Volume 21 • Number 3 • Autumn 2014

Organising and managing across boundaries

© inter-logics [from an original photograph by Mark Cardwell]

Journal of the Association for Management Education and Development

amed
developing people
developing organisations

Guest Editors: Chris Blantern and Tom Boydell

This is an experimental edition, likely to evolve over the coming weeks

Thanks to Triarchy Press for their continuing support.

This edition of e-O&P may be downloaded from the AMED web site www.amed.org.uk , priced at:

- £10 for networkers and non-members or
- £5 for visitors to the Triarchy Press website
- £0 for full members of AMED and e-O&P subscribers

e-Organisations and People is also available on the EBSCOhost database http://www.ebscohost.com

© AMED 2014. ISSN 2042 – 9797. You may freely print or download articles to a local hard disk, provided they are for your personal and non-commercial use only. Please ensure that you acknowledge the original source in full using the following words

'This article first appeared in e-O&P Vol 21 No 3, Autumn 2014 and is reproduced by kind permission of AMED www.amed.org.uk'.

For permission to reproduce article(s) from this journal more widely, please contact the AMED Office www.amed.org.uk, Tel: +44 (0)300 365 1247.

The views expressed in this journal by both editorial staff and contributors are not those of AMED or any of the organisations represented by the editors, but reflect the opinions of the individual authors only.

Cover illustration:. Original quotation – 'Two monologues don't make a dialogue' – Jeff Daly, from an original photograph by Mark Cardwell, composed by Chris Blantern, December 2002.

e-O&P Editorial Board:
Bob MacKenzie
David McAra

Contents

Two monologues don't make a dialogue 3

Chris Blantern and Tom Boydell

Shows four short video clips of our two Guest Editors in conversation

"Aren't we all rats really?" 5

Chris Blantern

Urges us, in the first of a two-part polemic (or will it be three part?), to adopt a radical and critical Stance 3 in our efforts to transcend boundaries

Tom's boundary crossword 12

Tom Boydell

Raises awareness about aspects and terminologies of boundary-crossing through playful, multi-media puzzling

Our virtual gathering: a 'transcript' 16

The Gatherers

Attempts to convey the essential messiness and issues emerging from our first virtual Gathering on boundary-crossing

Working across organisational boundaries 22

Rowena Davis

Illustrates a Systems Centred approach to helping social care managers share more widely the highlights of an extended support and challenge project

The sweet bitter of 'No' 38

Louie Gardiner

Reflects on the outcome of the recent Scottish Referendum, and wonders about its cross-border implications

Contents

A Narrow Escape 43

Peter Sheal

Argues that the 'No' vote in the Scottish Referendum represents a narrow escape from cross-border turmoil

Working across boundaries 45

David McAra

Reviews several online conversations about re-thinking ways of organising, and is left with a sense of disappointment at the absence of active listening and open inquiry

Some forthcoming events 48

e-O&P, Vol 21, No 4, Winter 2014 (November/December) 49

Guest editors: Pauline Willis and Anna Britnor

A note about inter-logics 53

A note about AMED 53

Two monologues don't make a dialogue

Chris Blantern and Tom Boydell

'Though she'll constantly
disobey orders
And sarcastically
sometimes applaud us
Not one who conforms
She eschews social norms
And unfailingly crosses
all borders'

To kick-start the conversation, here are four brief video clips of our guest editors in conversation, exploring issues inherent in this edition's theme of 'organising and managing across boundaries'. Just a couple of minutes each, click on the blue hyperlink to watch them.

Organising as performing ensemble – definitive energy

http://www.amed.org.uk/video/organising-as-performing-ensemble-definitive-energy

Inquiry as collaborative leadership and organising

http://www.amed.org.uk/video/inquiry-as-collaborative-leadership-and-organising

Health and social care integration?

http://www.amed.org.uk/video/health-social-care-integration

Do we organise FOR collaboration?

http://www.amed.org.uk/video/do-we-organise-for-collaboration

About the authors

Chris Blantern is a leading consultant in organizational and management learning (individual and collective). He has pioneered work on the organizing power of communications and the innovative field of 'the role of context in shaping behaviour'. Chris has a long interest in collaboration and participative approaches to organising, decision-making, inquiry and learning He has pioneered the development of 'Relational Action Learning' for working on 'shared' group/organisation problems and challenges, as distinct from individually centred.

Chris is also a semi professional musician mostly interested in 'Transatlantic' music (the fusion of Celtic and North American styles). chris.blantern@me.com

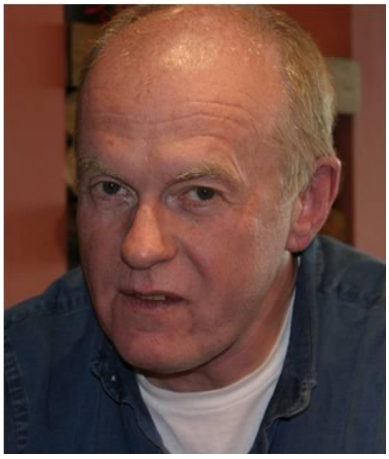
Tom Boydell is a management trainer, consultant, researcher, writer and prize-winning actor, His extensive experience includes all aspects of working, leading and managing across boundaries. Tom has worked in a wide range of sectors and organisations in a variety of countries in Europe, North and South America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

Tom has authored/co-authored some 40 books and reports, including a number published by AMED. He was for many years on AMED's Executive Council, Chair of its Publications Committee, and Manager of AMED's annual Workshops for Management Trainers. tomboydell@btopenworld.com

"Aren't we all rats really?"

The role of the situation in configuring organisational action and learning

Chris Blantern



In this two-part article, I develop a view that our traditional ways of intervening in organisations (and by extension, in society at large) are anachronistic and limited. In particular - when it comes to addressing change where communities, stakeholders, participants, actors are so positioned that their distance and separation in meaning and action seem like concrete boundaries - we would be better off taking a critical view of our principal methods of intervention. In Part 1 the article acknowledges the traditional tensions between organisations as 'structures' and as 'the aggregate of individual agency', and their limitations. Part 2, which will be posted online shortly, introduces the ways in which a third position, or 'stance', can move beyond those constraints and generate new possibilities for productive, collaborative action. It also includes full references for Parts 1 and 2.

Introduction

The original aim of this Autumn 2014 edition of e-O&P and its associated Gathering was to enquire into and share intervention practices that help us to tackle some seemingly intractable challenges in our organisations and communities; so intractable that they seem to be 'structural' or deeply 'habitual'. Our organising group referred to them as boundaries and we originally had in mind…

Dissolving the boundaries between Health and Social Care in the UK

The integration of Health and Social Care is seen by many, perhaps most, as a 'good thing'. Clearly this promises considerable benefits for service users in presenting a more 'seamless' service experience and consequential economic benefits for institutions through the reduction of duplication. In theory, it also enables a more accurate and targeted assessment of needs. The rhetoric is overwhelmingly positive – from politicians, via public service professionals to communities and individual users. However, regardless of some local successes, a more generalised sense of satisfaction is elusive. Integration is difficult to put into effect.

Moving the boundaries between active citizenship and public service institutions.

Community voluntarism is growing and more and more people want to make a contribution and at the same time continue to be involved in purposeful activities. Increasingly there's an acknowledgement that individual and community wellbeing are enhanced where more people are engaged in purposeful activities. It is increasingly irrelevant to talk about public service organisations and rather the notion of health and wellbeing communities that include the institutions and all

community stakeholders is gaining currency. How do we organise for this when many public service organisations see voluntarism as primarily a way of reducing employment costs?

