, try again

Four aspects of maturity /Seven conversations for viability

- **Capacity:** are there adequate resources to perform this function?
 - **Connectivity:** does this function have the relationships with other parties that it needs to perform adequately?
 - **Balance:** can both parties resolve their issues and achieve the outcomes they need through their relationship?
(conversational)
 - **Consciousness:** does management know that all the other three levels are performing adequately and why this is so?
- **S5<>(S4,S3)** – identity
 - **E<>S4** – scanning
 - **S4<>S3** – adaptation
 - **S3<>S1** – resource bargain
 - **S2<>S1** – coordination
 - **S3*<>S1** – audit
 - **E<>S1** – stability

Steve Brewis

(when) chief research scientist, BT



THE SCIO ORGANISATIONAL MATURITY MODEL

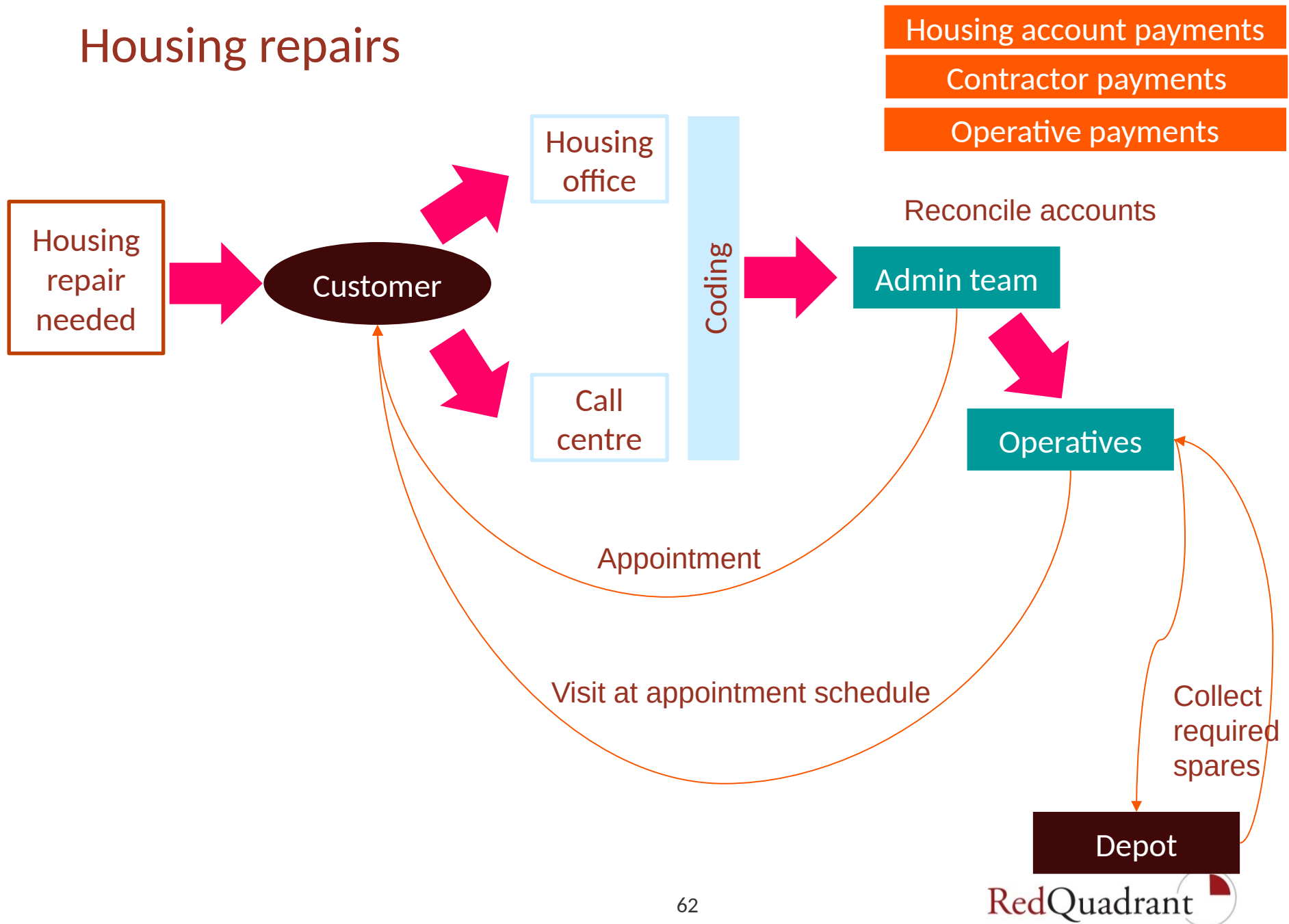
systemspractice.org/organisational-maturity-model

	Operations	Co-ordination	Resource and Performance Delivery	Monitoring	Development	Managing Strategy	
Capacity	Q1 Score	Q5 Score	Q9 Score	Q13 Score	Q17 Score	Q21 Score	Capacity
Primary	Bricks without Straw (Page 26) Castles in the Air (33)	Reinventing the Wheel (Page 23) The Shakes (22)	Bricks without Straw (Page 26) Missing Link (25) Dictators (27)		Bean Counters (Page 32)	Identity Crisis (Page 37)	Primary
Secondary	Stray Lamb (20) Identity Crisis (37)	Baronies (21)	Silo Decisions (34)	Giraffe (39) Fantasy World (18) Control Dilemma (19)	Here be Dragons (30) Goldfish (29) Bunker Mentality (31)		Secondary
Connectivity	Q2 Score	Q6 Score	Q10 Score	Q14 Score	Q18 Score	Q22 Score	Connectivity
Primary	Open Loops and Reverse Polarity (28)	Reinventing the Wheel (23) The Shakes (22)	Open Loops and Reverse Polarity (28) Missing Link (25) Dictators (27) Bricks without Straw (26)	Giraffe (39)	Here be Dragons (30)	Castles in the Air (33) Bean Counters (32)	Primary
Secondary	Baronies (21) Stray Lamb (20)	Baronies (21)		Control Dilemma (19) Fantasy World (18)	Bunker Mentality (31) Goldfish (29)	Silo Decisions (34)	Secondary
Balance	Q3 Score	Q7 Score	Q11 Score	Q15 Score	Q19 Score	Q23 Score	Balance
Primary	Open Loops and Reverse Polarity (28)	Reinventing the Wheel (23) The Shakes (22)	Open Loops and Reverse Polarity (28) Missing Link (25) Dictators (27) Bricks without Straw (26)	Control Dilemma (19)		Castles in the Air (33) Bean Counters (32)	Primary
Secondary	Following all the Fads (38) Fantasy World (18)	Baronies (21) Matrix (24)	Silo Decisions (34)		Following all the Fads (38) Goldfish (29) Here be Dragons (30) Bunker Mentality (31)	Silo Decisions (34)	Secondary
Consciousness	Q4 Score	Q8 Score	Q12 Score	Q16 Score	Q20 Score	Q24 Score	Consciousness
Primary	Fantasy World (18)	Reinventing the Wheel (23) The Shakes (22)	Baronies (21)	No Grassing (36)		Identity Crisis (37)	Primary
Secondary	Reinventing the Wheel (23) Stray Lamb (20)	Baronies (21)	The Shakes (22)	Fantasy World (18)	Bunker Mentality (31) Goldfish (29)		Secondary



CASE STUDIES

Housing repairs



Unit within a bigger consultancy – scenario

- System 1 – network arrangements of collegiate colleagues (1/3 industry, 1/3 audit in same industry, 1/3 homegrown)
- System 2 – network and integrating structures

Strong system 1 and 2 create a high level of apparent robustness

- System 3 – weak, emergent, ‘farming’ – exploiting and supporting emerging opportunities
- System 4 – weak, emergent, ‘scanning’ – looking for opportunities
- System 5 – deeply integrated to system 2 in practice, weak and with lack of clarity

Grew from five people and one £1m contract, in five years, to 220 consultants in a significant practice.

What happens next? Where does the environmental shock come from?

Unit within a bigger consultancy

- With such a weak meta-system, the unit was vulnerable to turf wars over resources, and to failure to plan for the future
- In fact, it was a response from the wider system – the global consultancy organisation of which the unit is a part – that killed it
- Because the global consultancy could see a different culture at work – and couldn't work with meta-system leaders to direct and control the organisation – it did two things:
 - Built up an internal competitor in the same market, with strong system 3 and 3* and completely different culture
 - Acquired a market competitor and merged it with the internal competitor
- There was then a 'merger' with this business unit which treated it only as a system 1 – destroying existing systems 2-5. Many people left.

Greek shipping company – scenario

- System 1 – crew on ships (rest of organisation tended to follow this hierarchy)
- System 2 – extraordinarily implicit – or rather, in the minds of very few people
- System 3 – linked with system 2 and across a wide range of planning and logistics functions – many of them not viable systems at their level of recursion
- System 4 – highly effective – good strategic planning e.g. first with a base in the Philippines
- System 5 – effective and organised

What might the threats be to this company?

Greek shipping company – what we might learn

- Systems 2 and 3 seem to be the risk points:
 - Implicit system 2 – how can this be managed and inspected?
 - System 3* not function as each ‘Captain’ has complete authority over ship or department
 - System 3 not able to make strong decisions
- So the meta-system has become effectively another system 1 – providing services not governance
- Risks could include:
 - Territorial wars between 1s and no ability to improve processes
 - No strategic direction or clarity of how to resolve resource disputes
 - Long term success of system 5 in doubt – how can it win resources?
- Indeed, these are all seen in the company in practice

The sense-and-respond approach – scenario

- For service organisations, develops a VSM-inspired approach based on four factors:
 1. are we capturing demand data from the environment? (data)
 2. are we making sense of that data? (meaning)
 3. Are we transforming our understanding into strategy? (strategy)
 4. Are we transforming our delivery to match strategy? (transformation)
- Do you see the link to Beer's model and management laws/axioms?
- Examples:
 - IT services/helpdesks
 - Contact centre
 - Adult social care and health

The sense-and-respond approach

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 - Contact centre
 - Adult social care and health

Why IT and other outsourcing fails – and how to fit it

- Outsourcing often fails despite rational incentives
- Most failures are systemic, not personal
- VSM offers a lens to diagnose and redesign viable outsourcing arrangements
- Key: focus on viability as the ability to maintain identity while adapting

VSM mapping:

- System 1: operational units (outsourced services)
- System 2: coordination across services
- System 3: internal regulation and governance
- System 3*: audit, insight beyond formal reporting
- System 4: strategic future-planning and environment sensing
- System 5: identity, values, coherence

Outsourcing – diagnosis and fix /1

System 1: incoherent service delivery

- Services delivered without internal coherence
- Structure often mirrors provider's silos, not client needs
- Missing basic integration of bespoke and standard elements
- Viability risk: service continues by inertia (autopilot) but not as a system

Fix: intentionally design the service as a coherent System 1 – with aligned purpose, roles, standards, and adaptability

System 2: lack of coordination

- Fragmented delivery: poor lifecycle, NSR, and project handover processes
- No stabilising rhythm or communication scaffolding
- Weak process integration (e.g. partial ITIL)

Fix: establish visible coordination protocols across functions (e.g. heartbeat governance, shared process ownership, tooling)

System 3: missing governance and control

- Focus on firefighting and sales over supervision
- No integrated account management system

- Lack of management information, unclear authority
- Fix: build governance that includes resource allocation, decision-making structures, documented roles, and internal feedback loops

System 3*: no walkabout, no feedback

- Over-reliance on filtered MI
- No upward communication or early warning
- Gaming of reports common

Fix: embed management by walking about and design-in informal insight mechanisms (e.g. staff listening, vox populi systems)

System 4: no future-focus

- Strategic blindness: minimal investment in architecture, innovation, or capacity planning
- Tactical focus limits adaptability

Fix: invest in foresight systems – architecture, business relationship roles, continual improvement, and horizon scanning

Outsourcing – diagnosis and fix /2

System 5: missing identity

- The outsourced organisation often has no independent culture or identity
- Organisational design follows convenience, not coherence
- Sales promises misaligned with operational reality

Fix: create and maintain a clear System 5: shared ethos, realistic expectations, viability as a distinct business unit

Cultural misalignment (across S1–S5)

- Client and provider cultures diverge in standards, behaviours, values
- Misalignments often invisible until stress hits
- Leads to friction, rework, and trust breakdown

Fix: audit cultures, clarify assumptions, design explicitly for divergence and translation

The silent conspiracy (System 5 failure)

- Both sides pretend bespoke = standard
- Results in underpricing, overpromising, and systemic stress
- Failure is latent until delivery phase

Fix: bring true requirements to light early – and cost them honestly

Fixing the system: making the outsourcing viable

- Design the outsourced account as a whole viable system
- Align structures, roles, and processes to purpose
- Invest in meta-level capabilities: improvement, learning, governance

Build ladders of trust and realistic contracts

Apply the VSM to both client and provider sides

Raleigh

INTERNATIONAL



THE VSM AND MERGERS AND SHARING

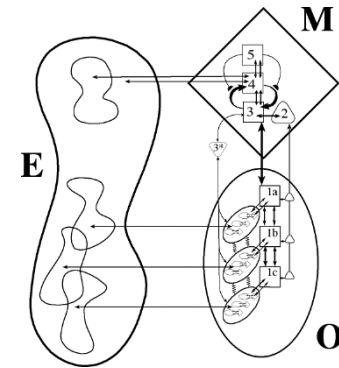
Mergers and sharing

Remember the viable system model is **recursive** – every system within the viable needs to also be a viable system

There are three core options for merging and sharing across two organisations:

1. Separate out all the 'system 1s' – delivery systems, build a new S2, and build a new Management system (3, 3*, 4, 5)
2. Make both existing organisations 'System 1s' in a new organisation. Build a system 2 to help them to balance day-to-day operations, and a Management system across the top of both
3. Take S1 elements out of both existing organisations (making sure they remain viable), and build a new, third organisation around them (with S2-5) which provides in to the existing organisations

The viable systems model would say that any halfway house (with blurred boundaries between organisations) is going to fail.



338 Uxbridge Rd
London
W12 7LL



The Shepherd's Bush
Advice Centre pages
are part of the
Hammersmith &
Fulham website.

Click [here](#), or on the
logo above to go to
the main site.

Please note. We
can only help
people who live in
Hammersmith &
Fulham

**Shepherd's Bush
Advice Centre
Pages**

Core Services

Take-up

Campaigns

Advice

Development

Officer

The Community



Shepherd's Bush Advice Centre

How to get advice

You can **come in** to the advice
centre at these times:

Monday 1.00pm - 6.00pm
Tuesday 10.00am - 3.00pm
Wednesday CLOSED
Thursday 10.00am - 3.00pm
Friday 10.00am - 3.00pm

You do not need an
appointment

You can **phone** the advice
centre at these times:

Tuesday 10.00am - 12.00pm
Thursday 10.00am - 12.00pm

The phone number for advice
is **020 8743 2621**. You
cannot get advice on any
other number

For general enquiries and
referrals only telephone 020
8743 6953 extension 203

Fax number 020 8749 2131

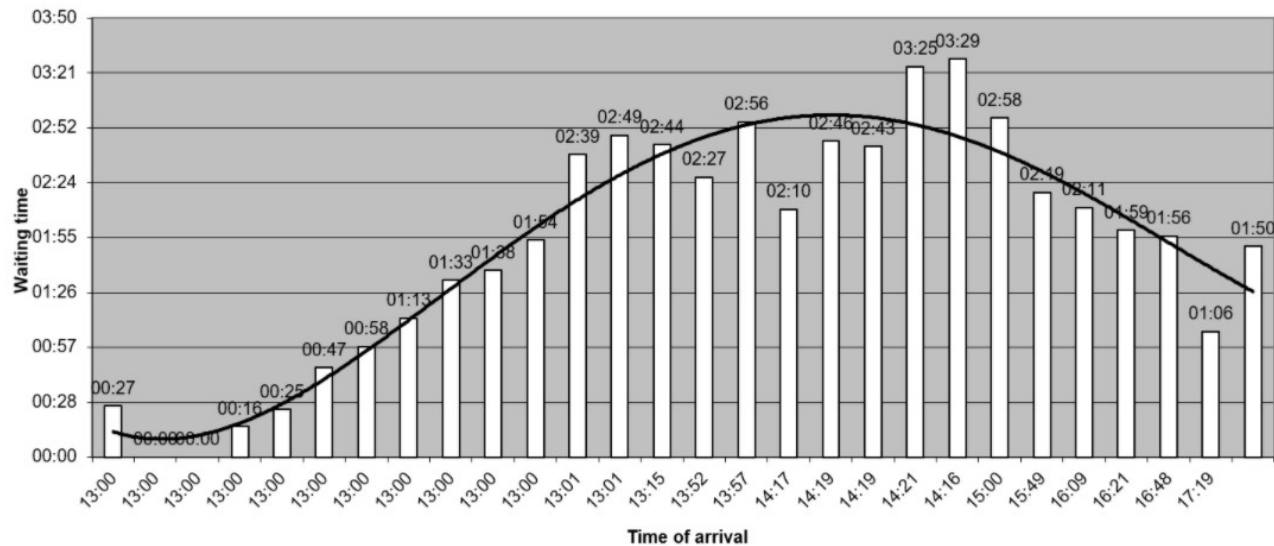
email sbac@inet.lbhf.gov.uk

The situation

- Open irregular hours due to staff availability and demand
- Long waits and limited time for customers
- Stress and frustration for staff
- Lots of people couldn't be helped
- Massive headache for the co-ordinator scheduling staff for reception duty and appointments, large number of no-shows

Waiting times – up to four hours

Monday 9th August
Relief session: None
Total clients seen 28
Total clients left 6
Clients seen by PR 2
Average waiting time 1h50



Services provided

- Housing and homelessness issues
 - *BUT NOT* immediate homelessness, or homeless issues under 25 (referral to housing centre or Bush Housing Crisis centre respectively)
- Employment issues
 - *BUT NOT* employment support
- Legal issues (through appointment with duty solicitor Mon eve)
- Benefits issues
 - *BUT NOT* completing application forms (referral to housing centre)
- Health – general information only (signposting etc)
- *NOT* immigration, asylum, nationality
- Council related *INCLUDING* disputes with the council
- Family *BUT NOT* domestic violence (signpost)
- Debt and finance
- Education – general advice
- Other – no public toilet but access for clients

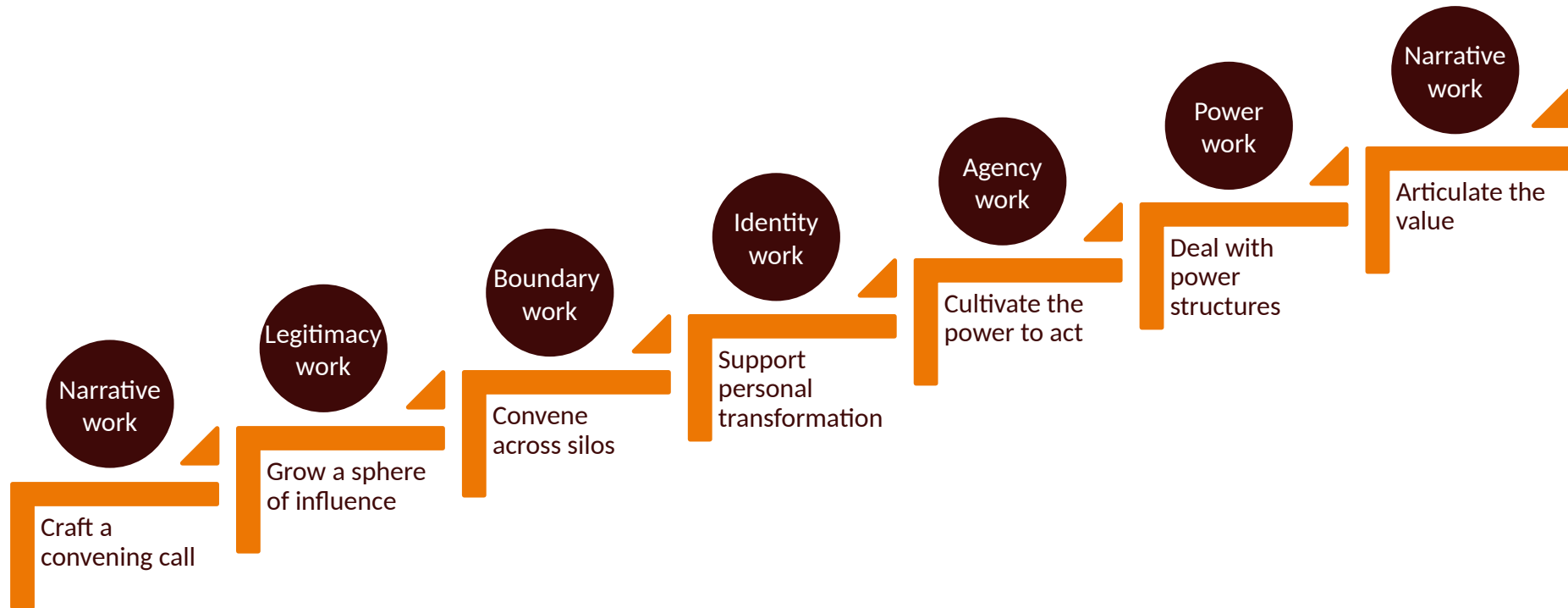
PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPERS 

CAPITA



SYSTEMS CONVENING, CHANGE, LEADERSHIP

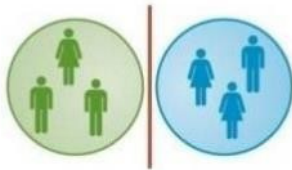
The work of systems convening



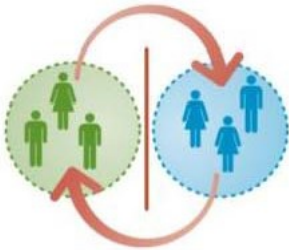
Where could you be placing more focus to support systems change?

Center for Creative Leadership – boundary work

One

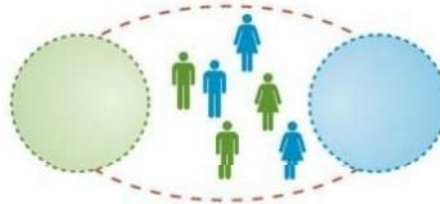


Strengthen boundaries
for safety and security

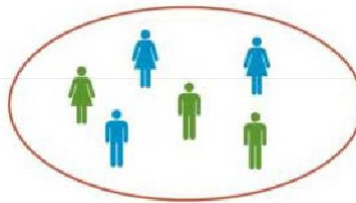


Understand boundaries
for awareness and respect

Two

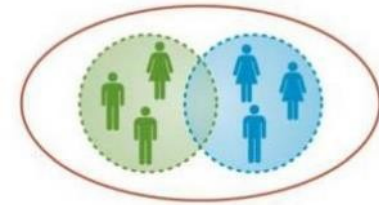


Suspend boundaries
for confidence and trust

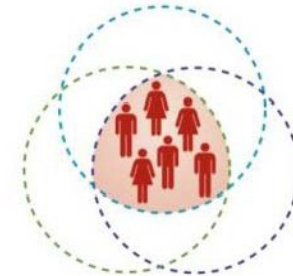


Reframe boundaries
for shared ownership
and accountability

Three



Cross-over boundaries
for interdependence and
collective learning



Change boundaries
to reinvent or find
alternative futures

When bringing together disparate groups, can you build all three steps?

Map of the framework

The big picture: outcomes arise from complex, adaptive systems



These are logical levels, not linear steps – all working simultaneously

Seeing the system to act on the system

Questions to ask

- Are the right interventions happening?
- Are delivery units working together?
- Are we putting our resources in the right place?
- Are we achieving effective results, and do we understand why?
- What's our role going to be in the future?
- What do we need to do and be to get to that future?
- How do we need to adapt ourselves to achieve that?

Elements of a functioning system

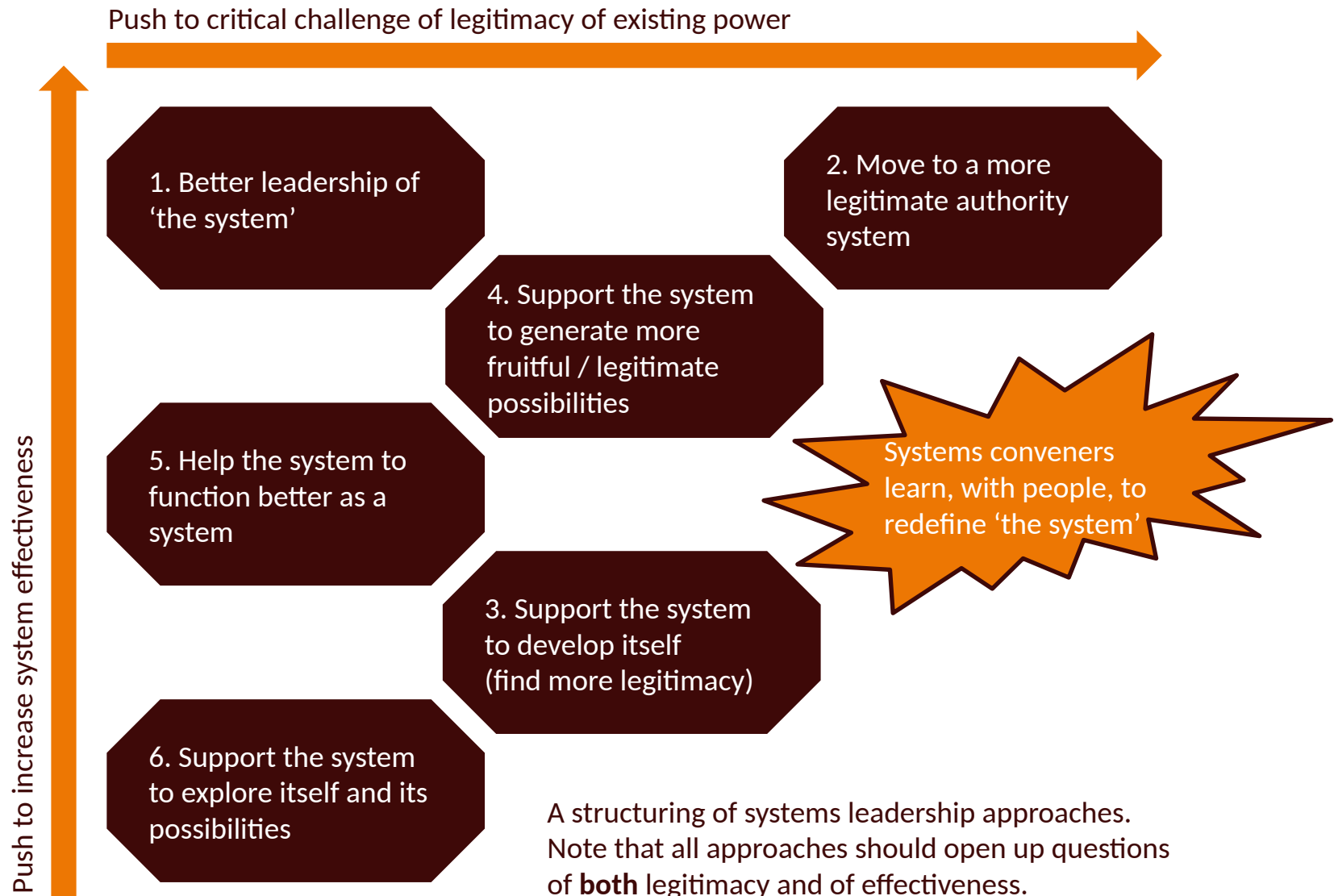
- System interventions
- On-the-ground co-ordination
- Intentional prioritisation
- Monitoring and understanding
- Planning for the future
- Balancing the needs of the here and now with the needs of the future

This is looking at the system **above** the level of direct delivery/impact

Types of learning

	Single loop learning – doing things right (Interventions)	Double loop learning – systems to ensure we do things right (Problem identification, governance)	Triple loop learning – are we doing the right thing? (Identity, purpose, system boundaries)
Us (systems changers)	How successful was our intervention? How can we do it better next time? What might we	What does this show us about how to change and improve our framework?	Should we even be doing what we are trying to do? Have we got trapped in a view of
The system (the place-based system for outcomes)	have done instead? How can we share this learning?	What does this show us about how our whole system works?	the world that is not effective? What would be more effective? Why?

Developing ways to learn *as a system*





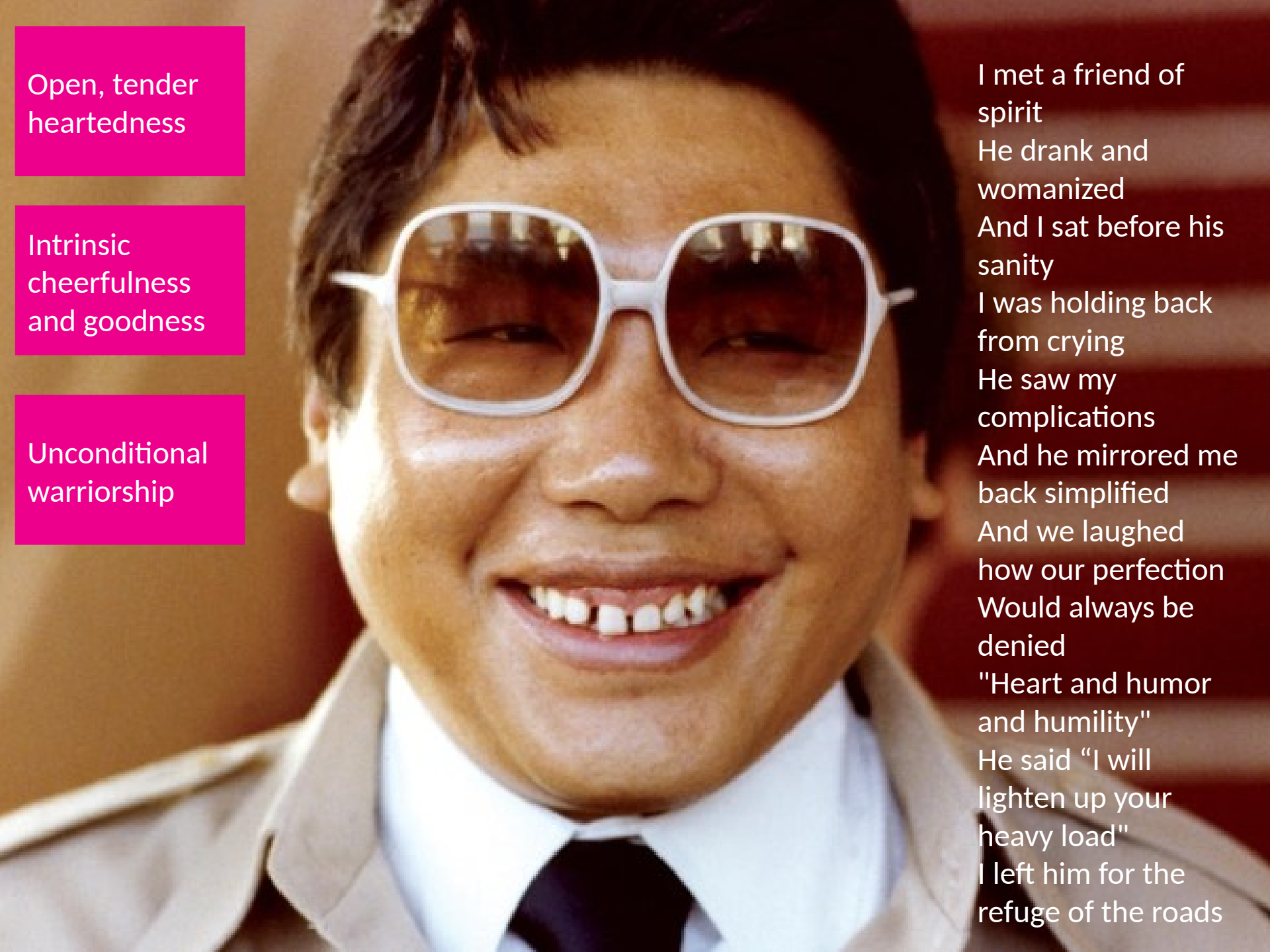
Leaderism*

“Conscious leaders are **driven primarily by service to the firm's purpose**, rather than by power or money”

A full-page background image of tennis player Novak Djokovic. He is shown from the waist up, wearing a white polo shirt with a red and blue horizontal stripe across the chest. He has a white wristband on his right wrist and is holding a black tennis racket in his left hand. His right arm is raised with a clenched fist, and his mouth is open in a shout or yell. The background is a blurred crowd of spectators in a stadium.

Conscious Leadership is a revolutionary and impactful leadership technique implemented by some of today's most effective leaders. ... In short, conscious leadership is the process by **which a leader becomes radically responsible, self-aware**, and focuses on building a culture of “we” rather than a culture of “me.” 6 Aug 2020





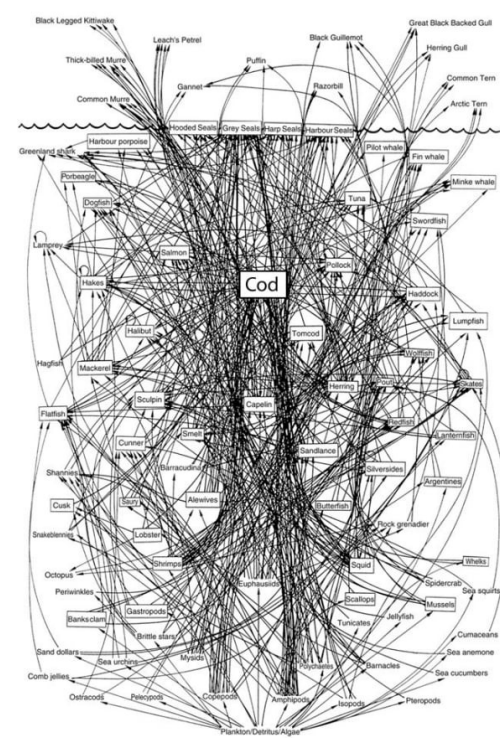
Open, tender
heartedness

Intrinsic
cheerfulness
and goodness

Unconditional
warriorship

I met a friend of
spirit
He drank and
womanized
And I sat before his
sanity
I was holding back
from crying
He saw my
complications
And he mirrored me
back simplified
And we laughed
how our perfection
Would always be
denied
"Heart and humor
and humility"
He said "I will
lighten up your
heavy load"
I left him for the
refuge of the roads

Legibility

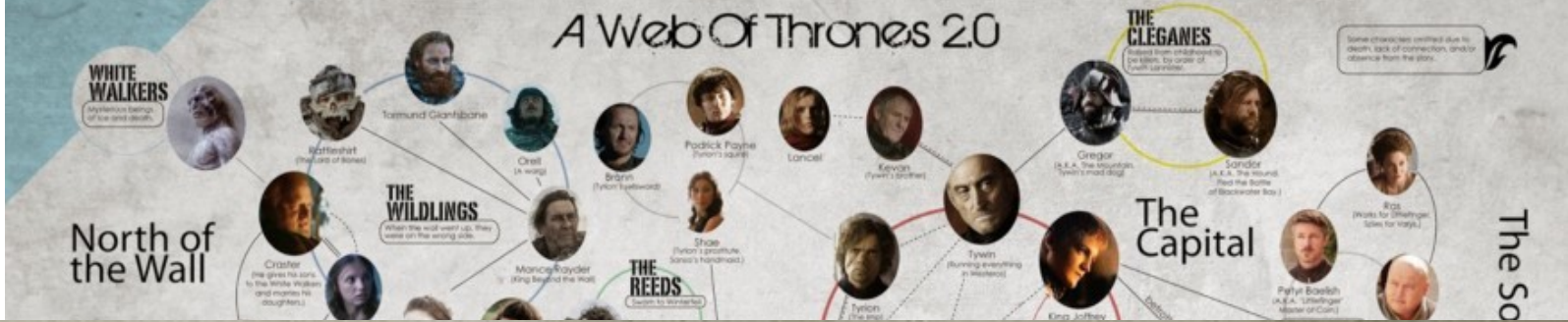


Differing definitions of power

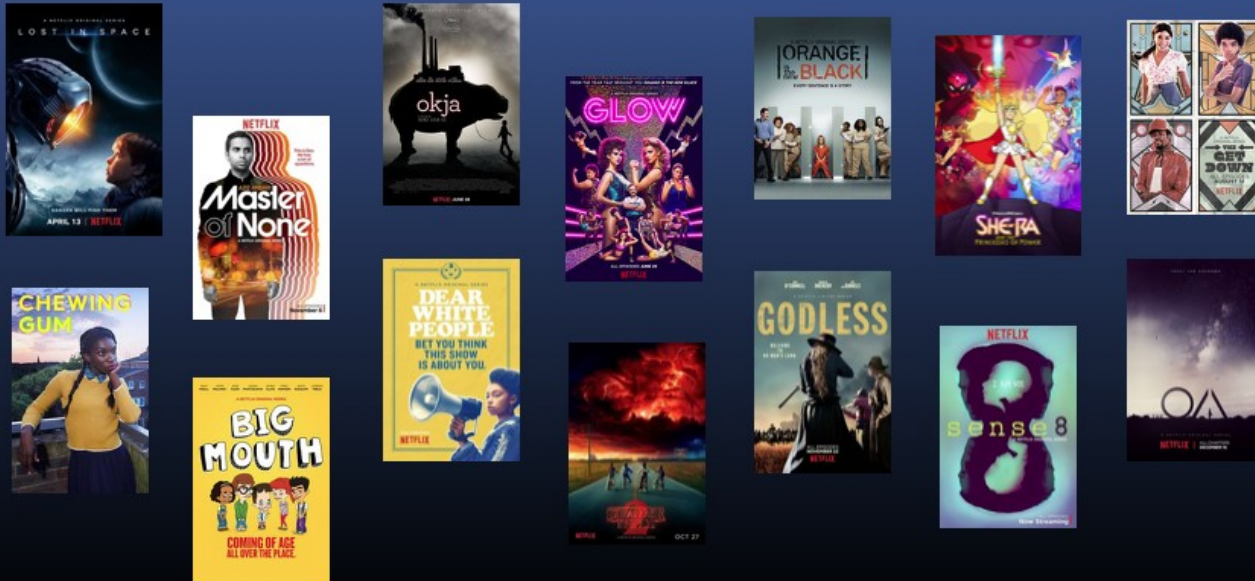
- Karen Oshry: 'Barry's definition of power as the ability to make things happen, knowing you cannot, and working with whatever does happen. To me this is an ongoing process, never finished, perhaps looking different at any stage than what was anticipated at the start, always proactive.'
- Peter Cooper: 'Every person exercises power to maintain their position in the organisation and to respond to their experience of power exercised by others. The repertoire of power that an individual can bring to bear determines their range of options to respond appropriately.'