Shifting the boundaries of organisational responses that continue to cast the articulation of localised negative or harmful public service practices as 'whistleblowing' ...

... rather than an opportunity for beneficial learning for the greater good?

Removing the boundaries of hostility between communities and peoples who are deeply invested in each other's demise and how to enhance 'peace-building and reconciliation'.

"Yes, Hamas want victory – but they also want to be right"

Jeremy Bowen – BBC Middle East Correspondent, Radio 5 Live, August 2014

In this article I want to suggest that relying on ways of looking at organisations as if they are 'structures' or viewing 'individuals-as-causal-agents' when it comes to the coordination of behaviour, are mostly unhelpful assumptions about organising.

Viewing organisations as structures (Stance 1)

Viewing organisations as structures assumes that people and their experience are merely servants of rules, procedures and the arrangement of resources. Meaning, cultural heritage and practices, history, moral sensibility and sense of being and worth are of secondary importance. It is assumed that people will easily adapt to the demands of 'structure'. Historically this view emanates from the philosophical tradition known as Positivism. (Later in the article I'll refer to this particular way of making sense of social activity, together with its required assumptions, as Stance 1).

On the other hand, *viewing organisations as arising only or primarily in the [reasoned] action of individuals* requires that there is little impediment to right action once the correct thinking [learning?] is arrived at. Organisations will change when enough people think differently, share their thinking language and make shared meaning together. The way to change organisations is through individual minds and their aggregation. This view of organisations (and society) constitutes, in the main, the language of the Learning and Development industry. Later, I will refer to this tradition, which is drawn from the philosophical positions of Phenomenology and Interpretivism, as **'Stance 2'**.

When it comes to organisational change the models of intervention used are largely based on one or other of the two stances and, quite often, blends, often unwitting, of both. But there is, in my view, something missing. The four domains listed above are proving notoriously resistant to courses of treatment offered by these two physicians (Stances) and boundaries which limit or prevent cooperation and collaboration remain concrete. In this article I want to say something of a Third Stance which offers promising possibilities for collaborative action, for privileging positive relationships over either both structures and individuals and which will not only help to make better sense of our social organising but has a great deal to offer a world where resources for supporting community-in-diversity are severely challenged.

Part 1: Towards a redundancy of 'structure' versus 'agency'

> *"In the traditional view, a person is free. He is autonomous in the sense that his [sic] behavior is uncaused. He can therefore be held responsible for what he does and justly punished if he offends. That view, together with its associated practices, must be re-examined when a scientific analysis reveals unsuspected controlling relations between behavior and environment."*

(BF Skinner, Beyond Freedom and Dignity, 1972)

B F Skinner's contribution to the psychology of human behaviour, in short, the ways in which environmental conditions operate to shape behaviour and his recognition of the central functioning of reward and punishment, was influential in the 1920s and 1930s. However his theories and methods receded considerably in popularity as the exposition of Phenomenology, mind and cognition, and the accompanying significance of 'free will' became increasingly attractive. It is particularly challenging, for example, to administer a system of formal justice without having individuals as causal agents.

This piece isn't about resurrecting Skinner's original brand of behaviourism but it does share something of the tensions acknowledged in Skinner's quote, above, taken from his reflections in later life. Skinner also believed in 'mind' but was adamant that we should not elide or dissolve the influence of environmental factors – perhaps something that Ludwig Wittgenstein would have found a way of sympathising with?

> *"What does behavior include here? Only the play of facial expression and the gestures? Or also the surrounding, so to speak, the occasion of this expression?..." "... the word 'behavior' as I am using it, is altogether misleading, for it includes in its meaning the external circumstances"*

(Wittgenstein I, 1980, no. 314).

In sociology too, ontological assumptions and theories of causal behaviour have oscillated between 'structuralist', where social 'structure' is ascribed independent and reified characteristics, and 'interpretist', where social order is created and maintained exclusively through individuals in action, generating meaning (agency).

Margaret Thatcher most famously said in an interview given to Woman's Own magazine in 1987, when railing against a perceived, growing dependency on the state...

> *They're casting their problem on society. And, you know, there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families. And no government can do anything except through people, and people must look to themselves first.*

Perhaps Leo Tolstoy's narrator in War and Peace would have wanted to agree….

> *"You say: I am not free. But I have raised and lowered my arm. Everyone understands that this illogical answer is an irrefutable proof of freedom."*

Leo Tolstoy, War and Peace, 2nd Epilogue, p 1201.

There are those however, Critical Theorists amongst them, who want to say that individual freedom is an illusion and who see it as their project to exhume those ways in which 'Society [is] organized to make permanent inequity appear normal, a natural state of affairs.' (Brookfield)

> *"Experts in ancient Greek culture say that people back then didn't see their thoughts as belonging to them. When ancient Greeks had a thought, it occurred to them as a god or goddess giving an order. Apollo was telling them to be brave. Athena was telling them to fall in love.*
>
> *Now people hear a commercial for sour cream potato chips and rush out to buy, but now they call this free will."*
>
> Chuck Palahniuk, Lullaby

I am suggesting here, then, that there is much to be gained by taking a more critical view of the 'structure' and 'agency' positions (Stances 1 & 2) when it comes to de-institutionalising our ways of organising[1].

In organisation studies there is much oscillation: organisational design, divisions (and boundaries), performance related pay, disciplinary measures, training (structured environment) or initiative, individual responsibility, human relations and learning (individual agency)?

However the scholarly discipline and professional world of Learning and Development focuses, almost exclusively, on individuals and sees individual agency as solely causal. Assisted by the ever 'deepening' vocabularies of cognitivism, phenomenology and constructivism we can dig further and further into the hidden recesses of the human mind and find internal processes that help people to 'grow' and/or become less dysfunctional. Change begins in the individual and resources (research, publishing, marketing, change practices and evaluation) are overwhelmingly dedicated to appeals to individual minds and their 'mental models' and thinking processes – albeit acting, where necessary, in concert. The ultimate goal of learning and development is individual 'autonomy' – even if we hang around to help organisations on the way.

> *"I am not sure that there is such a thing as a group that learns, or that a group can exercise autonomy. In terms of groups that are formed in a learning environment I think of them as a defined set of autonomous individuals. The other individuals in the group often act as foils that create learning, or are a catalyst to more direct learning. But each individual should act in ways that does not damage the ability of others to be responsible for the self, and to seek self-development and exercise self-care and to come to knowledge in their own way and time."*
>
> Linda Perriton, Senior Lecturer in Human Resource Management at University of York (MamllNet discussion forum, LinkedIn, July 2014[2]

A fairly brief thought-piece is, perhaps, not the place to develop or further explore the worlds of implications associated with privileging either a structural view or one that positions individual agency and free will as ultimately causal. It is nevertheless evident that this dualistic tension does play out when we try to agree ways of influencing for change in our societies, communities and organisations. Perhaps Thatcher was an exception but politicians, economists and governmental officials tend to see change in terms of structures whereas specialist scholars and practitioners in the worlds of human resources, learning and development and community development will find it easy to mouth "it's the individual stupid!".

[1] I have deliberately chosen to avoid the nominalisation of 'acts of organising' – as 'organisations' since the latter too easily contributes to the uncritical acceptance of 'organisations-as-things' (structures, entities or big animals).

[2] MAMLL – MA in Management Learning and Leadership, Lancaster University Department of management Learning and Leadership, LinkedIn discussion forum: 'A Group Approach to Working Out What's Going on in Groups' virtual hot seat.

These different vocabularies often play out as confusions about what we privilege as causal? Much of the literature in the organisational learning discipline implicitly talks of organisations as 'structures' whilst at the same time seeing organisational change as the aggregate of individual learning – where 'natural order' meets 'free will'.

Yet even those of us who have been acculturated with the iconic precepts of HR or L&D will recognise challenges like the failure of the 'transfer of learning', even 'on-the-job', or how individuals learn – but 'the system' overwhelms them, or the difference between 'theories espoused and theories in use.'

It's widely acknowledged that most change interventions in organisations have very little effect – especially in the medium to long term. Of course it's other people's interventions that tend not to work – so we keep on going – perhaps with the acquisition of more tools for promoting autonomy or with more targeted forms of structural redesign and reinforcement – like key performance indicators or best practice definitions – or, even, swearing an oath of allegiance[3].

Some attempt, too easily, to avoid these tensions by collapsing the distinction between agency and structure and refer to organisations as if they are sentient beings – just like agentive individuals - when they say things like 'Does your organisation know how to do double loop learning?', or…..

> *'A learning company is an organization that facilitates the learning of all its members and continuously transforms itself.'*
>
> (Pedler et al. 1991, p. 1)

[3] Recently proposed for teachers by the then Education Secretary, Michael Gove

According to the popular press, too, it is not strange to cast organisations as sentient beings replete with autonomous agency….

Apple stumbles in delivering web services

Facebook tests mobile ad network

They can feel emotions…

Relief for Euro Disney over refinancing deal

..and think ahead…

Hibu warns its shares could be worthless

…and even make moral judgements…

Beijing blames car row on US elections

Extracts from the Financial Times – various dates, 2013 (Blantern, Boydell, Burgoyne, 2013)

In the Introduction I referred to examples of societal or organisational change that are proving to be particularly intransigent and we are concerned to ask whether the traditional ontological assumptions associated with both the 'structural' (Stance 1) and 'individual agency' (Stance 2) positions, expressed as they are in tension with one and other, are really sufficient for such conditions. Of course we include in this the prospect of developing vocabularies and practices which will help to bring about more widespread benefits to organisations, communities and societies – especially in a world which is increasingly interconnected and yet still, largely, struggles to achieve co-existence in diversity.

Advocating a Stance 3

So in my next piece, which I will post on the AMED website in due course, I'd like to talk about a 3rd Stance and say something of a style of thought and practice that we believe to be much more promising. I will begin by saying something about the assumptions we make commonly about 'structure' and 'individual agency' and in so doing re-engage with Burrhus Skinner's concerns that we need to find ways of not forgetting about environment, occasion and context – the situation – when we talk of agency and action in the world. As Bruno Latour encourages, (more later) if we want to make better sense of human, social action then we would be better off considering the live acts of other people and things in our moments of interaction – our behavioural performances rather than seeing structures or individuals as autonomous causal entities.

About the author

Chris Blantern is a leading consultant in organizational and management learning (individual and collective). He has pioneered work on the organizing power of communications and the innovative field of 'the role of context in shaping behaviour'. Chris has a long interest in collaboration and participative approaches to organising, decision-making, inquiry and learning He has pioneered the development of 'Relational Action Learning' for working on 'shared' group/organisation problems and challenges, as distinct from individually centred.

Chris is also a semi professional musician mostly interested in 'Transatlantic' music (the fusion of Celtic and North American styles). chris.blantern@me.com

Tom's boundary crossword

Tom Boydell

The solutions to this crossword are all in some way or another connected with the "cross-boundary" theme, although in some cases the connection might be seen as a bit tenuous! Thus part of the enjoyment, if that's the word, of solving some of the clues might come from making one or more such links. Some clues have been provided by ***Bob MacKenzie****, the rest by me,* ***Tom Boydell****.*

I constructed the puzzle using Crossword Weaver. This works tolerably well but I am not very happy with the way many responses have little interaction with each other - this is particularly true in the bottom left-hand corner. Nor is it feasible to produce a traditional symmetrical grid using one's own words.

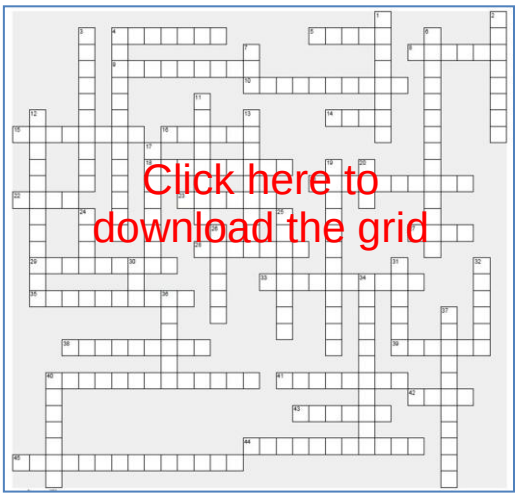
Also it's not possible to reproduce the grid interactively - you have to download and print it I'm afraid. For a future version I would use the software, then type out all the spaces in a Word table, and then "manually" add some additional words and change the square reference numbers.

For every clue I have included a web-link. The hyperlink is embedded in the clue number and also listed in full in the table following the clues. Some of these act as additional clues, most others give further information about the answer, although not necessarily from the "boundary" perspective. Hopefully they may lead to some semi-random voyages of exploration, surprise, pleasure discovery or disturbance! In principle I have tried not to include the solution as such in the url - you will need to visit the site, although there are one or two exceptions to this.

Some clues are basically straightforward "facts" or pieces of information; others are rather or indeed very cryptic. At least three are connected with this publication. One contains a symbol amongst its letters.

After the number of certain clues, you'll find the key 'A', which indicates 'Across', or 'D', which indicates 'Down'.

The prize for solving these puzzles is a sense of satisfaction and discovery. I hope you enjoy playing with it.



Click here for solution

ACROSS

4. Movement of a solvent (eg water) through a semi-permeable membrane (eg covering of a living cell) into a solution of higher solute concentration (7)

5. Grassy edge (5)

8a+24d. 28's lasted for ages - some of it still there - this one came down in 1989 (6, 4)

9. Often beaten annually, if you step over 13d you might be out of them! (3, 6)

10. As covered in this edition, two of these don't make a 25d! (8)

14. Metal added to 40d to extend it from Stettin to Trieste (4)

15. Where we might find the limits of knowledge or the most advanced achievements in a field (8)

16. Found on a violin, it connects two sides (6)

18. Race formed by scrambled definite article, reversed in large conurbation (9)

21. An indefinite, ambiguous or contested area where guidelines and authority are not clear but a famous Christmas day football match was played (2, 4, 4)

22. Are you an un-made member of this association? Or in Bali? (4)

23. Male or female, renegade loses first two vowels and becomes confused (6)

27. Partially symbolic and virtual rather than entirely literal, here we are all in this together! (4)

28. Well before referenda, he allegedly built the Vallum Aelium to keep the barbarians out (7)

29 & 33. These need to be integrated in the sense of working together effectively if we are to be well looked after (6,3,6,4)

33. See 29a

35. At the edge, the outskirts or margins - a vision that's sometimes hard to see! (10)

38. Often associated with which 23a - if any - you fancy (9)

39. A distinct part of a society or economy; a zone or section of a city or country (6)

40. Circular 13d (13)

41. Stop at the end of the line (8)

42. Antipodean coral barrier (4)

43 & 4d. 1494 agreement between Portugal and Spain creating a line of demarcation dividing lands newly discovered outside Europe (6, 2, 11)