Tony Benn's five questions for people in power

- What power have you got?
- Where did you get it from?
- In whose interests do you use it?
- To whom are you accountable?
- How do we get rid of you?'



Netflix Collective Journey Shows



STARLIGHT RUNNER





BRINGING SYSTEMS LEADERSHIP TO PUBLIC SERVICES

A first set of challenges when introducing systems

- Not seeing the whole
- Believing we know what the whole is
- Assuming the whole that we see is real and concrete
- Denying the realities of the parts
- Assuming that seeing we are part of the whole creates a paradigm shift
- Believing that we are speaking from a different paradigm
- Denying the problems inherent in the whole
- Ineffectual and counterproductive approaches as a result of the above

Speaking from a specific context

What is commissioning?

- **method**
understand, plan, do, review
- **system**
seeing the whole and optimising
- **mindset**
learning from the current state,
from the citizen, the provider,
the market and the business –
look for ways to fulfil purpose
- **identity**
'middle class', system convenor,
architect, conductor, enabler

How is it changing?

- **CCT / outsourcing / Best Value**
'commissioning' as
competition or comparison
- **Commissioning 1.0**
looking out across markets
to get the best service /
payment by results
- **Commissioning 2.0**
real outcomes thinking –
taking responsibility for results
- **Commissioning 3.0**
building on assets –
achieving better together
- **#systemschange**

Partly 'horses for course' – partly development (of humility)

Commissioning shifts – decentring

Comparison

Competition

Payment by
results

Outcomes

Assets,
people, place

from

innocence

centrality

power

services

cold data

expertise

separation of commissioning
and service design

to

responsibility

humility

impact

outcomes

warm data (Nora Bateson)

learning

shared responsibility
for outcomes

The learning ladder of purpose – WORK IN PROGRESS

Approach	Description
5.0 Blended	Draw from the below as appropriate to maximise learning and progress
4.1 Self organisation	Teal...
4.0 Asset based approach	Never need public service – achieve their purpose through individual and community assets
3.1 Enabling help	Good help/bad help
3.0 Help	Support needs behind demand (risk of shadow side)
2.2 Outreach	Engage with non-presenting demand
2.1 Service redesign method	Hear citizen demand in their words and respond effectively
2.0 Process redesign methodology	Hear citizen demand in our services and respond effectively
1.2 Avoidable demand	Try to look beyond your system, but from the paradigm of the system
1.1 Naïve demand analysis	Obfuscated signals of demand – deaf to what we don't provide / translate (badly) into our own language / can't identify non-presenting demand
1.0 Scarcity model	Control 'demand' through gatekeeping – fight fires
0.0 Make cuts	Meet internal purpose

As you move **up** the purpose ladder, increase in:

- Community and citizen outcomes
- Energy
- Learning
- System benefits (cost neutral/ whole system savings)
- **Demands on leader development**

**SERVICES ARE BAD FOR PEOPLE
THRIVING TOGETHER IS BETTER**

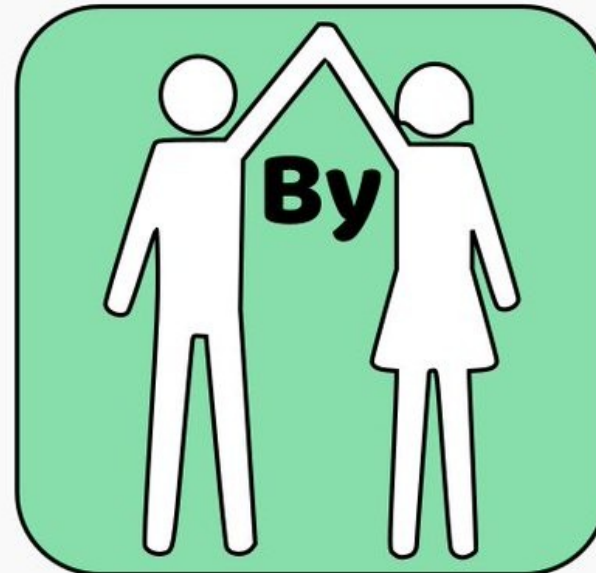
The Poor Sick Miserable Person and the Noble Helper

Communities, unlike human services, need citizens. Citizen is the name for the people in a democratic society who have an equal share of the total power of the society. However, a citizen has much more power than a vote. Voting is a very individual act that entails giving power away to someone who will hopefully represent you. The definition of a powerful citizen can't end there because really powerful citizens make power by coming together and take power by acting together.

John McKnight

Services are Bad for People: you're either a citizen or a client

How can we do our work without creating the powerful helper/PSMP divide?





by the people in their communities



done by but with help

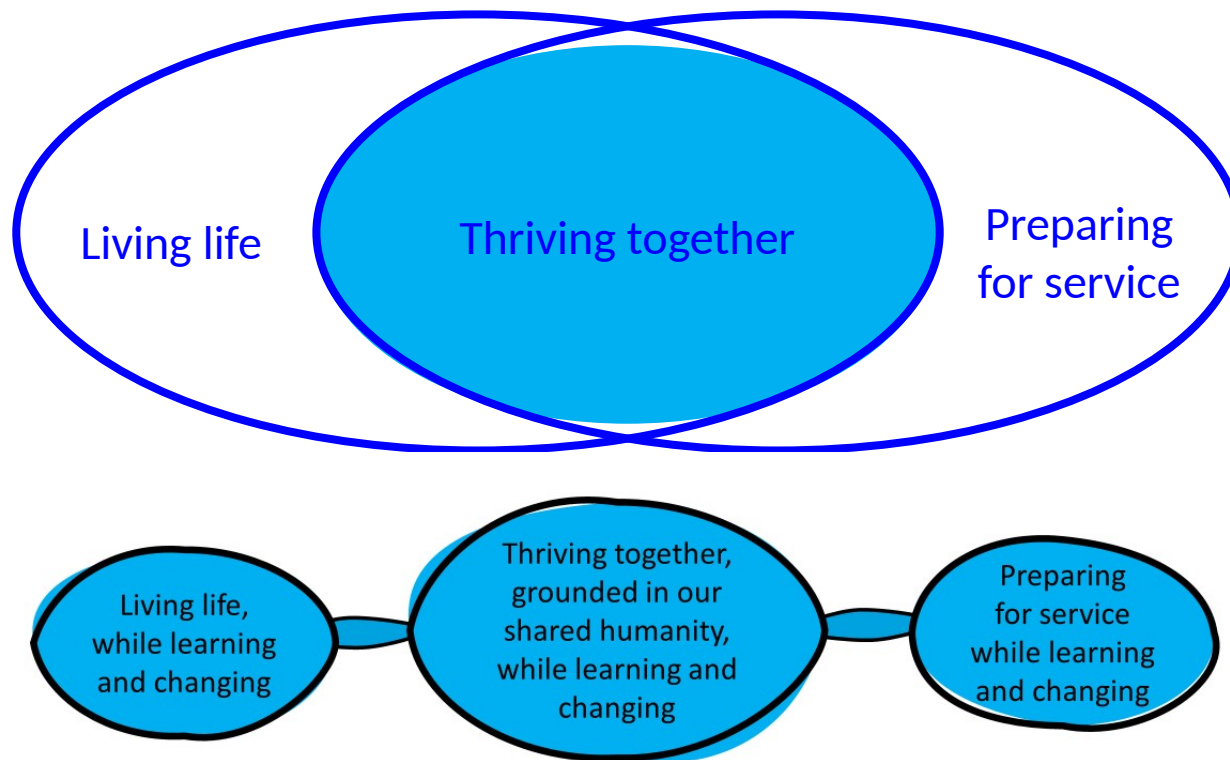
done for but decided by



by free, prior & informed consent



Thriving together – Jane Searles and Roger Duck



Examples of aspects of thriving together

Community meals

Fire and Rescue



nfcc.org.uk

 **relational activism**
www.relationalactivism.com



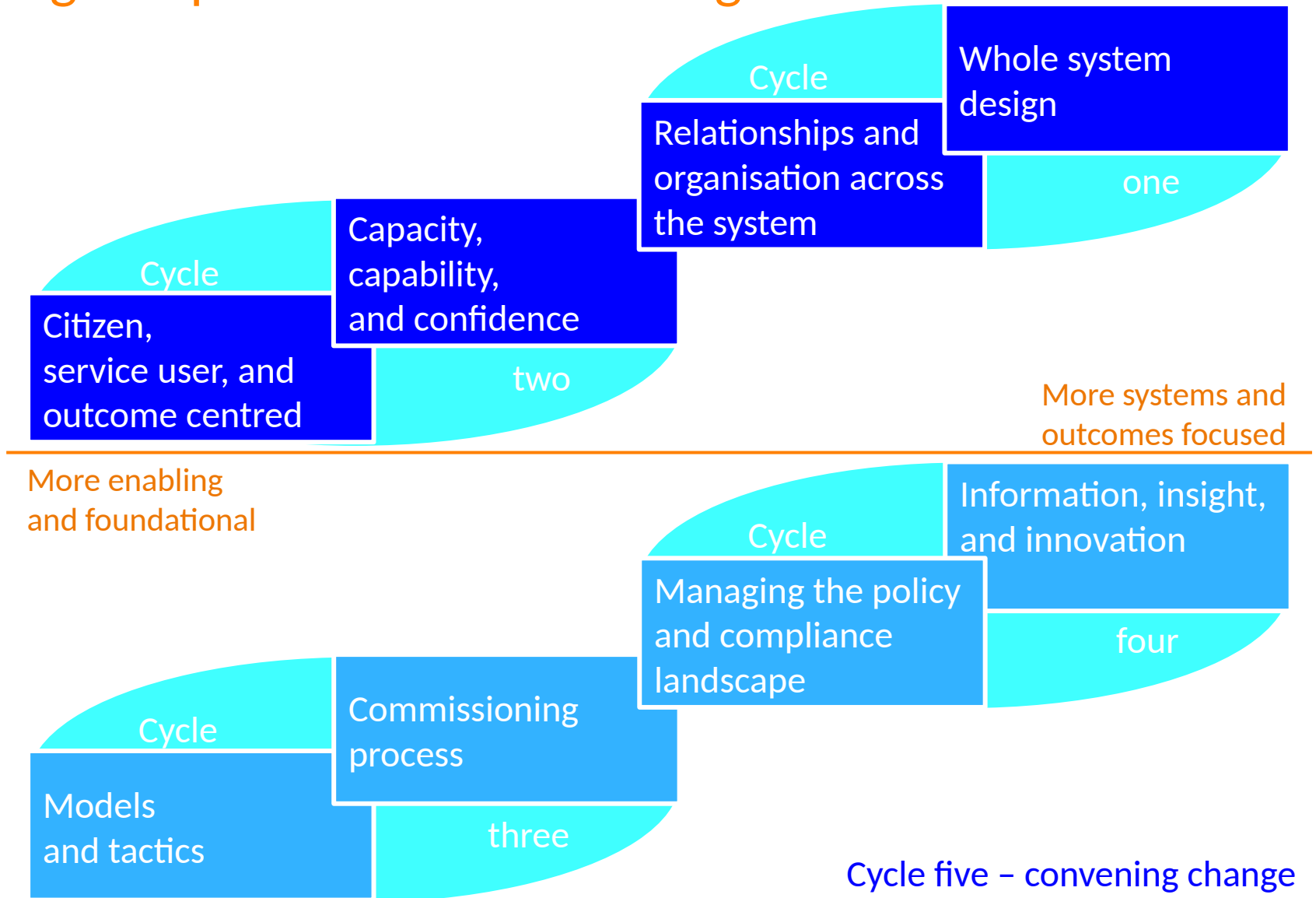
Equal Care Co-op

www.equalcare.coop

Community
Development

EIGHT ASPECTS OF COMMISSIONING

Eight aspects of commissioning



Simple questions for each of the eight aspects

More systems and outcome-based:

1. Whole systems design – are we shaping a place based on wellbeing, where people thrive?
2. Building relationships across the system – are we joining up and making sense and planning together?
3. Are we boosting the capacity, capability, and confidence of people, neighbours, community groups, businesses, and public services?
4. Are we putting citizens and outcomes at the heart of services?

And the foundational pillars:

5. Are we leveraging information, insight, and innovation?
5. Are we making the space to actually make a difference, and dealing with policy and compliance and so on in a proactive way?
5. Do we have the core commissioning process right?
5. Are we developing models and tactics, and designing interventions that really make a difference?

And an overarching aspect: are we convening change in a way that works?

TEN PRINCIPLES FOR PUBLIC SERVICE TRANSFORMATION

Ten principles and practices

1. **Purpose:** founded on strong, shared understanding of:
 - organisational purposes – what the organisation exists to do; and
 - citizen purposes when engaging with the service.
2. **Measures:** measure and work to the fulfilment of both organisational and citizen purpose;
3. **Citizen-centred design:** design channels, processes, and services to meet demand, to reduce need, and to support purpose;
4. **Enterprise architecture:** design the organisation, leadership structures, ICT, accommodation and other enablers to support processes and services;
5. **Enabling constraints:** ensure clarity and fit of roles and tasks to create freedom within boundaries;
6. **Intentionally shape the culture** to support individual, team, and organisation development and exercise of discretionary effort;
7. **Systems awareness:** lead and manage with an understanding of the natural systemic patterns which can create conflict and waste, or empowerment and discretionary activity, and offer psychological safety for those in the organisation and for clients;
8. **Change navigation:** can deliver both technical and adaptive change effectively;
9. **Systems change:** begin to support true 'systems change'; create the possibilities for citizens to make better choices for themselves; and
10. **Learning system:** at multiple levels, through constructive conversations, bravery, honesty, and reflective practice.

Ten principles and practices

Practices

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Organisation design

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Practices

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STANDARDISE WHEN YOU CAN CUSTOMISE WHEN YOU SHOULD

Standardise when you can, customise when you should

Citizen service proposition		
Service characteristics	Standardisation	Customisation
	• Reliable • Know what you get – clear expectations • Standard quality	• Reflecting small group/individual needs • Specialist knowledge required
Main organisational focus	• Operations • Low cost • Common processes • Standard outputs	• Citizen partnering • Best solution • Projects • Various outputs

Distinguish your citizen propositions

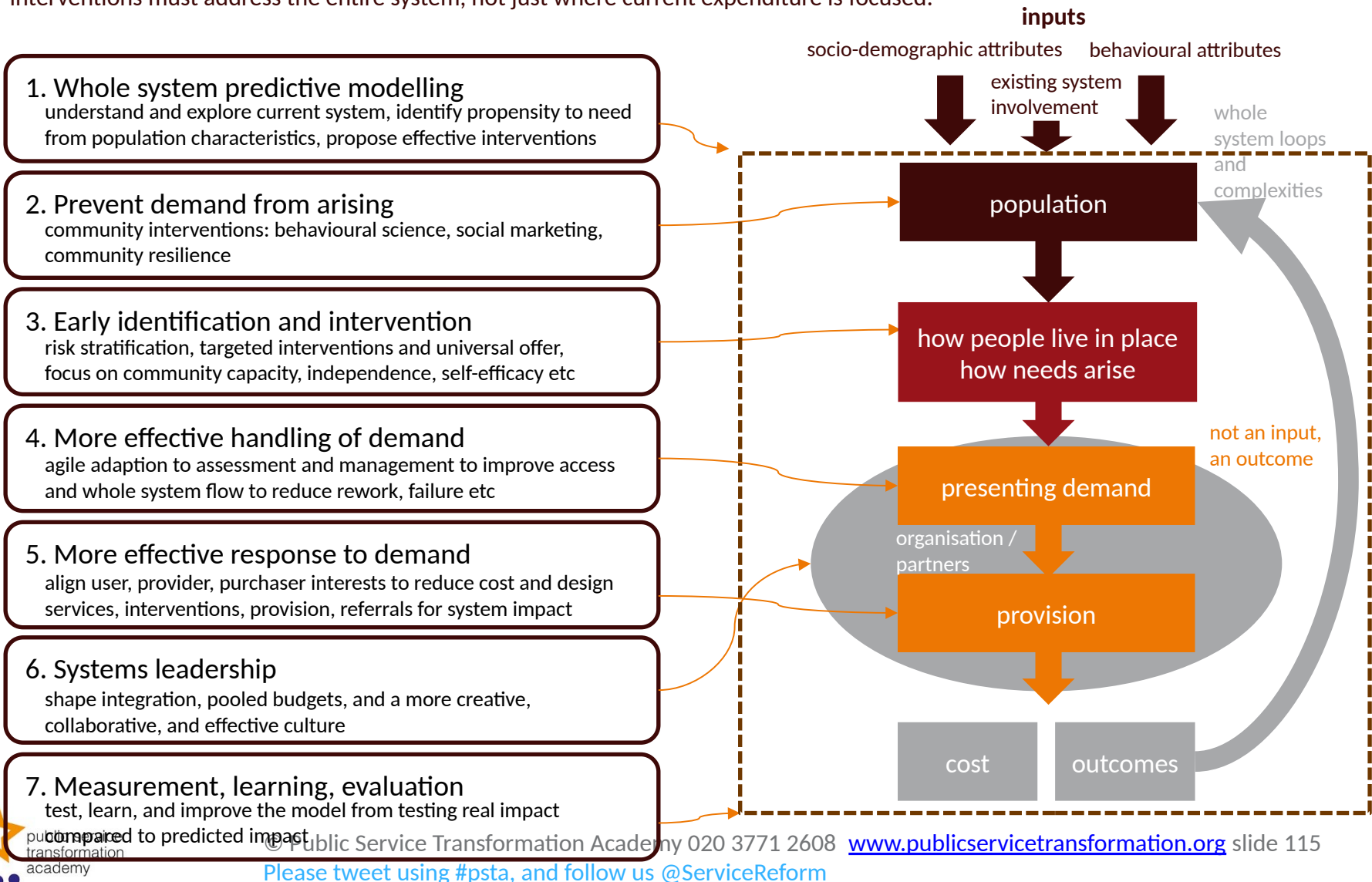


‘DEMAND MANAGEMENT’

Seven approaches to 'manage demand'

Crisis to capability – earlier, easier, with you

Rising costs are primarily due to the system, not the population. To reduce demand, interventions must address the entire system, not just where current expenditure is focused.



**OUTCOMES ARE THE RESULT OF
COMPLEX ADAPTIVE SYSTEMS**

Outcomes are the result of complex adaptive systems

- **Operation Cat Drop Borneo**
- Pre-school childcare
- Mao's sparrow campaign
- The cobra effect
- The Beer Game, the Red Bead Game
- Isle of Wight KPIs
- Jamie's School Dinners
- Doctors and prescriptions
- Smoking-related mortality
- **The Chinese farmer...**



We do not 'deliver' outcomes



What are the parachuting cats in your area of interest?

THE CHALLENGE OF MOVING TO RELATIONAL PUBLIC SERVICES

...and the general challenge of systemically challenging the assumptions of the organisation...

Some good work gets done

- Intensive social care charity – service savings 30% (murdered by councils who would only paying by beds)
- Just good social care – complex cases, massive savings... but...
- Orthotics, proved spend £1 today save £5 mitigating loss of mobility – Treasure said ‘yes it’s right but no mechanisms for making it happen’
- Digital Neighbourhood Vanguard programme and Brave AI
- The Lighthouse for Child Sexual Abuse reporting
- Oldham, The Wigan Deal, The Wirral Deal, Greater Manchester
- Leeds voluntary sector, Kirklees voluntary sector, Walsall partners
- System-wide approaches in Calderdale and Plymouth
- The Pan-London Placements Commissioning Programme – placement sufficiency, quality, and value for money for London local authorities.
- Barnardos – Leicestershire Children’s Innovation Partnership, Essex Residential Care, Thrive Rathcoole and Monkstown
- Thriving in Fife

You are not missing a trick

- Special circumstances – Plymouth, Wigan, Greater Manchester, Glasgow
- Success – Devon – but not long-lived
- Success that fail overall
- Troubled Families?

We know how to do integrated and person-centred service better.
That's the immediate problem – but not the main problem.

Nobody has cracked this in such a way that you can pick it up and apply it

The challenge is to work at (at least) four levels

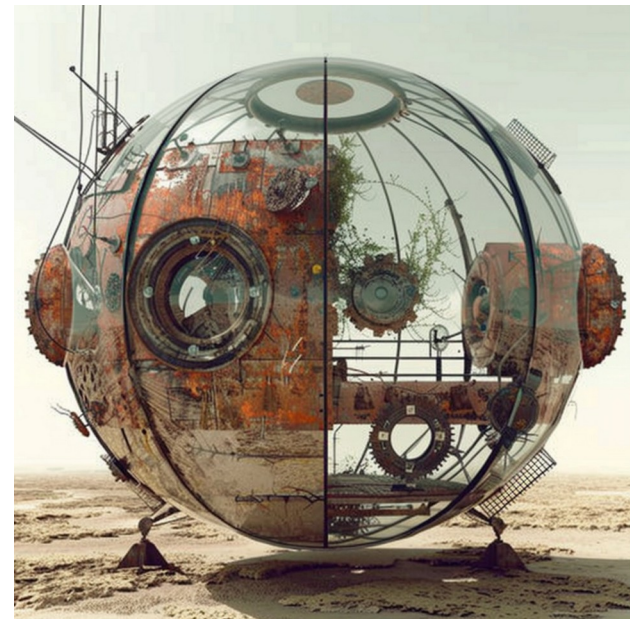
1. Service around the person
2. Coordinating the capability
3. The governance ceiling of the system
4. Dealing with organisational defences

So – above the operational level, what can we try?

BUBBLES AND WHAT IT TYPICALLY LOOKS LIKE

Forever blowing bubbles...

- *Maybe* we can reinforce the bubble...
- Maybe get to a stable situation – the complexity you bringing to the rest of the system is accepted, valued, ‘worth it’?
- Or, is it a question of zealous converts, and horrified inquisitors?
- We’re doing a lot of single-loop, or double or triple-loop learning BUT AT OPERATIONAL LEVEL.
- What will live on when managers / sponsors / funding leave?
- Philip Boxer: ‘Let’s all agree this is how the world should be and if we can agree that, we can persuade others and get the world to follow us’
- Bear in mind how people are currently invested in organisation. ‘We can all sing Kumbaya – but it won’t help if we are naïve in dealing with structural issues, naïve in dealing with power’

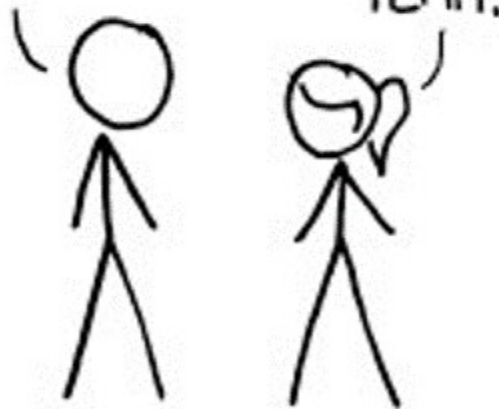


HOW SERVICES PROLIFERATE:

(SEE: STROKE PATHWAYS, FRAILTY TEAMS, KEYWORKERS, MDTs ETC)

SITUATION:
THERE ARE
14 **SILOED**
SERVICES

14?! RIDICULOUS!
WE NEED TO DEVELOP
ONE **INTEGRATED SERVICE**
THAT **JOINS UP AROUND**
THE CLIENTS



SOON:

SITUATION:
THERE ARE
15 **SILOED**
SERVICES

Does it sometimes look like this?

- We do breakthrough work with individuals – it gets lauded and elevated
- We develop a method:
Vanguard / Human Learning Systems / Liberated Process etc etc
- It seems hard to 'normalise' the way we are working in the wider system.
- They say: 'it makes sense to me if you can either target or scale it'. But that's NOT THE POINT! It's a new way of working!
- The system starts to push back – or a sponsor moves on: data, concerns, budget...
- We seek all kinds of support and find partners, fans, movements, ABCD, Beyond Budgeting, co-production.
- It all seems to depend on superhuman effort of one person, strangely alienated from the organisation
- Vision, mission, goals, and slides are cheaper with less personal cost....

...in the worst case, you could always just become a consultant 😊

WHAT IS IT WE'RE DOING HERE, AND WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS

Including customer-shaped services

What is it we're doing here?

We're moving to relational public service. The spectrum of types of service:

- Product: standardised (works if you fit it) – off-the-shelf
- Tailored to some degree – fitted
- Co-ordinated around the citizen – full tailoring
- Relational: a cohesive response to the citizen's needs – lifestyle offer

Relational service is focused on value in the citizen's context-of-use; their specific needs and goals in the context of their life. This involves:

- understanding the customer's unique situation and adapting services accordingly, which requires a high level of flexibility and agility in service delivery and obviously collaboration and communication with the citizen.
- the organisation being subject to value definition in the citizen's world.
- a continuous process of learning and improvement to ensure that services remain relevant and effective, more or less moment-to-moment.

A different way of defining value.

What are the implications?

To move to relational service provision, leadership needs to move:

- **From** a vertical focus on internal processes and efficient organisation
- **To** a BALANCE of that vertical focus with a primary focus on the citizen's context-of-use

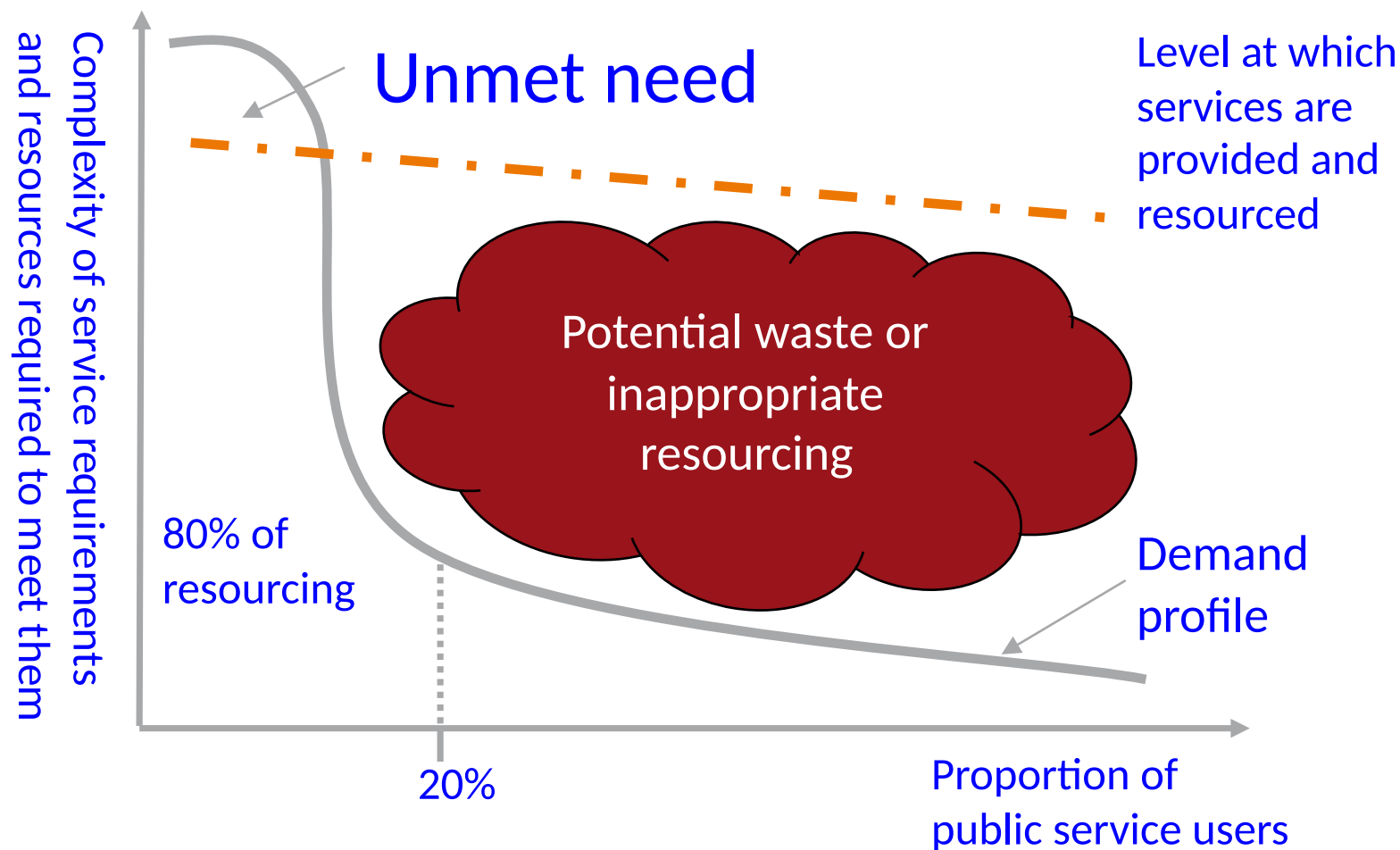
Public value is understood not by analogy to the difference between market price and a supplier's cost, but as an increased utility added to each citizen's life, assuming each life to be different in some ways. Internal value needs to be understood as 'volume under the curve' in 'real option' pricing.

This requires a transformation in the operating model of the organisation to be driven through the 'boundary'.

You don't need to do this unless the rate at which you need to adapt exceeds the rate at which the organisation can adapt... so there will be natural reluctance to accept that the world 'demands' that we are able to work 'from the boundary'.

You still need all four types on the spectrum of service! Deployed differently.

'Customer shaped' services



If we can reduce the total 'volume under the curve', we save public money.

HOW DOES IT USUALLY GO? AND HOW COME?

How does it usually go?

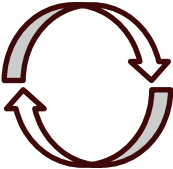
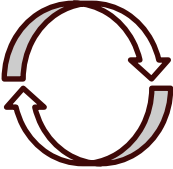
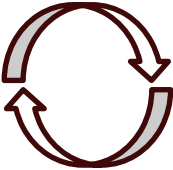
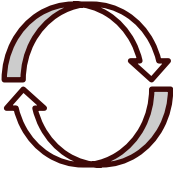
Approach	How does it work?	Why?
Bubble	It works! 30-50% cheaper, MUCH better outcomes, more human and humane.	The risk – the end of the bubble (pretty much an inevitability really).
Stable bubble	Theoretically it could work – usually requires special funds or focus.	The complexity is recognised but the value justifies it.
Fully pooled and integrated	Theoretically it could work – there are examples!	Perhaps create a new silo (or new org) – but with big enough scope OK.
Commission an integrated service / Alliance	Can work – setting up a different form of organisation.	Vulnerable to cuts – and ‘not us’. Another beast in the forest.
As-is	The costs are so well known and depressing.	Incentives. Nobody gets fired for it. Fits with the world...
Modular – bolts on to existing services	Could work in theory.	Co-ordination costs at the interface, vulnerable.
A sort of add-on service	Ish.	A new silo!
Incrementalism	It works – a bit.	Not much cheaper or better.
Wedges and discs	It can actually work.	It is actually doable – but requires changing the strategy ceiling and the architecture.

How come it goes the way it goes?

- The dynamics of the system are clear.
- Keyworkers find new and better ways to work 'at the boundary'.
- Managers or advocates systematise that and it works! But the wider system is a risk.
- You end up creating zealous converts, and likely some high-level sponsors.
- Those who have to manage the mess need legibility from the centre, they need the structures to work in predictable ways.
- And the psychological cost of acknowledging that this might work is significant.
- So you get cautious defenders. And angry opponents.
- There's a Dominant/Other stalemate – either Allow/Adapt or Preserve/Protect – either way, a sterile solution which is going nowhere.

We don't have a full theory of what's going on so we walk into the bear-pits.

How come it goes the way it goes?

Predictable condition		Predictable response	Familiar disempowering reality	Leadership stands
Frontline complexity		Crack on and meet needs	Heroic exhaustion	Work on the system as well as the PSMP
Driving a movement		Zealous advocacy	They won't listen! Fight or go my own way	Appreciate and engage with the opponents and work on their defences
Making the mess manageable		Protect sanity and way of being	This is dangerous	Be open to listening and exploring
Not knowing where to start		Try to make it all happen at once	Things move too slowly or not at all	Focus on steps to implement the whole picture

Based on Barry Oshry's power+systems work

WHAT ELSE IS POSSIBLE?

Dealing with resistance

Resistance – Dominant and Other

'Preserve/protect' and 'allow/adapt' are reflexive responses to encountering the Other, which create system fragility.

These responses are based on evaluating, fearing, defending against, and trying to control the Other.

Such actions are sterile and unproductive, leading to a lack of genuine engagement or understanding.

A Robust Culture, on the other hand, is characterized by a dynamic balance of adaptation, stability, autonomy, and integration.

In a Robust Culture, the Other is studied, welcomed, valued, and utilised.

This approach allows for a deeper understanding and appreciation of differences, leading to a more inclusive and adaptive organization.

Robust Systems require thought, exploration, and are not predictable, but they open up human possibilities and success patterns.

Dominance Systems are reflexive and simple, often predictable but not inevitable, and tend to replicate across hierarchies and time.

Robust Systems encourage diverse specialized capabilities through segmentation and blending of knowledge, learning, and experiences.

The shift from Dominance to Robust Systems involves moving from a familiar story to one that embraces cultural differences and potential.

From Barry Oshry's Encounters With The Other work

What else is possible? (from Boxer)

Don't be a hero or a victim.

The organisation, to stay stable, has to have norms – a 'palisade' where established rules, practices, and expectations are maintained.

Working outside these established norms puts you 'beyond the pail'. If you are seen as 'an insurgency', you will be squashed by the organisational immune system.

So you need to be seen as a welcome part of learning and adaptation.

The gain for those 'within the palisade' has to be greater than not acting.

You need to be forensic about making the case for change.

The systemic change needed is what the vertical focus of leadership is systemically blind to see – it's a locked-in framing.

The organisation therefore offers a 'Faustian pact' – give us what we need and no hassles, and we'll leave you alone.

The individual can then be blamed, the individual manages the complexity (and leadership don't have to see it), and the side-effects to managing that complexity stay 'out of the palisade'.

The individual (or group) can be a hero or a victim, but they are like Hercules, sustaining the change alone.

Don't be a hero or a victim.

So, how to avoid the Faustian pact and make real change?