44. Confused route before restrictions or restraints will take you to the furthest extent - you cannot go past these, not even in a 1960s black-and-white TV series! (5,6)

45. The referee may be making a disclosure in the public interest

DOWN

1 & 6. Absence of war, together with re-establishment of relationship (5,3,14)

2. Restrictions that sounds like criminal monetary penalties? (8)

3 & 11. Two cultures separated by wintry precipitation (10, 7)

4. See 43a

6. See 1d

7. Suffix used to derive words in philosophy, politics, religion or other areas pertaining to an ideology of some sort, sometimes with a derogatory or hostile sense, thus forming a boundary (3)

11. See 3d

12. Male, sandwiched between the edge and a vessel, creates deliberate act of pushing matters to their limits (13)

13. Line bounding or marking off an enclosed area or measuring the distance all the way round (9)

17. Rather than reconnecting us it quite often is the cause of major barriers and conflicts (8)

19. Armed unit intent on preventing uncontrolled migration or smuggling (5, 6)

20. Pam is upset and seeking information about the terrain (3)

24. See 8a (4)

25. See 10a (8)

26. Vegetation added to 40a to indicate an unstable political demarcation between some communist and non-communist states in East Asia (6)

30. Basis of much discrimination and misunderstanding, referred to in The Passionate Pilgrim, allegedly by Shakespeare, as crabbed (3)

31. Often seen at 24 per second, though sometimes 48 or 60 - when still they set pictures etc in context; (6)

32. Person in past times given to plundering raids between Southern Scotland and Northern England (6)

34. Your guest editors of this edition of 27, 22's journal (5,3,3)

36 & 37. Taking a non-passive role in the community (6, 11)

37. See 36

40. Not Hitchcock's torn one, but may be metallic as in 21, or vegetative as in 26d (7)

Full list of crossword hyperlinks

1	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MYZ84f3hULY
2	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2kY_ZG78V-g
3	http://www.uni-leipzig.de/~helium/Querdenker/Cohen.pdf
4	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HqKlLm2MjkI
5	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H1fctPplyEM
8	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MM2qq5J5A1s
9	http://www.britishpathe.com/video/a-little-bit-of-old-england
10	http://gohbyname.wordpress.com/2014/02/16/2
12	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CZBdq9GXit8
13	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KwXBMGdSWmI
14	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S2PUIQpAEAQ
15	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BAzCf0ascW8
16	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zGyKwcdK4pw
17	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pv9SeQ4n0W8
18	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aDz3BJDPXHA
19	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CNXXYOgVJRQ
20	http://www.alcoholconcern.org.uk/campaign/alcohol-harm-map
21	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wd6iKPkXMqY
22	http://www.lifebali.com/oceanview-cottages.asp
23	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2GIu5ZpnTM
26	http://www.rfa.org/english/multimedia/VideoBurma2Lahu-12102009104011.html
28	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M8FBBMHEYBc&feature=youtu.be
29	http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/audio-video/joined-care-sams-story
30	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K_qoYbTMfmA
31	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eMccPJqyg0o
32	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dTKX4kKIf1o
35	http://labcast.media.mit.edu/?p=262
37	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldGV1us61Hg
38	https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLz27Rlp3y6XuhCuhVbHoUr3RgqtxOhsgr
39	http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/A-level_Mathematics/OCR/C2/Circles_and_Angles
40a	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=laDQiZqixDk
40d	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qYxUwdQSQFY
41	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fx_lUCgC-Jo
42	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2T2i29M92RQ
43	http://www.beyondthemap.ca/english/historical_divide_world.html
44	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2GTYUHjFwKE
45	http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-29280108

About the author

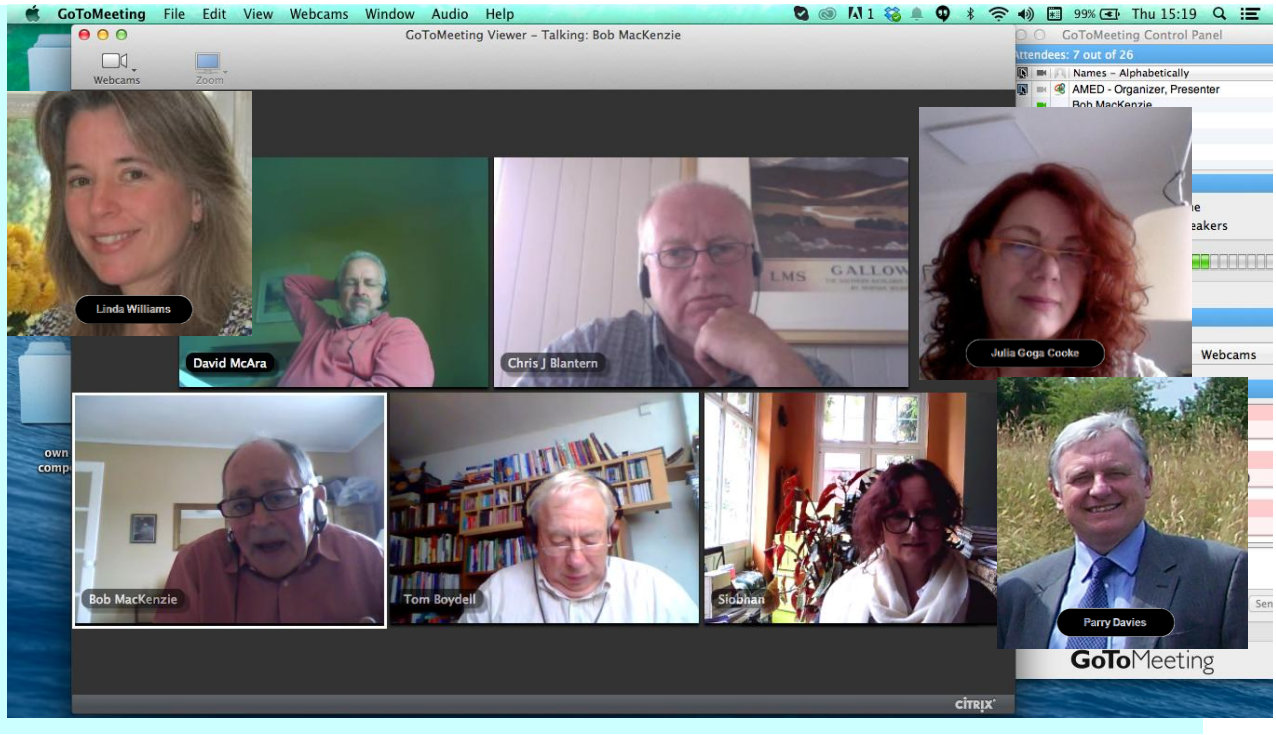
A management trainer, consultant, researcher, writer and prize-winning actor, **Tom Boydell**'s extensive experience includes all aspects of working, leading and managing across boundaries. Tom has worked in a wide range of sectors and organisations in a variety of countries in Europe, North and South America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

Tom has authored/co-authored some 40 books and reports, including a number published by AMED. He was for many years on AMED's Executive Council, Chair of its Publications Committee, and Manager of AMED's annual Workshops for Management Trainers. tomboydell@btopenworld.com

Our Virtual Gathering:

Transcending boundaries

Although too few for the Work Foundation, we were able to go ahead with our gathering virtually, Siobhan took comprehensive notes which we've worked on a little to try to render the essence of the dialogue. It's a messy business, conversation and while we've done a bit of tidying up, some of the mess remains. 'CAB' is our shorthand for collaborating across boundaries.