Action steps

- Digitalisation is changing the landscape in which we can make this argument. AI requires good quality training data and patterns of behaviours etc needed – and is sexy – a way of liberating data from PMO types... we need AI-type tools to create cohesion dynamically...
- Fundamentally you have to have a positive story... ‘we can take those complex areas away without threatening the transactional issues...’
- But you have to address the strategy ceiling and governing mentality by raising of the limits of seeing of the ‘palisade’.
- The only way to lift the ‘strategy ceiling’ of what can be understood is by finding the situations where you need more relational agility, make the argument, prove it and do...
- Pilot (proof of concept) / pathfinder (how to do it here) / scaling (dealing with the immune system response)

Governance on-ramps for leaders: stories of how it’s worked, first steps...

DATA AND RISK

Data and risk

- Data to help the system do it better or to change the system?
- Data enables horizontal transparency and accountability – which is needed to achieve relational service – risk isn't equipped for that.
- At the end it has to be a political issue.
- And a move:
 - from 'Safety I' – I didn't make errors of execution of plan, I just tried to do the wrong thing
 - to 'safety II' – errors of intent – were we trying to do the right thing?
 - from exception and prevention of 'risk' to building normal capacity for graceful recovery
- You have to make your data own structures – disaggregate and make a new data model centred on the person and the timeline – not easy.
- How to make a graceful transition? With attention to our risks!

The possibilities are coming...

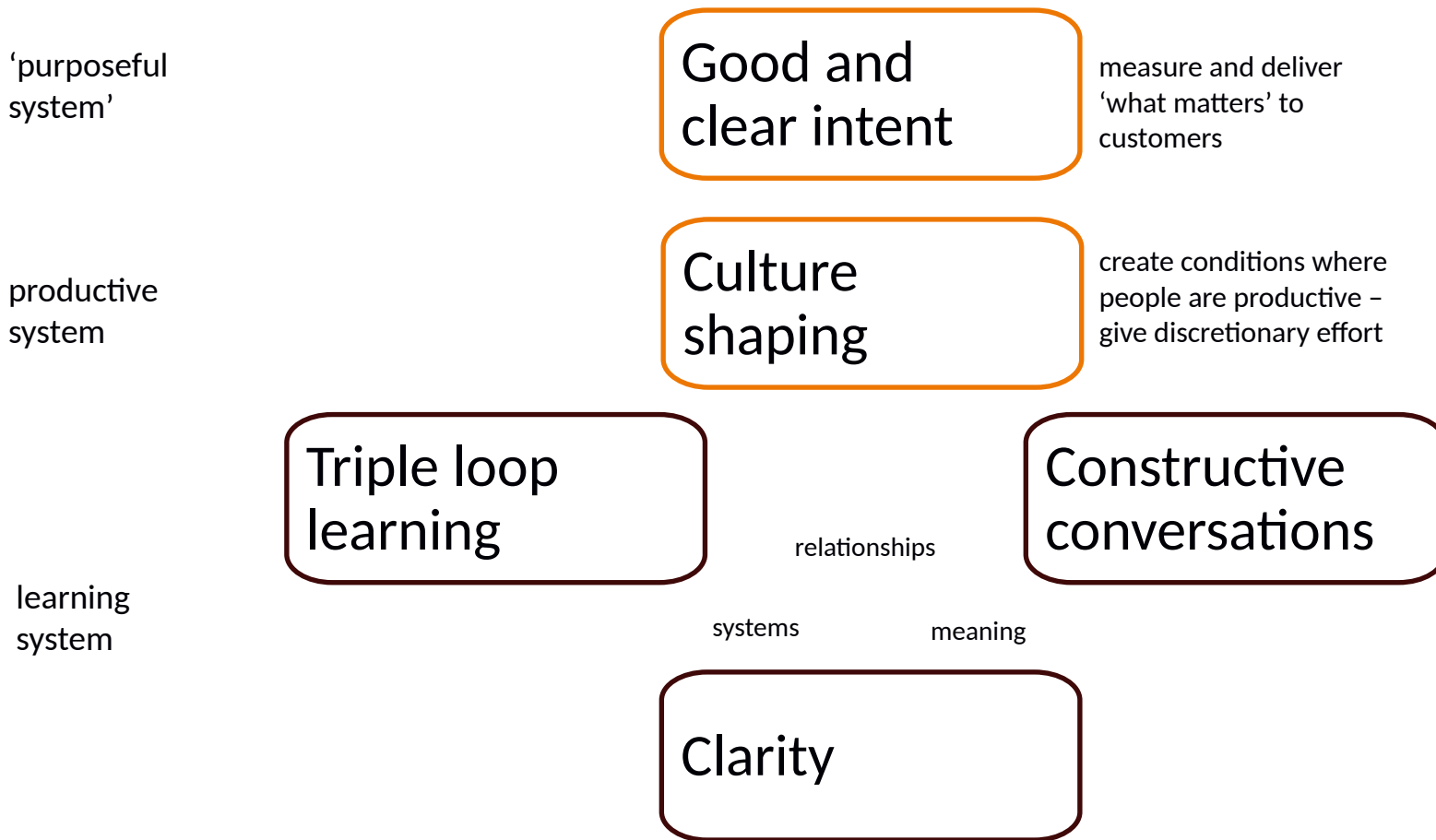


Why 'practices' are so important

The danger of double binds

FIVE CORE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

Core management and leadership practices



Address danger / confusion / conflict / deficit / development as they arise

Foundations

The three basics (a requirement of management) create a *learning system*:

1. **constructive conversations** (constructive challenge of reasoning, psychological safety, surfacing of emotions and 'the undiscussable') – nothing can develop unless there's a shared effort to get at the truth
2. **clarity** – no learning is possible, and productivity and psychological safety are unlikely, few without clarity of roles, tasks, and decision-making – and fit and stretch of roles and tasks to the level of thinking, adult development, skills, and capacity of individuals and teams
3. **triple loop learning** – true learning isn't possible without planning, prediction, and learning and reflective practices

Managers are responsible for generating clarity, honest, and learning

Productivity and purpose

4. **culture shaping** – understanding culture as a complex adaptive system
how the interaction between leaders and teams/organisations
determines psychological safety and productivity

Culture shaping develops a *productive system*

5. **good and clear intent** – align purpose and measures to real customer
outcomes

Intent provides real orientation to customer / user / citizen / community
outcomes – as measured by **them**

Culture and **intent** are **self-correcting measures** – if you measure the actual
outcomes of your practices; the experience of employees and customers.

Leaders take responsibility for building productive systems of purpose

Intervention priority sequencing

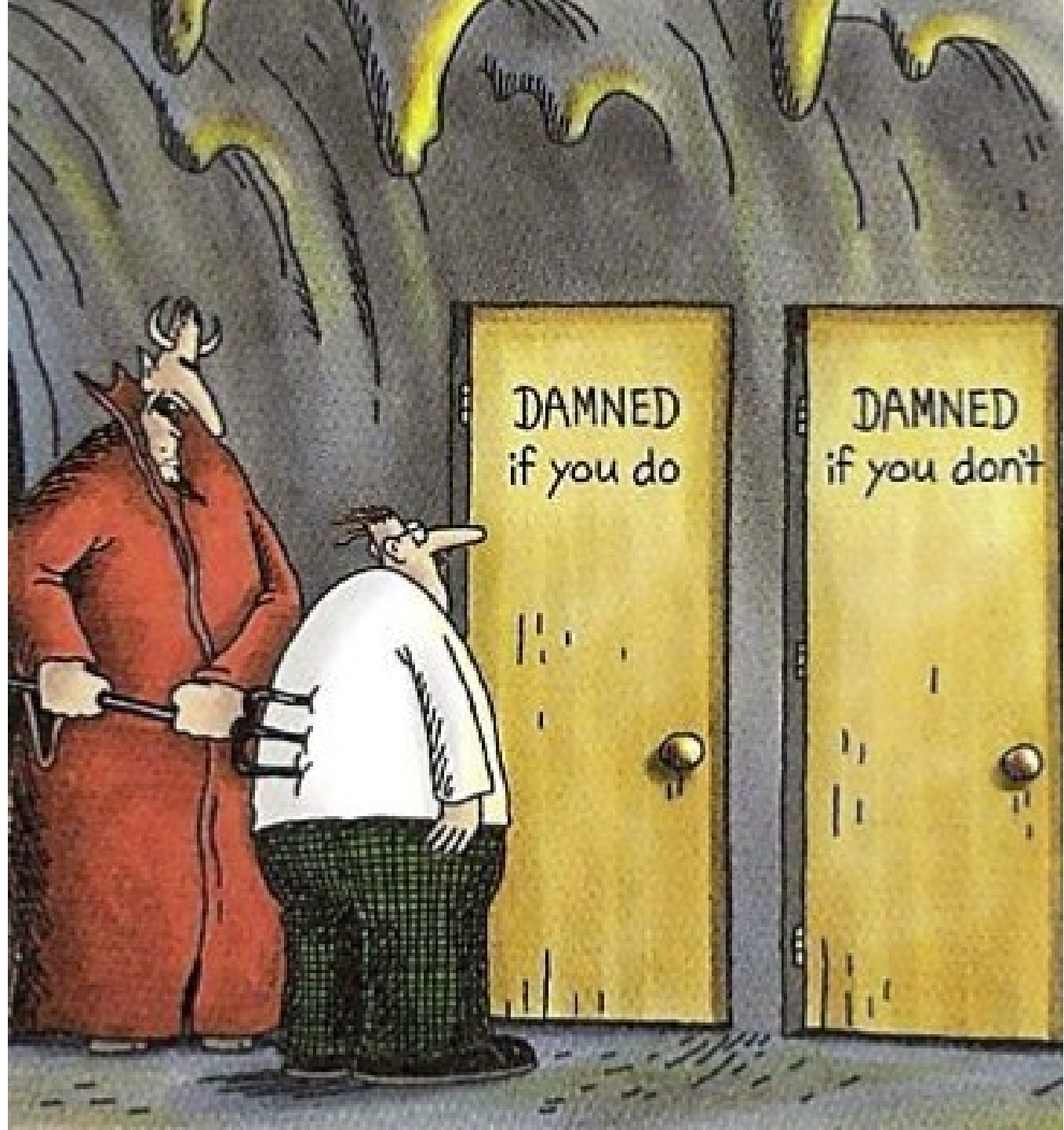
When you open up a system to learning and change, you are going to stir some things up. So you need to create the safe space to process these things as they arise:

- Danger (some threat in the system)
- Confusion (some loss of focus in the system)
- Conflict (some split, polarisation or conflict in the system)
- Deficit (some experience of need or deprivation or for reparation)
- Development (some requirement to increase depth, breadth or complexity)

Work needs to be done usually in this order of clearance if it is to be effective
You don't have to resolve them – just hold enough space for processing, and make everyone feel safe that these things can arise, and it's not the end of the relationship.

Supervision – Psychoanalytic and Jungian perspectives. Edited by Petruska Clarkson, 1998 Whurr, London. Chapter 9.
An intervention priority sequencing model for supervision. Petruska Clarkson pages 121-135

The
danger
of
double
binds



'Practice
practice
makes
perfect,
perfect is
a fault; in
fault lies
change'





THE THREE CORE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Tools, techniques, and practices include...

Conversations

- Ground rules (Schwarz)
- The ladder of inference
- Traditional vs learning virtues
- The left hand column
- Drama triangle
- BRAVING inventory

Clarity

- CPORT task clarity
- Role clarity process
- Team decision-making process
- The three box model
- Strategic clarity

Learning

- Journaling
- Action inquiry
- Debrief
- Check-in and check-out
- Action learning sets
- Triple loop learning

Creating the learning system



Schwarz's Ground rules

Brene Brown's BRAVING

Four ways in, shadow and payoff

Noticing and making known

Action inquiry

Retrospective

Lots of Argyris

- Traditional and learning virtues
- Ladder of inference
- Advocacy and enquiry
- Left hand column

DEVELOPING PRODUCTIVE CONVERSATIONS

Authenticity and honesty are scary – but generate safety

A 'devil's bargain' of unaccountability

- I'll never completely communicate what you need to do
- So we can both hide from responsibility
- I will never be satisfied by you
- But I can never fully hold you to account
- So we'll both be dissatisfied
- But we will be in a stable situation where nothing will ever change!
- We won't have to face the stress of accountability and change...

Authenticity and honest communication

- We'll have many more productive conversations where we can move forward together...
- But we might find out ways we don't fundamentally agree...
- Even ways we don't fundamentally respect each other...
- Do we want to know?

The initial effort can be scary – but the end result is greater security

Productive conversations have all kinds of implications!



WAYS IN TO PARTNERSHIP

Ways in to partnership

	Avoidance (‘there’s no conflict’)	Productive (creative surfacing of conflict)	Explosion (unproductive conflict)
Vision	Motherhood and apple pie with no real world reference	Shared views, differences, achievable ambition	Unproductive conflict over form rather than function
Opportunities	Individual opportunities and ‘low hanging fruit’	Valuable opportunities that require collaboration and generating real learning about working together effectively	Identify where others have to change
Problems	‘There are no problems’ (or problems are located outside the partnership)	Real problems that require collective action and generate learning	Blame and focus on the problems of the other
Relationships	‘There are no problems’ or ‘general unobjectionable principles’	Current strengths and weaknesses, productive learning, sharing of perspectives	Unproductive conversations, rehashing past conflict



CPORT task clarity

Role clarity process

Team decision-making process

The three box model

CLARITY PRACTICES



CREATING CLARITY

A definition of 'work'

'effort, to a purpose, using judgement and discretion, within boundaries, over time'

Purpose

- A fundamental and powerful idea: the intent to achieve something.
- Purpose depends on context, framing, understanding, level of thinking and much more.
- The purpose and the context must be communicated and understood for work to be done.

Judgement and discretion

- There's no 'work', no value of a human over a machine unless these are brought into play.
- And that means freedom to act.

Freedom to act, if unboundaried, is stifling and confusing and would create chaos.

Boundaries

- Without boundaries, we have creativity, or expression – not work.
- Judgement and purpose provide some inherent boundaries, but we too often fail to clarify the boundaries of the work we want to do.
- Boundaries protect the space for discretion and enhance effectiveness – they stop overreach and confusion and allow confidence in freedom to act.

The boundaries make the work make sense (after Elliot Jacques)

To engage discretion (freedom) – set constraints

'Soft' principles – freedom/discretion

Underlying organisational purpose – the implicit raison d'être, which gets people motivated and unites them

People's skill and will – people have both the skill to do their job and they are motivated, which allows devolvment

Tolerance to ambiguity – things look a bit chaotic and there is a degree of tolerance to such ambiguity

Freedom to act – individuals have full discretion how they go about doing jobs/achieving objectives

'Hard' principles – constraints

Clear individual objectives – each person knows what he / she is trying to achieve and why, and there is an element of self-setting

Few simple rules – there are a few clear rules which lay down how people operate and the key principles they must follow

Unambiguous feedback – there are clear measures which enable people to see how they are doing at any point in time

Clear boundaries – these lay down what people are enabled to do or not, and where they should operate

Complex Adaptive Leadership – Professor Nick Obolensky



FOUR CORE QUESTIONS AT WORK

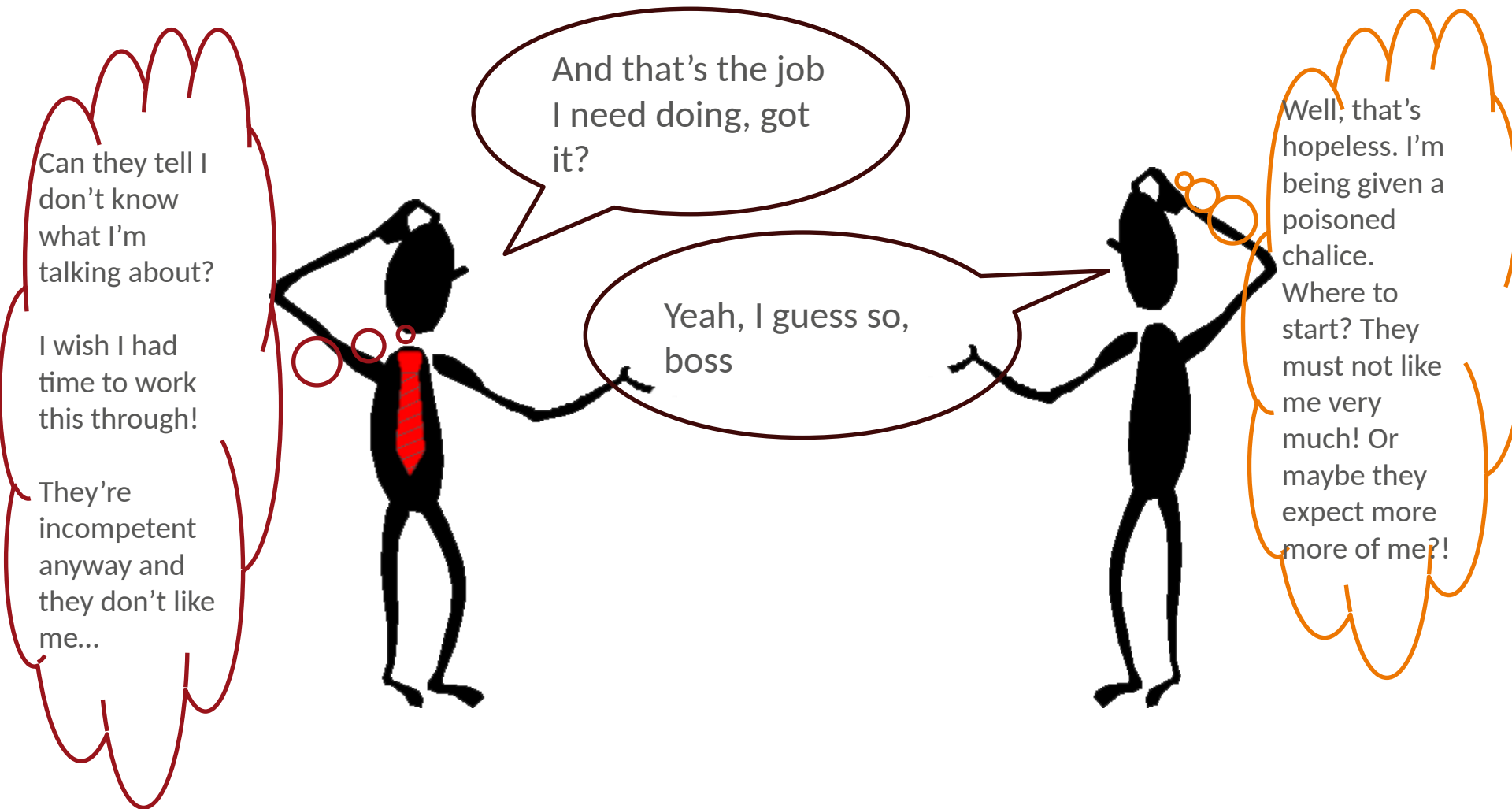
Four core questions at work

- What's my job?
- How should I work with others?
- How am I doing?
- What's next?

(Compare 'the devil's bargain')

If you don't have clarity, you are in murky territory

Getting things done in organisations – conversations



Conversations in organisations – the results





CPORT TASK DEFINITION

A clearly defined task – CPORT

- Context – why / where it fits in / limits
- Purpose – what it is to do
- Outcome – what standard, what specifications, how many etc
- Resources – with what, with whom
- Time – by when

Discipline creates positive dynamics



THE THREE BOX MODEL

Three-box model

Non-negotiable (information)	'Check with me' (consultation)	The work to be done (delegation)

Three-box model

Non-negotiable (information)	'Check with me' (consultation)	The work to be done (delegation)



Journaling

Action inquiry

Debriefing

Check-in and check-out

Action learning sets

Triple loop learning

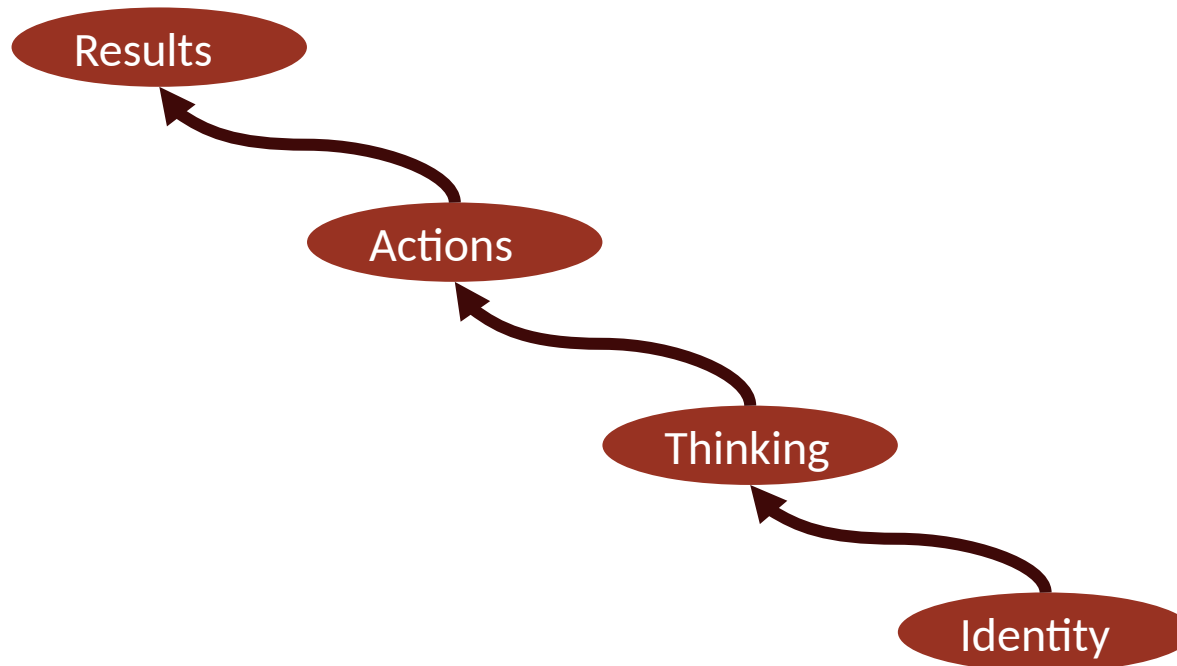
LEARNING PRACTICES



DOUBLE AND TRIPLE LOOP LEARNING

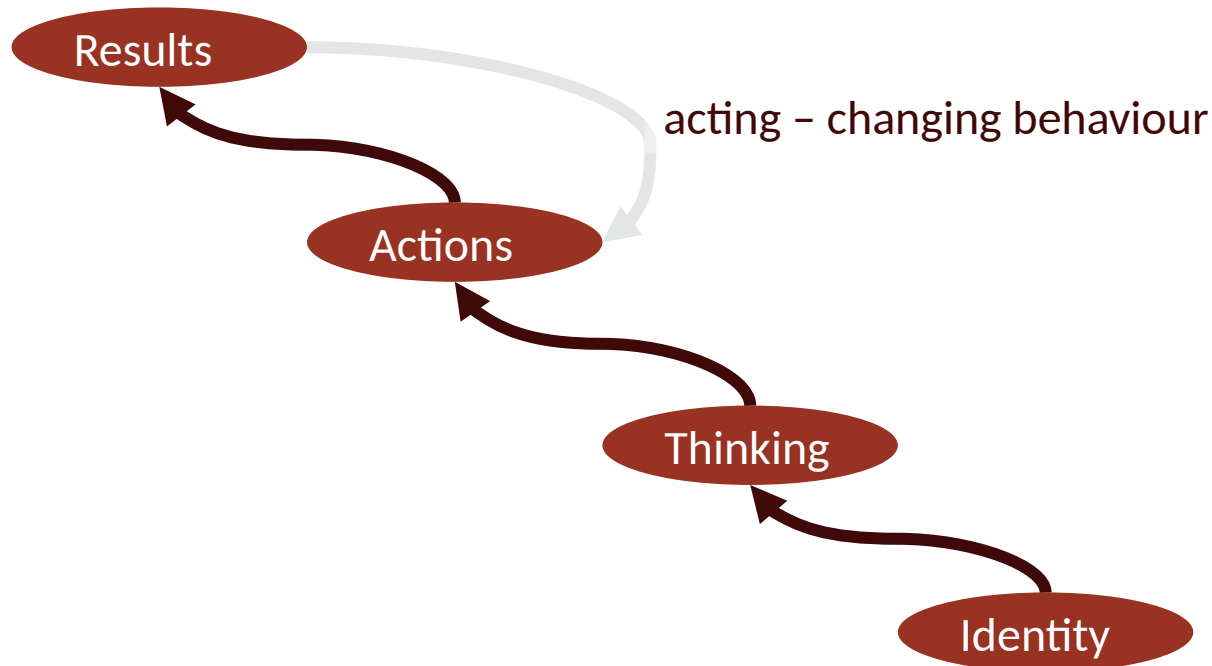
Transformational learning – Argyris, Bateson

Our results are shaped by our actions, shaped by our thinking, our identity



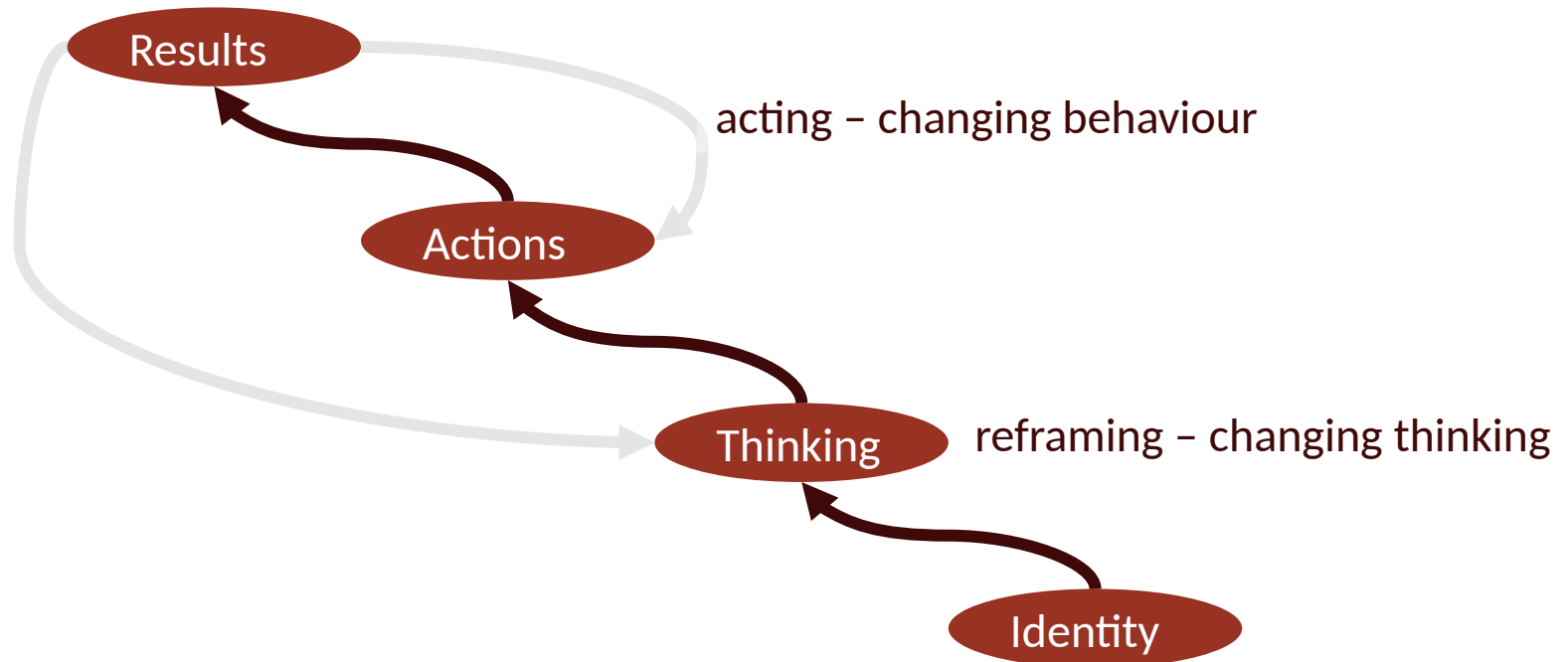
Single loop learning

Changing our actions for better results



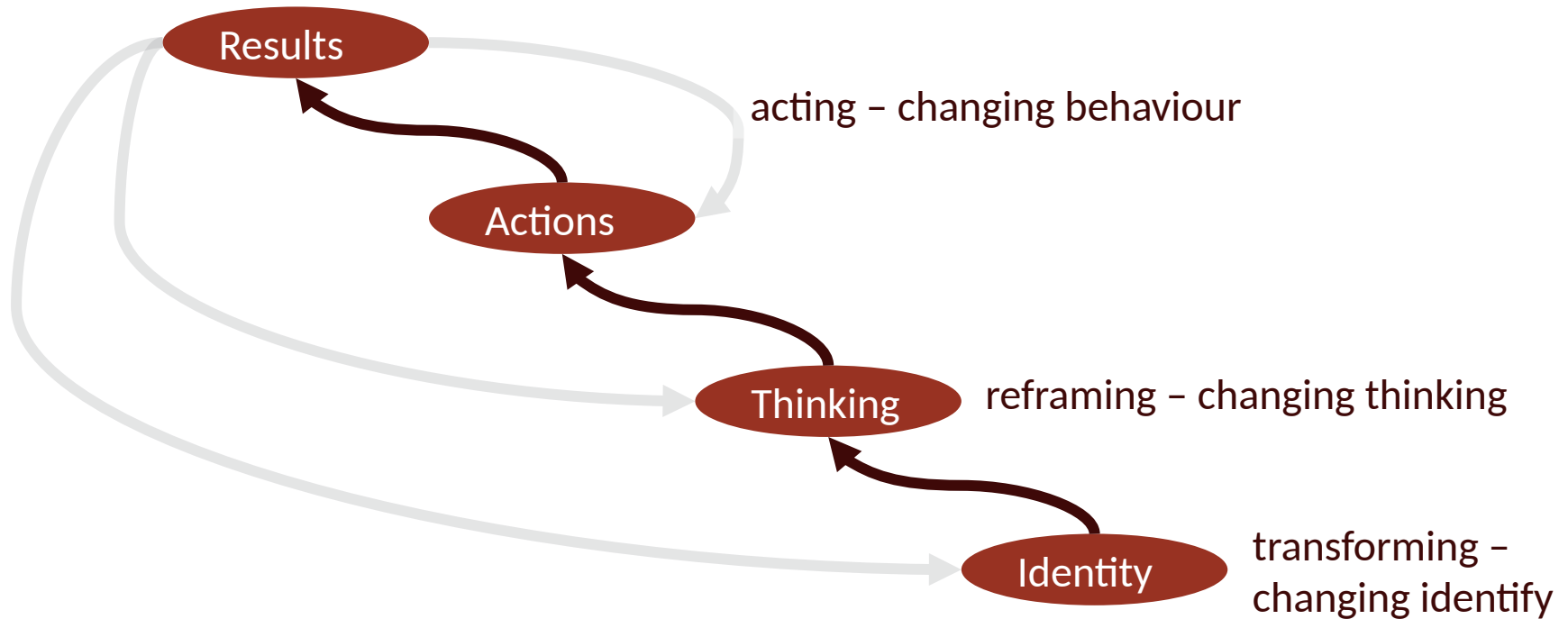
Double loop learning

Changing our thinking



Triple loop learning

Changing our identity



No learning without planning. Innovation requires changing the rules.



SYSTEMS CHANGE



CULTURE AS A COMPLEX ADAPTIVE SYSTEM

it isn't
about
you

The quality of what you get depends on the judgements your team make about you and their experience.

Therefore the quality of what you get depends on how good you are at sensing what's in the hearts and minds of the people involved.

Leader-led culture shaping: the model

Culture in this definition means *productivity*, wholehearted *engagement*, the willingness to give *discretionary effort*, *motivation*

How culture is *formed*:

- Three triggers: leadership behaviours, organizational processes, systems, procedures, and organizational symbolism
- Every time an employee (or partner, customer, etc) *experiences* one of these, they have a core, gut emotional reaction – positive or negative
- That drives their motivation
- Furthermore, they will tell stories about their most salient experiences
- These stories drive core, gut emotional responses in others

Culture is *shaped* by changing behaviours, systems, and symbolism over time.

Leader-led culture shaping: the leader's journey

- Briefing session to understand the model and engage with the process
- Predict the results of the staff survey in their area
- Work in pairs, from the top level of leadership down, supported by CEO
- Convene listening groups, well planned and well briefed, around *stories*
- Listening *only* – no defending, promising, explaining, fixing
- Partners or you take notes, agree key points at the end
- You produce an overview report
- We meet again to review the report and identify
 - the stories we are hearing now, and the stories we'd like to hear
 - changes to behaviours, systems and symbols that might achieve that
 - an action plan including persistence and consistency

This is an **ongoing** learning process

Culture as a complex adaptive system

- Leadership behaviour
- People systems
- Organisational symbolism



Emotional response

- harm • betrayal
- unjust / disproportional
- oppression / tyranny
- subversion • cowardice
- dishonesty • degradation

Core human values

'Gut' judgements are made on these scales



Notice that different groups and individuals will evaluate the same situation in different ways against these criteria

Based on Haidt's 'moral emotions':

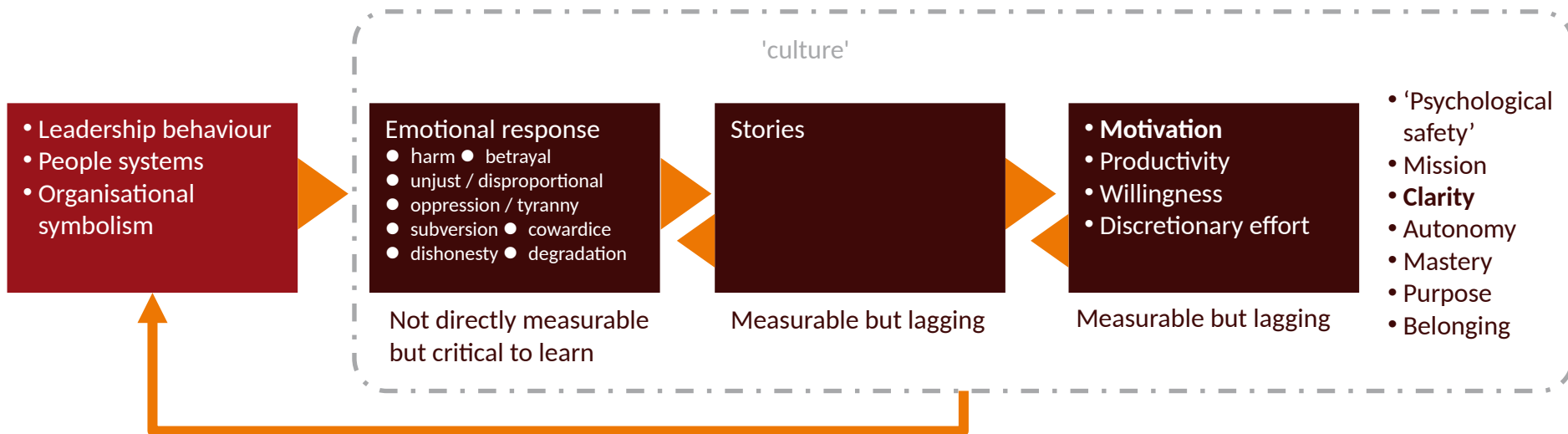
http://faculty.virginia.edu/haidtlab/articles/alternate_versions/haidt.2003.the-moral-emotions.pub025-as-html.html

<http://people.stern.nyu.edu/jhaidt/publications.html>

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3083636/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_intuitionism

Culture as a complex adaptive system



Building two learning loops: **understanding** and **intervention**

A leader's process of learning and change

1. Understand this complex dynamic process
2. Learn about your system
 - Predict what you have now (metrics and stories)
 - Listen and learn to test your prediction
 - Oh sh*t!
 - Cognitive dissonance
 - Need to learn
 - Generate desired stories for the long-term future
3. Hypothesise about changes that will help
 - Predict how the change will impact
4. Intervene
 - Expect cognitive dissonance at first
 - Be persistent and consistent
5. Learn!

Repeat...