The Gatherers

Linda Williams (Dorchester; technical facilitator)
Chris Blantern (Kirkcudbright; process facilitator)
Siobhan Soraghan (Milton Keynes)
David McAra (Aberdeen)
Julia Goga-Cooke (London)
Parry Davies (Aberaeron)
Bob MacKenzie (Southampton)
Tom Boydell (Sheffield))

Introductions

Chris: I am an organisational learning consultant with a general interest in collaborative organising and a specific academic interest in relational practice. How do we structure the world through the way we interact to create collective performances?

Siobhan: I offer consultancy in leadership development (coaching and programmes), including senior team facilitation and staff engagement. I'm interested in supporting CEOs as they engage their teams in decision-making. But I'm aware that not all want to relate in this way.

David: I work in software training for the oil industry. Amongst other things, I've been influenced by

Goldratt's 'theory of constraints', though I find it very difficult to communicate and share my ideas on this and on working across boundaries. I'm drawn towards a whole systems view, rather than merely addressing the parts.

> I was trying to convey how thrilled I was when first introduced to systems thinking. A whole new way of seeing the world ... and yet, how difficult it was to share the insight. People just didn't get it.
>
> David

Julia: My research interests include complex collaborations. Few people seem to know how to create the collaborative partnerships. I've carried out experiments with start-ups, crowd-sourcing, and studied collaboration between different communities – elite, expert, and crowd.

Parry: I am Director of Social Services in S. Wales; concerned with integration between Health & Social Care. How do elusive combinations of personalities and systems combine to produce a better experience for the end user? We're encouraging regional collaborations between local services, legislation, the 3rd sector, leisure, education, which present all kinds of boundaries. We're seeking an understanding of how to contribute to the Wellbeing agenda. I've realised that language can form barriers - a phrase used too much loses meaning and becomes a shibboleth.

> A **shibboleth** is a word or custom whose variations in pronunciation or style can be used to differentiate members of "ingroups"from those of "outgroups". Within the mindset of the ingroup, a "connotation" or "value judgment" of correct/incorrect or superior/inferior can be ascribed to the two variants.
>
> http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shibboleth

Bob: For me, boundaries can be both political and personal, and – as an exile Scot - this came home to me forcefully during the Scottish Referendum. Perhaps we all embody boundaries within ourselves. There are also boundaries in my professional life which I seek to span, and I sometimes describe myself as a hybrid academic - practitioner (jobbing consultant). Additionally, I attempt to transcend boundaries in my voluntary roles with AMED's Council and the Editorial Board of the journal *e-Organisations and People*. In these different contexts, I find that I'm having to work out where the boundaries are all the time. I embarked on my doctorate: '*A learning facilitator's uses of writing*' in an attempt to explore such boundary crossings and to identify possible 'solutions'

Tom: My interest in this theme arises from anger at the unfairness of everything. Elites keep working for their own advantage, and I hope we've not left this initiative too late. We're killing people who disagree with us. Re Parry's point about language, when it's 'in', it means everyone's claiming to do it, and no-one's actually doing it.

> I may have said this but I don't think it makes much sense when written - probably didn't when I said it!
>
> Tom
>
> I think I know what you meant. I had to look up 'Shibboleth'. Suddenly, everyone is speaking about 'Mindfulness', it's 'in'. If I want to be 'in' too, I'll have to embrace 'Mindfulness' but it isn't arising from any real insight.
>
> David

Process

Chris – Let's agree the purpose of today and what might follow. We didn't get enough takers for the residential event. There's a lot more to it (the topic of CAB) than the cognitive ideas and insights. We can talk about it positively, but we find it hard to do. We have the possibility to create a group to meet every now and again as a community of inquiry – around practice…shifting from talking to doing. We're hoping to share experiences, and invite others to join in. We could establish small f-2-f gatherings in the regions, and invite local people tackling these issues to share their stories - good and bad.

> This is not a phrase I like or would knowingly use – because talking is very much doing. I might have said – or at least, would like to have said something like… "shifting from talking about collaborating to talking for collaborating."
>
> Chris

The conversations

Chris: I've been talking with Tom over couple years, in the context of Health and Social Care, and.VDS (Volunteer Development) Scotland. Collaborating across boundaries (CAB) is incredibly difficult to do in practice. Yet simply blaming the system stops us from inquiring further. What actions characterise CAB, and how we do stuff together? Cultures develop over years in hierarchy in a mutually exclusive fashion. Do we have stories of specific episodes? Let's share what touches us.

Siobhan: A bank with which I've been involved professionally has not been working well across boundaries. There's an evident lack of responsibility and support for colleagues in different silos from whom they picked up a process baton in the value chain. Is the need for boundaries hard-wired in human nature, reinforcing the protection of silos and fostering competition? What are we asking from boundary-crossers in terms of maturity and consciousness?

Parry: Everybody thinks CAB is a great idea in principle, but when we start to look at reality… We create a narrative of failure if it just stops there. Nobody unpacks what integration really means. Often, it's seen as just realigning rather than radical restructuring.

David: Systems thinking may have something to offer, though it's difficult for us to look at something different and see something differently when it means sacrifice for ourselves by relinquishing control. Self-interest becomes a barrier.

Parry: I've been working to have meaningful constructive conversations. These build on relationships that occur at local level and acknowledge the need to move towards integration. The search for common ground represents a hugely aspirational approach, but is generally tempered by a caution to be realistic.

Chris: People can find informal ways of getting round organisational obstacles, yet these are not usually legitimised.

Bob: And you, Parry, *have* done some things. Let's build on the positive examples we know about.

Chris: What makes successful co-operation work? What do we have in common?

Julia: I couldn't agree more. We can easily become depressed by difficulties that are there. If and when they are researched, they don't get much traction. What is the power we have to tell the story well? Culture is related to what we believe in, process and do. For years we have taught people to compete…

Now there are lot of platforms, technology, to help us bring people together for shared tasks. When is collaboration strategically important? And how do I decide who to involve? Yet the way we have educated Masters in Business Administration (MBA) graduates is about control rather collaboration.

Chris: People on the ground know how to do things in collaboration; they find "work-arounds". But why can't organisations legitimise this?

Julia: This is through fear of loss of control. How do you find boundary-crossing enablers and support them?

Chris: When I work with facilitators, they tell me that they'd often find themselves being asked to manage meetings, because of a common plea from 'conventional mangers' is that they couldn't handle how to help their people to collaborate.

David: I liked Siobhan's views on what CEs need to be able to do, which is to change underlying beliefs. We don't need to be in control; there are solutions beyond the compromise of all parties, which we are able to discover together.

Chris: What we discover or make happen together: I like that.

> I think I said that I prefer 'what we make happen together – rather than "discover".
>
> Chris

David: Perhaps I have a success story. At the end of a successful project, I invited participants to tell their stories from beginning to end, just talking through their experiences... When groups or individuals told their stories, they surprised one another: "I didn't know this small decision here had this big consequence for you later". Perhaps this approach helps to get over some dangers of oversimplifying? It's OK to be afraid and confused and unsure what comes next, before you learn something…

Siobhan: Parry – you're clearly a positive proponent of cross-boundary working. What do you believe and what do you do to support CAB?

Parry: We are heavily regulated, and there are some pretty clear command and control regimes in place. Things aren't amazingly different, but there's something around how we get the work done, believing in the people, not being on their backs, trusting that they want to do a good job throughout the organisation. We try to be comfortable with messiness. There's no point at all in trying to hold on to and control everything. We try to have confidence in our own and others' experiences. There will always be a messy environment; nothing is as we would like it to be. Yet within that there will be things we can do and achieve together

Bob: This conversation is fascinating, and I'm reminded that we've managed to arrive at this point today after some 11 months (at least) of messiness in developing this project we're all involved in - organising and managing across boundaries. It's been evolving continually since David and I first began talking to Chris and Tom about it at AMED's '*Exploring Frontiers*' conference in Bournemouth. We've gradually shifted from the ambition of convening a fairly large residential gathering in London to focusing initially on a constellation of more localised online gatherings, of which this is the first. Perhaps, through action learning and action research through shared projects, we can identify and privilege practical examples over grand theory, as advocated by people like William James? Over the past year, we've already generated and shared a lot of material that may help us to start telling something of a success story.

Siobhan: It's interesting how early we are taught to compete. I recall back in the '90s being given an American book on corporate politics for women. There was a lot in it about how male team sports (which boys learn at school) work, as the sporting metaphors about team and competition and winning are rife in business. Which is quite male.

Tom: I'm interested in Siobhan's point that we are hard-wired and are we looking for a different level of maturity. This ties in with a picture I have of how we develop and become increasingly mature. Is empathy the development task of the current era? A book: 'Zero degrees of empathy' holds that some people are incapable of understanding others or appreciating others' priorities, though I'm not sure I agree. As for sport from the point of view of a not very sporting type, based on envy and ??? I think it generates unhealthy competition – an emphasis that really annoys me. Julia's observation that MBAs are all about control is a neat point. And I also liked Julia's point about boundary-spanners not being supported because they are not in top positions.

Chris: I'm reminded of Goffman's traffic rules of engagement, which hold that it's not enough to know what's in drivers' mind; we also need to know about traffic lights. ….not all in the mind, we need to do other things as well.

> 'need to take account of what characterises context – like social rules & conventions as well as the acting role of objects – such as more formal documented procedures (like those traffic lights).
>
> Chris

David: Perhaps the notion of buffering scarce resources has something to offer?

Julia: Here's another potentially relevant element, drawn from personal experience. Unless we see this collaborative behaviour modelled by the people who are at the top, just talking about it will not change anything. Where do we look for examples of this? Who is championing these behaviours?

Siobhan: This comment triggered a thought for me about Jim Collins' book: 'Good to Great and Level 5 Leaders'.

> I might have said the two key charactersitics of Level 5 leaders that Jim Collins refers to are Humility and Determination.Bob
>
> Siobhan

Julia: What makes Millennials tick? Research derived from 45,000 people (PWC?) surveys and new methods and tools made possible by ICT, 4,000 to converse over 72 hrs across the world to see how they tick, how are they going to be led…how are we preparing them to take the reins rather than just complaining…. They are modelling collaborative behaviour within their own generation, not with the generational level above, as previous generations did. They are likely to leave their employer after a few years, showing weaker loyalty to the employer. They are influenced by teen experiences and the technology at their disposal, with or without permission.

> Julia – I didn't quite follow this bit. Could you possibly re-summarise your contribution here? Many thanks
>
> Bob

Siobhan (postscript): I think there was more talk about differences in gender here – and some playful banter about women being more naturally empathetic and more mature than men (Toms' work found this?). I couldn't possibly have commented! But it made me think about the benefits of women in senior roles and yet there are fewer women on Board positions than a few years ago – the numbers have slipped.

Some reflections on the process before we signed off

Q About the length of such online conversations: 1.5 hours is possibly the optimum. 2 hours can be a long time to listen with such intensity.

Q About the technology for the conversation? All liked GoToMeeting. Possible alternatives include:

- VSee
- Google Hangout – this can cater for up to 10 participants, who can share their desktops.

Q About moving forward: Let's continue with this format for the time being, finding ways of making it inviting and vital for people to come and join in… This could involve convening regional face-2-face gatherings as well, where we could specialise and see what people like Parry are doing…?

Q How to get this conversation out to a wider audience?

Chris: Please choose six things that each of us has been most struck by on this conversation – let's share them.

Bob: The conversation has been extremely rich, and it would be wonderful to make it more widely available…'We had this conversation and here are a few highlights' (Hence this 'transcript').

The journal e-O&P could carry excerpts…transcripts. Let's propose a rough schedule of further events.

Julia: Maybe a fixed day in the month to put in the calendar, like IAF do?

Chris: Each participant could flag one of 'their six highlights' on they might be prepared to facilitate a discussion in a subsequent gathering.

Working across organisational boundaries

Shifting from complaining and blaming to problem-solving

Rowena Davis

Systems-Centred Training (SCT)[4] *conceptualises boundaries within ourselves – intrapersonal boundaries – and between ourselves and others – interpersonal boundaries. SCT posits that differences are key to our survival, development and transformation. Our boundaries tend to open to similarities and close to differences. How the potentially useful information in differences crosses these boundaries is important to our ongoing survival, development and transformation. In this article, I highlight some of the key moments in a five-month assignment with managers in a large UK social care organisation, interspersed with how my thinking about boundaries from a Systems-Centered perspective guided my work and how I and the managers I worked with and made sense of what happened (Weick, 1995, 2001). I argue that when we see things only from an individual perspective, we lose the wider context and tend to blame ourselves or others (and feel anguished). The alternative of seeing the wider context – working across boundaries - helps to explore how we are all contributing to what is unfolding, and hence normalises our experience and gives us access to more potentially useful information.*

Introduction

The theme of this issue of eO&P – Organising and Managing Across Organisational Boundaries – struck a chord with me when I first heard about it at an AMED Writer's Group meeting in May 2014. I had just finished five months' work with a team of managers in a large UK social care organisation. The work ended with the managers and their manager asking the question: 'How shall we communicate this work to others in the organisation?'

I highlight in the following pages some of the key moments of the work and how I and the managers made sense of what happened (Weick, 1995, 2001), interspersed with how my thinking about boundaries from a Systems-Centered perspective guided my thinking and what I did.

What do we mean by boundaries?

Commonly, we think of boundaries in terms of time and space. For example, we might say 'It's time to start'; or, 'We've crossed the border into Canada'. Boundaries also commonly delineate what is here from there and what is me or us from what is you or others. So we might say 'This is engineers' work not marketers'.

[4] SCT® and Systems-Centered® are registered trademarks of Dr. Yvonne M. Agazarian and the Systems-Centered Training and Research Institute, Inc., a non-profit organization.

One way of thinking about boundaries is that they help organise energy or information in human systems (Gantt, S.P. & Agazarian, Y.M. 2005: 12-13). From this Systems-Centered perspective, how information and energy cross boundaries is important if we are to develop and transform. We can be more or less open or closed to information. When our boundaries are closed, no new information comes in and the system (ourselves, a couple, a team, an organisation) stays static or stable. Think about how closed off you feel to what the other person is saying when you're arguing with each other. When our boundaries are too open or too much information comes in, the system is likely to become disorganised, chaotic, or flooded. Think about your experience when you get so upset that you are flooded with emotion, or when someone talks on and on; in both cases we tend to lose our ability to think. When our boundaries are appropriately permeable, we can take in new information and use it to develop and potentially transform. You may have experienced this in conversations which flow easily.