INTENT: PURPOSE AND MEASURES

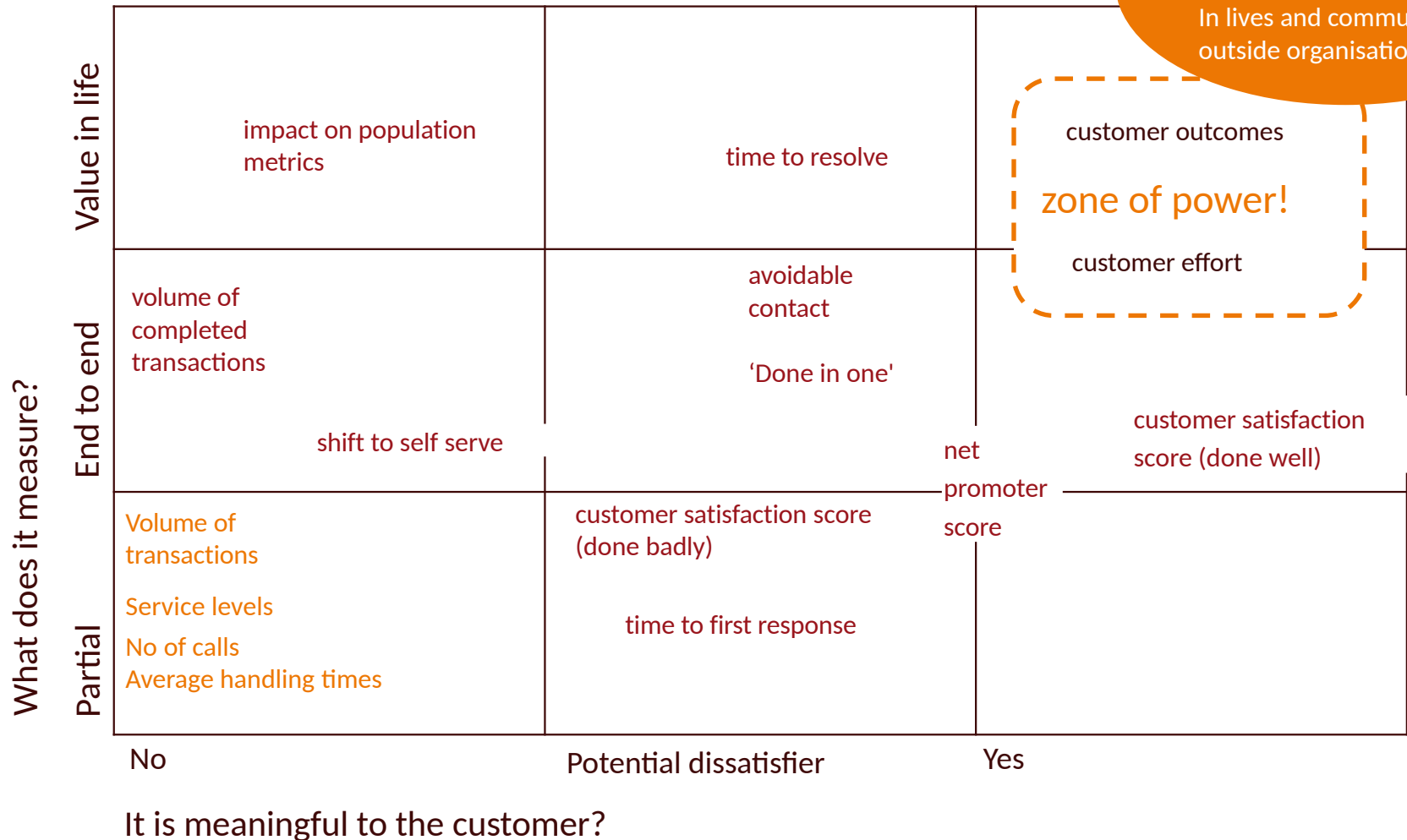
The purpose of a system is what it does (Beer, 2001)

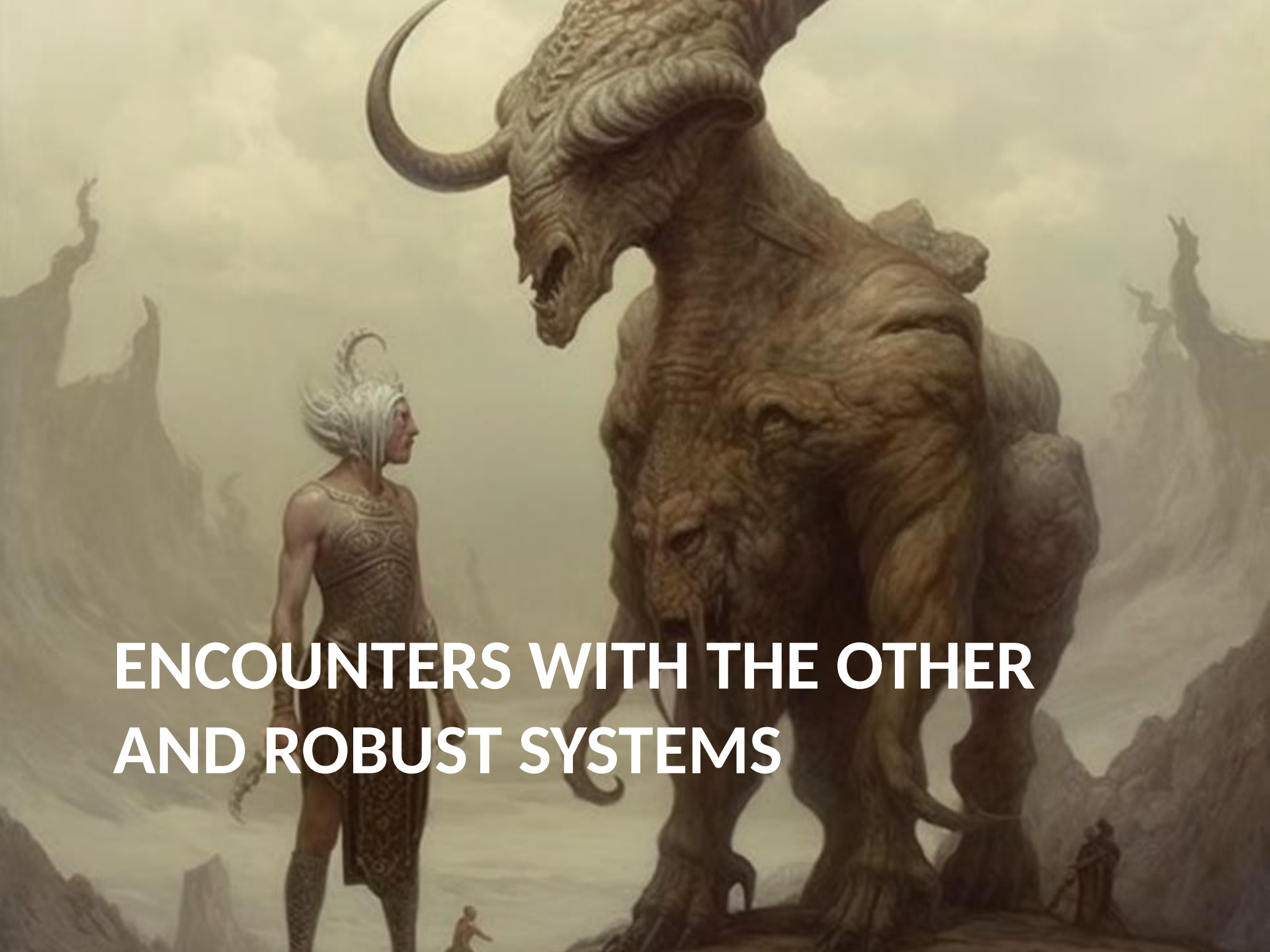
- POSIWID
- Espoused purpose
- Purposeful purpose!



Measure what matters... to the customer

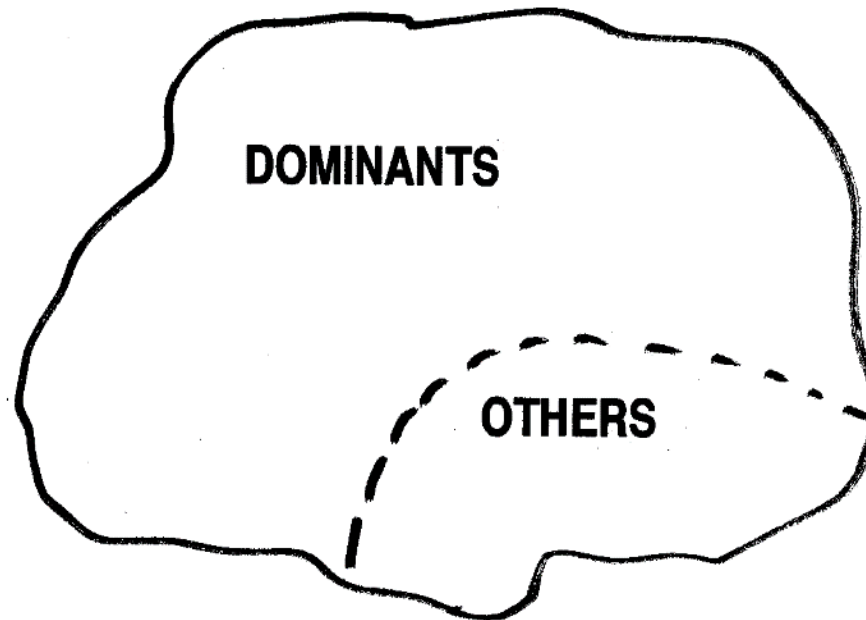
True public
value outcomes
In lives and communities –
outside organisations



A dramatic illustration of a man in ornate, dark, patterned armor and a tall, spiky helmet standing in profile, looking up at a massive, horned, dragon-like creature. The creature has large, curved horns, a scaly head, and a muscular, scaly body. It stands on a rocky outcrop. The background is a desolate, mountainous landscape with jagged peaks and a hazy, cloudy sky. The overall tone is epic and fantastical.

ENCOUNTERS WITH THE OTHER AND ROBUST SYSTEMS

The dominants and the others



The predictable condition – the predictable response – the familiar disempowering experience... arguably even worse consequences

DOMINANCE SYSTEMS Tension of preserve/protect and allow/adapt. Both ultimately sterile.	• evaluated • feared • defended against • controlled
ROBUST SYSTEMS Dynamic balance of adaption, stability, autonomy, and integration	• studied • welcomed • valued • utilized



The four dynamics

**THERE IS A DEEP UNDERLYING
PATTERN OF SUCCESS**



Divide people into groups based on skills, interests, background to develop diverse specialised capabilities.



Come together to break bread. Share knowledge, learning and experiences. Understand commonalities and overlaps.



Empower each person to use their unique skills and perspectives and develop their unique talents and abilities.



Bring everyone together to work towards a common goal, unifying and aligning efforts around a shared mission and purpose.

You need a zestful balance of these dynamics

Segment



Divide people into groups based on skills, interests, background to develop diverse specialised capabilities.

Blend



Come together to break bread. Share knowledge, learning and experiences. Understand commonalities and overlaps.

Empower



Empower each person to use their unique skills and perspectives and develop their unique talents and abilities.

Harmonise



Bring everyone together to work towards a common goal, unifying and aligning efforts around a shared mission and purpose.

If one of these dominates...

Segment



Turf warfare



Blend



Everyone does everything



Empower



Save yourself!



Harmonise



Total group think



And it's the same when either one is weak – it's all in the BALANCE

We need these four in balance for 'robust systems'

Segment



Divide people into groups based on skills, interests, background to develop diverse specialised capabilities.

Blend



Come together to break bread. Share knowledge, learning and experiences. Understand commonalities and overlaps.

Empower



Empower each person to use their unique skills and perspectives and develop their unique talents and abilities.

Harmonise



Bring everyone together to work towards a common goal, unifying and aligning efforts around a shared mission and purpose.

...able to survive, thrive, adapt, and meet constructively with others

A man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a green zip-up jacket over a grey shirt, is smiling warmly at the camera. He is positioned in front of several shelves filled with numerous glass jars. These jars contain a variety of dried botanicals, including what appear to be dried fruits, roots, and other natural ingredients, suggesting a setting like a health food store or a traditional pharmacy. The lighting is soft and focused on the man, creating a professional yet approachable atmosphere.

If you understand this deep pattern, you can use it to diagnose...
...and to fix!

DIAGNOSIS AND PRESCRIPTION

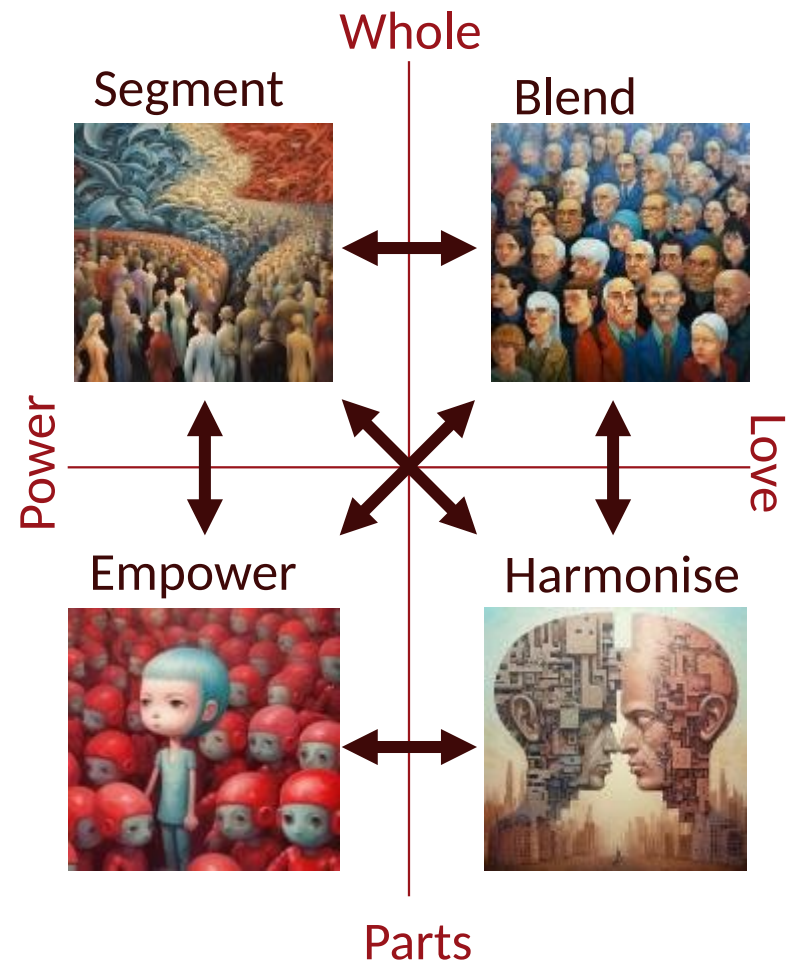
Diagnosis – how to see what’s wrong

Dynamic / identity	Too much	Too little	Imbalances
Segment I am... my group / profession / task	• Silos – even ‘UDI’ • Can’t see the bigger picture • Teams blame each other, don’t collaborate	• Not enough expertise • Too generalised • Unable to bring deep expertise to bear	• If Segment > Blend, even good blending can’t overcome separate sense of identity
Blend I am... an expert, dancing well with other groups	• Loss of unique perspectives • Overemphasis on consensus • Limited innovation and risk-taking	• Not able to share knowledge, communicate • No sense of community end belonging • Limited innovation capability • Fragmentation	• If Blend > Segment, even strong segmenting can’t overcome endless consensual decision-making
Empower I am me... a special snowflake, the main character	• Focus on individual goals, not aligned to organisation • Conflict between team members • No trust and respect	• Lack of initiative • Low satisfaction • Not empowered to take decisions and risks	• If Empower > Harmonise, even good harmonisation can’t get away from individuals’ destructive behaviour
Harmonise I am... part of something bigger	• Groupthink – focus on conformity • Suppression of dissent	• Lack of alignment • Fragmented culture • No sense of overall purpose or direction	• If Harmonise > Empower , even strong empowerment can’t overcome numbing focus on group harmony

Multiple forms of diagnosis and engagement recommended (more soon)

Prescription – how to fix what's wrong

- Too little of a dynamic? Introduce more.
- Too much of a dynamic? Reduce it.
- Imbalance? Balance it with the opposite dynamic.
- Advanced:
 - The diagonal dynamic also has an impact – like the left-right relationship but less strongly.
 - The up-down relationship is important too – and needs to be balanced



There's a deeper pattern here we don't have too much time to go into

How to apply this

- It's a different experience for different people, so there is no real substitute for **engagement** – this can be done explicitly with teams.
- **Weight maps** focus on the overall balance of what people experience across the four dynamics – quick, rough and ready, risk of 'static' picture.
- **Rhythm maps** focus on cadence – how much time is spent with what dynamic – takes more time, more likely to pick up symbolism.
- Can be used when **making changes** to focus on how to do work on each of the dynamics – necessary – in a way that *includes* the opposite dynamic. E.g. personal development aligned with company objectives, setting up a new team and building connection rituals to other teams from the start.
- Look out for **rebounds and squeeze-out effects** – too much of one thing can produce people rebelling into the opposite!
- **Constellations work** – dynamically moving around a space – can be used to good effect here.

Must not be limited to 'HR'! And it is a continual, ongoing process...



RITUALS AND PRACTICES

To **segment** for specialisation and expertise...

- Silos (teams, departments, projects) – NB grouping can be expertise or purpose-based
- Expertise directories
- Skills development
- Team or departmental meetings
- Mentorship, communities of practice
- Professions / Tribes
- Recognition in specialist categories
- Specialism-based feedback
- Acknowledgement of the needs of one group
- Carrying out tasks mandated by one specialist group
- The imposition of the needs of one group on another



At heart, allocation of responsibilities: (dis)empowerment

To **blend** for shared learning and working together...

- Cross-functional teams (but...)
- Hackathons, special short-term projects
- Lunch and learns / brown bag lunches
- Whole-organisation development
- Town Halls
- Team-based feedback
- Marketplaces
- Knowledge sharing platforms
- Group appreciation
- Cross-functional team building / social activities
- Recognition and reward of cross-specialism support
- The 'how' of whole-organisation strategy



See how much harder this one is? Building community: break bread

To **empower** to enable unique skills and perspectives...

- 360-degree feedback
- Coaching and mentoring
- Employee recognition (as individuals)
- Personal feedback
- Personal appreciation
- Flexible working
- Innovation and experimentation programmes (e.g. 20% of personal time, side hustles)
- Personal Development Plans and training programmes
- Good management and delegation, with clear boundaries and discretion



The most advocated – so why are we so bad at it?

To **harmonise** for focus on common goals, purpose...