SCT conceptualises boundaries within ourselves – intrapersonal boundaries – and between ourselves and others – interpersonal boundaries. Within ourselves, we have different sources of information – our cognitive knowledge and our apprehensive or emotional knowledge, both of which are needed if we are to make decisions and act using our emotional intelligence (Agazarian & Gantt, 2000: 185; Damasio, 1994). We also often have different sub-groups within ourselves or in a team. For example, when deciding if we want to apply for a job, we are likely to have a part of us that does want to apply and another part of us that doesn't. In any group or team there are likely to be different subgroups holding different views on an issue, for example, those in favour of going one way and those against.

SCT posits that exploring the potentially useful information in the different subgroups, one at a time, is likely to be important for a solid decision which we are fully signed up to. SCT aims to create a climate in which this is possible and has methods, the major one of which is functional sub-grouping, to facilitate integrating differences (for a visual of how this works, see the short video Susan Gantt and I produced @ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3A_ZsQgmbAM).

The Systems-centered notions outlined above were particularly important in guiding the work I describe in this article.

An email out of the blue

Mid-December 2013 I had an email from Alison[5], with whom I'd worked previously, asking me to link to one of her managers, Michael, about possible work with a team. I'd facilitated a couple of management development days with the senior team (which included Alison, Michael and Caroline, who reported to Michael) earlier in the year.

Michael's follow-up email described the project as

> *'essentially a support and challenge time limited intervention. In essence this is work with the management team to understand and change dynamics. We need to develop a culture which promotes consistent approaches across and between teams. Within this there is a likelihood we*

[5] I have changed all the names in the narrative to preserve anonymity as requested by the team.

need some coaching for various members including Caroline the service manager. These need to be developed into a plan which Caroline and I will do but would welcome your thoughts.'

He attached a five page document outlining his view of the issues.

I understood from this the key issue seemed to be about getting teams to work in consistent ways across organisational boundaries. I was struck by some of the language which seemed managerial and abstract – for example, *'time limited', 'consistent approaches'*. I wondered if this meant Michael (and the wider organisation) had a notion of 'best practice' and also a linear view of how change happens; did they support local adaptations to take account of different contexts? My experience is that change is emergent (a view supported by complexity theory and SCT as well as group dynamics) and, while we can have a plan or goal in mind, we can't control what happens or guarantee outcomes. We co-create change – and stability – as we interact daily and jointly make sense of what happens, through our everyday conversations with others and ourselves. Some of the best ways to solve problems is to allow people to come up with solutions that suit local conditions (Rodgers 2007; Stacey and Giffin, 2005).

I had some other questions: Was Caroline on board with this proposed work? What role did Michael want me to play? I was curious and decided to explore further to see if the resources I bring might be relevant to helping them achieve their goals. I knew that if our views seemed too far apart or if my resources didn't seem to match what they wanted, I would decline the offer.

I found parts of the document Michael sent hard to follow (in our first conversation I said this and we worked to clarify these). It contained several unexplained acronyms and several disjointed sentences with missing words. There was a lot of data and detail, with few 'so whats?' I wondered if time to think, clear communication and seeing the wood for the trees were uncommon in this organisation (as in many others I've worked in). Michael said he wanted *'a systems approach'* and a *'systems leader'* to do the work, without specifying what he meant by these. He described the communication patterns he observed between the team managers in terms of Obscuring and Competing behaviours rather than Resonating, Responding or Integrating. These are labels for some of the Squares on the SAVI®[6] (System for Analyzing Verbal Interaction) grid http://www.savicommunications.com/savi.html that I had introduced at the senior team development day.[7] I took all this to mean he wanted to draw on my Systems-Centered Training and SAVI knowledge.

I emailed him back suggesting that we speak to explore my questions and our ideas for how to do the work. I wanted to clarify if we thought we could work together and, if so, how.

The issues and the context for the work

From our conversation and Michael's document, I understood the issue was that the team managers (TMs) in the West of the region were not performing as well as their counterparts in the East. In Michael's words, the West delivery teams were taking *'too long'* to do their work and not meeting their *'targets for timeliness'.*

[6] SAVI® and SAVI Grid® are registered trademarks of Yvonne Agazarian, Claudia Byram, Frances Carter and Anita Simon. ©.

[7] The SAVI grid can be used to map the communication patterns we co-create and to identify strategies to try out where these are 'stuck' or blocking communication. So we might shift from Yes-Butting each other (a Competing behaviour) to Paraphrasing and asking a Broad Question (both Responding behaviours) to explore our different views.

A re-organisation 12 months previously had led to the West losing one Team Manager and two delivery staff posts. The West TMs did not regard this reallocation as *'reasonable'.* They also had higher work-loads than the East. In Michael's view, the West TMs had lost their capacity to *'problem-solve'* and had gone into *'complaining and blaming'.*

> *In SAVI, complaining and blaming are two Avoidant behaviours which get in the way of communicating information clearly – the complaint avoids saying what the person wants or how they might achieve this and signals a feeling of helplessness, without saying this directly. SAVI posits that Avoidant behaviours are 'noisy' (ambiguous, redundant or contradictory) and we experience frustration and stress in a 'noisy' climate (Agazarian and Gantt, 2000: 47-69). Complaining commonly tends to evoke in the listener a want to propose a solution (which the complainer tends to reject and instead continues complaining, thus creating a frustrating, redundant 'loop'); other common responses are for the listener to ignore the complaint or to attack the complainer. None of these surfaces the potentially useful information underneath the complaint.*

Michael reported that the West Service Manager, Caroline, had joined the complaining, and had become, in his view, *'too closely identified'* with the TMs. One of the Team Managers in particular was not meeting targets and was not supervising staff or recording outcomes in the expected way. As I listened to Michael, I wondered if he had joined the pattern of complaining and blaming – a common phenomenon in my experience, which highlights how strongly the climate or system dynamic influences individual behaviour (Agazarian and Gantt, 2000: 59). (I did not mention this at the time, guided by my sense I had already challenged several of his notions and I wanted to keep our communication open.)

Starting to build an open communication climate

What I did instead was to voice my concern about the potential for scape-goating or personalising (i.e. s/he is the problem) vs. seeing the pattern as something which we are co-creating and therefore can all potentially contribute to changing.

> *I was drawing on SCT's understanding about personalizing and scape-goating as common dynamics in human systems (groups, teams and organisations) (Agazarian & Gantt 2000: 65-69, 163, 202-203). This highlights that when we see things only from an individual perspective, we lose the wider context and tend to blame ourselves or others (and feel anguished). The alternative of seeing the wider context helps to explore how we are all contributing to what is unfolding and normalise our experience. Without a shift in our communication pattern (which is the output of the system dynamic in SCT theory - Agazarian & Gantt, 2000: 62), we can remove one scapegoat, only for the next one to appear soon after.*

In my experience, personalising and blaming individuals, with its concomitant climate of shaming and anxiety, is widespread in organisations and our wider society. The scrutiny of public sector workers in the UK makes it particularly prevalent here (Stacey & Griffin 2006).

I said something like *'I'm wondering if there's a potential for scape-goating here. What do you think?'* I was aiming to use an open, neutral tone (as opposed, for example, to asking a leading question) and was curious to hear his response. I was aware of crossing from my internal conversation to the one with Michael and of bringing in something that he might find difficult to take in as too far from his view. Asking the question seemed appropriate from my consultant-to-the-organisation role; withholding it risked losing potentially valuable information. Michael agreed there was a risk of scape-goating and that he wanted to avoid this. I was relieved to hear this and said so.