- Company-wide engagement
- Strategy work on the 'what' and 'why'
- Company vision, mission, and values... but
- Whole-organisation celebrations (can work in each dynamic)
- All-hands meetings
- Rewarding overall contributions
- Community service projects which reflect mission and values
- Symbolism, belonging, identity, story, true rituals (always at work in each dynamic)
- Alignment of individual and team objectives with organisational strategy and priorities, regular tracking and reporting on progress and outcomes



Think carefully about symbolism, and relationship to 'blending' dynamics



ORGANISE FOR HUMAN NEEDS

A black wooden chair stands in the center of a forest floor covered in fallen autumn leaves. The chair is surrounded by many other similar chairs that are lying on their sides, suggesting a scene of destruction or abandonment. The background is a dense forest of trees with bare branches, and the lighting is soft and diffused, creating a somber and contemplative atmosphere.

THE PATTERN MEETS HUMAN AND ORGANISATIONAL NEEDS

Humans have needs...

Core human needs
<i>Our needs for...</i>
Uncertainty and variety
Certainty and comfort
Significance, uniqueness
Love, connection, belonging

And learning/growth,
and contribution to value in the world.

Organisations have needs...

Core human needs	Organisational needs
<i>Our need for...</i>	<i>The need to...</i>
Uncertainty and variety	Differentiate and increase ability to adapt
Certainty and comfort	Homogenise and create stability
Significance, uniqueness	Individuate and maximise autonomy
Love, connection, belonging	Integrate, feed and support each other, moderate behaviours

And learning/growth,
and contribution to value in the world.

Organisational needs

- at a human dynamics level, from Barry Oshry's Organic Systems Framework: differentiation and homogenisation of the whole; and individuation and integration of the parts
- at a functional level, from Stafford Beer's management cybernetics: adaptability and stability of the whole; and autonomy and integration of the parts

The four dynamics meet human needs

Core human needs
<i>Our need for...</i>
Uncertainty and variety
Certainty and comfort
Significance, uniqueness
Love, connection, belonging

Dynamics
<i>...is achieved when we</i>
Segment
Blend
Empower
Harmonise

Creating such a context meets the final two human needs—learning/growth, and contribution to value in the world.

The four dynamics meet organisational needs

Organisational needs	Dynamics
<i>The need to...</i>	<i>...is achieved when we</i>
Differentiate and increase ability to adapt	Segment
Homogenise and create stability	Blend
Individuate and maximise autonomy	Empower
Integrate, feed and support each other, moderate behaviours	Harmonise

Meeting human and organisational needs

Core human needs	Organisational needs	Dynamics
<i>Our need for...</i>	<i>Is met by, and contributes to, the organisation's need to...</i>	<i>And is achieved when we...</i>
Uncertainty and variety	Differentiate and increase ability to adapt	Segment
Certainty and comfort	Homogenise and create stability	Blend
Significance, uniqueness	Individuate and maximise autonomy	Empower
Love, connection, belonging	Integrate, feed and support each other, moderate behaviours	Harmonise

Human and organisational needs

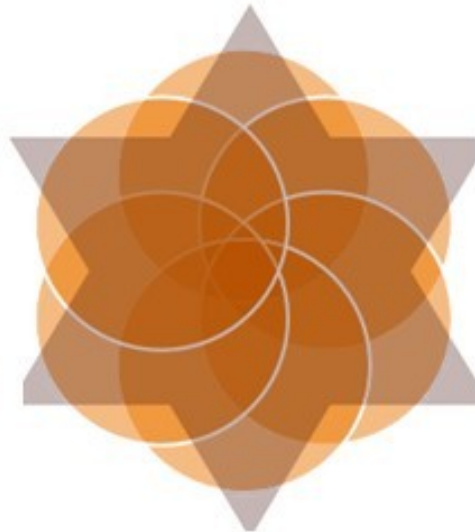
Segment

Uncertainty
and variety

Significance,
uniqueness

Empower

Contribution



Growth

Blend

Love,
connection,
belonging

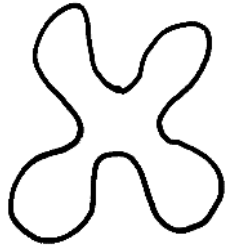
Certainty
and comfort

Harmonise

Robust systems are those that actively balance

Power, adaptation

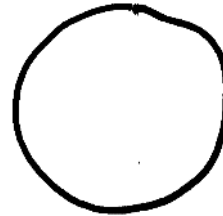
Differentiate:
increase ability to adapt



Use the different strengths and capabilities of the different cultures and organisations.

The whole

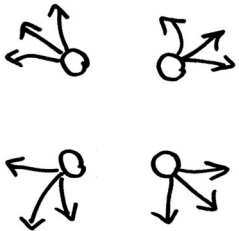
Homogenise: increase stability



Actively learn about all the cultures and organisation. Share knowledge, best practices. Incorporate aspects of one another's cultures and practices.

Love, stability

Individuate: increase autonomy



Put your unique talents on the line. Identify and encourage the full use of the talents of all.

Integrate the system as a whole

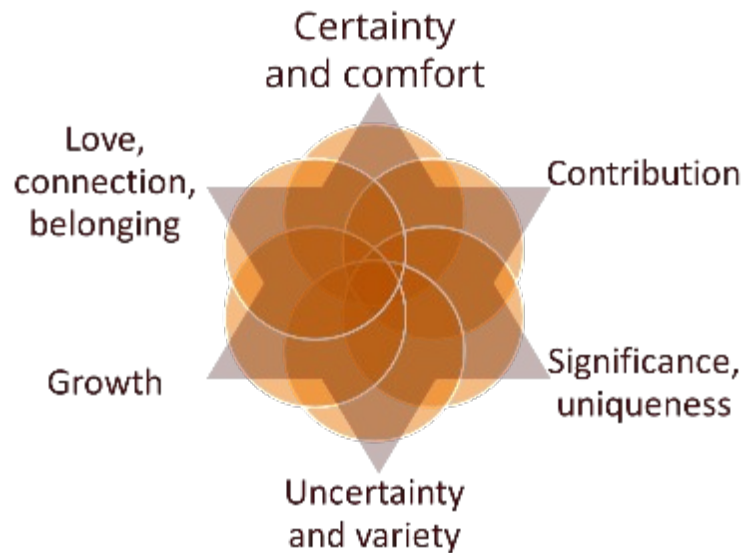


Create a compelling system mission. Feed and support one another. Modulate behavior in the service of the whole.

Parts / individuals

Barry Oshry (Organic Systems) and Stafford Beer (Viable Systems)

Human and organisational needs ...blue dot distribution!



Core human needs	Organisational needs
Our need for	Is met by, and contributes to, the organisation's need to
<i>Certainty and comfort</i>	Homogenise and create stability
<i>Uncertainty and variety</i>	Differentiate and increase ability to adapt
<i>Love, connection, belonging</i>	Integrate, feed and support each other, moderate behaviours
<i>Significance, uniqueness</i>	Individuate and maximise autonomy

Creating such a context meets the final two human needs—learning/growth, and contribution to value in the world.

Core human needs

- Multiple sources – I re-developed this myself, but/and, it turns out it totally maps to the model used by Tony Robbins (<https://www.habitsforwellbeing.com/6-core-human-needs-by-anthony-robbins/>),
- Apparently originated by Chloe Madanes: <https://cloemadanes.com/2016/10/12/the-6-human-needs-for-fulfillment>.
- See also <https://pollackpeacebuilding.com/blog/conflict-6-core-human-needs/>
- and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Optimal_distinctiveness_theory

Organisational needs

- at a human dynamics level, from Barry Oshry's Organic Systems Framework: differentiation and homogenisation of the whole; and individuation and integration of the parts
- at a functional level, from Stafford Beer's management cybernetics: adaptability and stability of the whole; and autonomy and integration of the parts



CO-ORDINATED MANAGEMENT OF MEANING

CMM – a meta theory of conversation

- Meaning-making is a process that is specific to historical and cultural contexts. It is sustained through social processes and is deeply intertwined with power relations. To understand this complexity, one must commit to reflexive engagement with the system. Furthermore, truth is not an absolute concept but is socially constructed within a 'communication community'. Each community may have its own norms and agreements on what is considered true.
- Based on Christine Oliver, 2014
- 'people construct meaning on the basis of exchanging rules'
- 'The process by which reality itself and within it particular ways of being human are co-constructed in all those events where we interact with each other.'
- Well-formed co-ordinations are: 'collaborative artistic achievements' Pearce (1989)

Co-ordinated Management of Meaning

A communication framework that helps individuals create and manage meaning in conversations. It involves identifying and understanding the rules that guide the creation and interpretation of meaning.

These rules are used to coordinate and negotiate meanings in a conversation.

CMM operates on the premise that communication is not just about information exchange but about co-creating reality.

The process starts with speech acts, which are the basic units of communication.

Speech acts are contextualised within episodes, which are sequences of communication with their own rules.

Episodes are part of relationships, which are patterns of communication that define how individuals interact.

Relationships are influenced by life scripts, which are personal narratives that guide

individuals' understanding of their experiences. Life scripts are embedded within cultural patterns, which are webs of shared meanings and values.

CMM helps individuals navigate the complexity of communication by focusing on how these different levels interact.

It emphasises the importance of understanding how individual actions and meanings are part of a larger social reality.

Ultimately, CMM aims to improve communication by making individuals aware of the rules and patterns that shape their interactions.

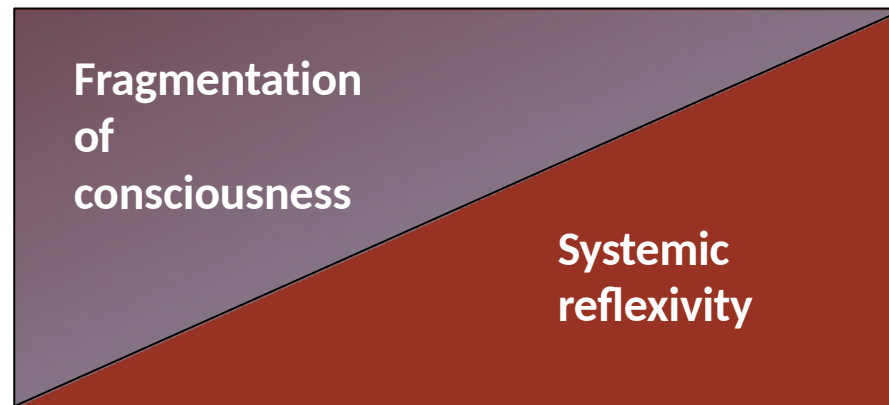
‘Consciousness about connections implies strong practical and implicative force.

Unconsciousness about connections implies strong prefigurative and contextual force’

Christine Oliver

Fragmented and systemic

- Poor meta-communication
- Incoherent storytelling
- Prefigurative & contextual force strong
- Coordinated patterns: reactive and paradoxical
- Two spaces: I/you



Systemic
fragmentation

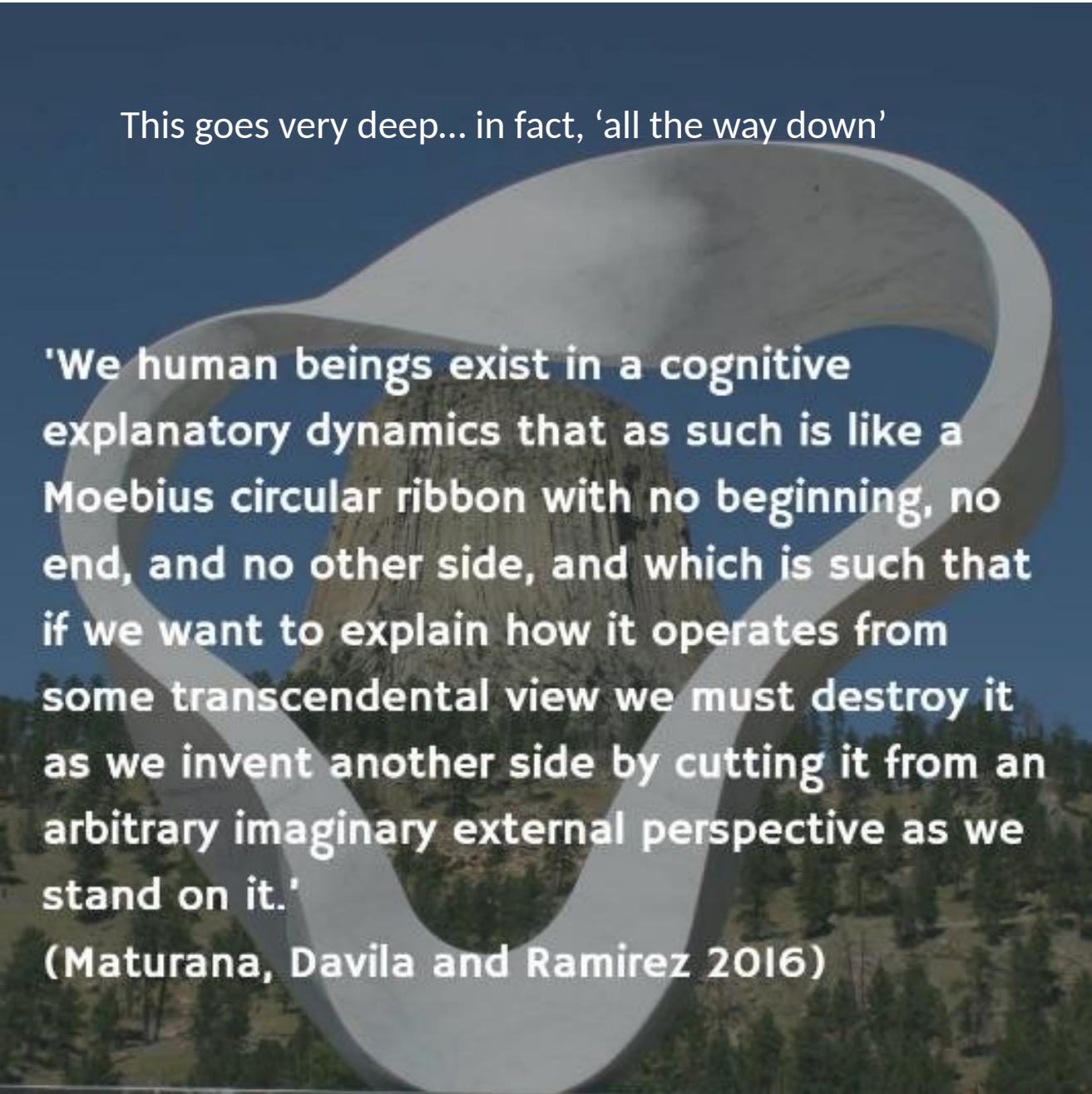
Systemic
integration

- Good meta-communication
- Coherent storytelling
- Practical and implicative force strong
- Coordinated patterns: reflexive
- Allowance of the third space of the relationship

Christine Olivera 2014



MATURANA'S APPROACH



This goes very deep... in fact, 'all the way down'

'We human beings exist in a cognitive explanatory dynamics that as such is like a Möbius circular ribbon with no beginning, no end, and no other side, and which is such that if we want to explain how it operates from some transcendental view we must destroy it as we invent another side by cutting it from an arbitrary imaginary external perspective as we stand on it.'

(Maturana, Davila and Ramirez 2016)

‘Consensual coordination of consensual coordination of actions’

- Maturana views language as a recursive process of coordinating actions, creating shared realities.
- Language emerges from social interactions, not just as words but as participatory acts.
- Consensual coordination is key, requiring agreement on actions within a shared context.
- The first level of coordination is about aligning actions based on mutual understanding.
- The second level involves agreeing on how to agree, reflecting on the norms of coordination.
- Through language, individuals co-create understandings of the world, establishing norms and values.
- Language and cognition are intertwined, shaping how we perceive and interact with our environment.
- Maturana's perspective has profound implications for social systems and organizational dynamics.
- The fabric of social life is woven through continuous negotiation of consensus via language.
- Offers a nuanced understanding of the interplay between language, cognition, and social dynamics.

I welcome follow-up and conversation!

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All around the viable systems model

Benjamin Taylor
22 May 2020

I AM A METARATIONALIST
(. CYBERNETICIAN)

THIS THINKING IS DANGEROUS

SENSEMAKING WORLDS

THE DYNAMICS OF WORLDS
AND THE DEVIL'S BARGAIN

SEEING THE SYSTEM

SOURCE: OWB 2016

- Patrick Heuser
- David Fleming
- www.owb.org.uk

THE VIABLE SYSTEMS MODEL

USING THE VSM FOR DIAGNOSIS
AND PRESCRIPTION

THE SCIO ORGANISATIONAL
MATURITY MODEL

CASE STUDIES

Shepherds Bush Advice Centre
New In-Get advice

SYSTEMS CONVENING, CHANGE,
LEADERSHIP

BRINGING SYSTEMS LEADERSHIP
TO PUBLIC SERVICES

SERVICES ARE BAD FOR PEOPLE
THRIVING TOGETHER IS BETTER

EIGHT ASPECTS OF
COMMISSIONING

TEN PRINCIPLES FOR PUBLIC
SERVICE TRANSFORMATION

STANDARDISE WHEN YOU CAN
CUSTOMISE WHEN YOU SHOULD

'DEMAND MANAGEMENT'

OUTCOMES ARE THE RESULT OF
COMPLEX ADAPTIVE SYSTEMS

BUBBLES AND WHAT IT TYPICALLY
LOOKS LIKE

WHAT IS IT WE'RE DOING HERE,
AND WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS

HOW DOES IT USUALLY GO?
AND HOW COME?

DATA AND RISK

Why 'tradition' are so important
The danger of double-binds

FIVE CORE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

Schwartz's Ground rules
Brown/Brown's 5B/5B/5B
Four steps to, choose and payoff
Writing and making known
Action inquiry
Reflection
Self-revelation

Sally of Agents

- Traditional anchoring in role
- Latency of inference
- Adversity and inquiry
- Left hand volume

DEVELOPING PRODUCTIVE
CONVERSATIONS

OPROT task clarity
Role clarity process
Team decision making process
The three box model

CLARITY PRACTICES

Journaling
Action inquiry
Debriefing

Checks in-and-check-out
Action learning sets
Flight loop learning

LEARNING PRACTICES

CULTURE AS A
COMPLEX ADAPTIVE SYSTEM

INTENT:
PURPOSE AND MEASURES

ENCOUNTERS WITH THE OTHER
AND ROBUST SYSTEMS

ORGANISE FOR HUMAN NEEDS

CO-ORDINATED
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MATURANA'S APPROACH

I welcome follow-up and conversation!

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