With the to-and-fro of our questions and answers, clarifying where we weren't clear, agreeing or disagreeing openly with each other, and our exploratory tone, we were starting to create an open, reality-testing climate in this first conversation.

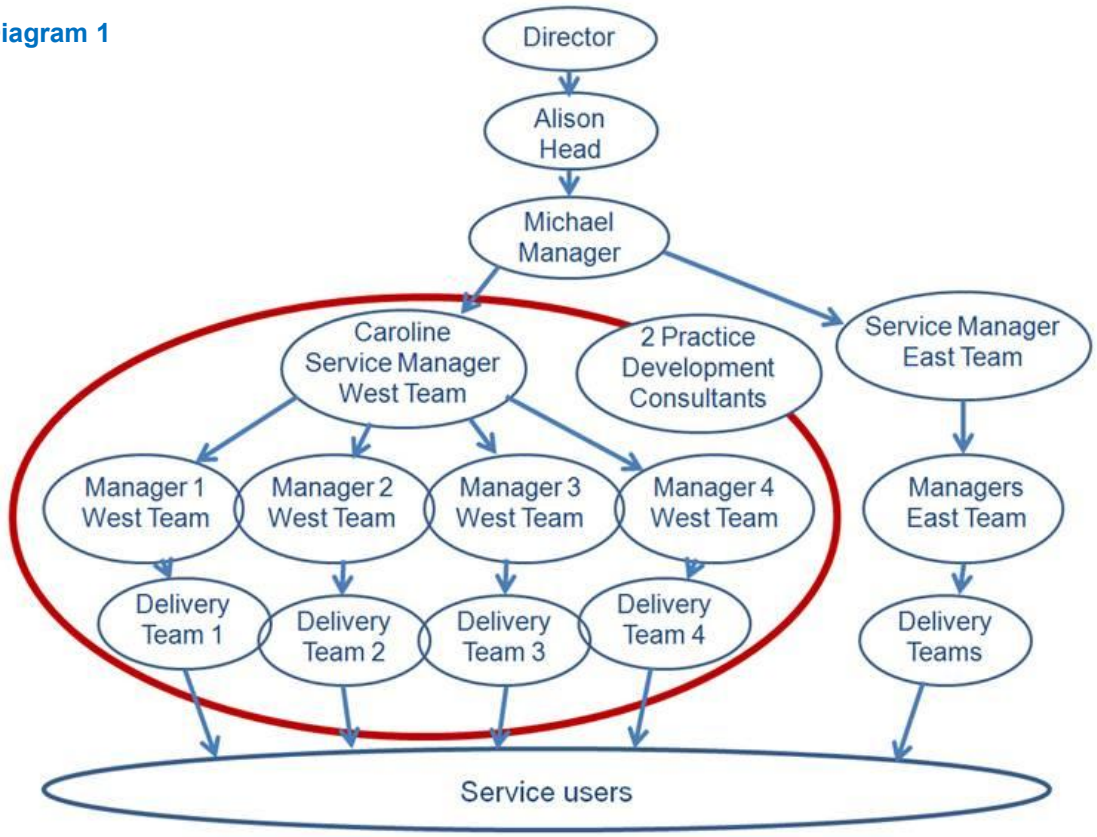
In so doing, we were stepping into the unknown, potentially creating something neither of us knew in advance. In other words, we were engaging in an emergent conversation which had an open, creative quality and which involved some risk as we crossed the boundary from inside ourselves to the outside.

Goals and Roles

I asked Michael what he wanted to see in terms of a change. I was thinking in terms of 'Role, Goal and Context', which is another Systems-Centered notion (Gantt, S.P., & Agazarian, Y.M. 2005: 8-9). I had some idea of the context and wanted to agree the goals and our different roles so that we could make a start, knowing that these might change as we worked.

I asked him to describe where the TMs sat in the formal organisational hierarchy. Below is the picture I drew after our conversation. This helped inform where to focus the work.

Diagram 1



I said I could see several options regarding what we might do and where we might start: working with Caroline alone, Caroline and the TMs or just the TMs. We explored each of these in relation to the overall goals of the project and decided that I'd work with the system of the four TMs, the two Practice Development Consultants (a temporary resource supporting the TMs) and Caroline. (This is outlined in red in Diagram 1). Our criteria for starting here were: this was where the dynamic seemed most stuck; and this was likely to have an impact on the way Michael and Caroline worked together, as well as on the way the TMs worked with the Delivery Teams.

> *I was using the Systems-Centered notion (Gantt & Agazarian, 2005: 3-6) that, if you think of systems as coming in threes, the system in the middle is the one where you're likely to have most impact. A change in the middle can affect the systems above and below it in the hierarchy. Once the middle system changes, then the task is to see how the change can cross the boundaries. Paying attention to this crossing, by not bringing in too much difference or 'noise', is important for change to happen.*

We agreed the goals of the work were to:

- 'Identify what was helping and what was getting in the way of the West cooperating with delivering a similar service to the East and between West teams and specifically to shortening their delivery times
- Help the West team shift themselves from a non-problem solving communication pattern, to one where they see themselves as proactive agents and are able to engage in problem-solving and meeting their delivery goals.'

We also agreed these goals might change as we did the work and that we would start, see what happened and then decide what to do next. This gave us flexibility in adapting the work and also allowed for local solutions to emerge to meet the delivery times goal (see below).

Michael talked through the goals and the design with Caroline to check if she was on board with them.

Shifting to more open, problem-solving communication climates

Michael, Caroline and I met in early January to confirm the goals, our proposed design and to plan the first meeting with the TMs.

During this first face-to-face meeting which lasted 1.5 hours, Caroline started complaining about resources, using a whining tone. I asked her if she was aware of this (she was) and if she wanted to try an alternative (she did). I suggested she try using Facts and Figures (a specific SAVI category which brings in facts about the outside world that can be verified e.g. we now have one less Manager) and asking questions, both with a more neutral tone. She tried this. Michael responded with a Yes-But (a competing SAVI behaviour which gives a token acknowledgment of the previous speaker's point but focuses on getting across a different view and results in two monologues, rather than a dialogue). Caroline retorted with another Yes-But and a Complaint. So here we had a pattern going with very little sharing of information and frustration rising (theirs and mine!). I pointed this out to them and they agreed it was a common pattern in their conversations and one they wanted to change.

I then asked them if they would be willing to paraphrase each other and check if they'd done a good-enough paraphrase. They agreed. We were all moved by what happened next. Caroline felt that Michael had acknowledged, for first time, that the West had insufficient resources. She heard – again for the first time – that he was allocating extra ones. Her body visibly relaxed and her facial expression softened. She said she felt relieved. I asked Michael to paraphrase this too. He missed the feeling of relief which was important to Caroline. So he tried again and 'got it' this time. This seemed an important shift across an inter-personal boundary which freed them both up and led the way for feelings to be more openly acknowledged.

Meeting the TMs – exploring what was working well/less well

At the first meeting with the TMs Michael introduced the work. The TMs clarified some points with him about the wider context. He then left. The rest of the meeting included the TMs, Caroline and the one Practice Development (PD) Consultant who was at work that day.

One of the TMs asked what my background was (a very reasonable question I thought and said so, and one which we had not addressed). I answered this and added that I wanted to support them and work transparently with them. They said this was enough for the moment. This was an early example of the TMs asking openly what they were thinking in their internal conversation. (It was also likely a voicing of their anxiety about the work, which we did not explore at that point; instead I chose to focus more on the task. I had a sense that this would give them an experience of the work that hopefully would alleviate some of their fears.) In hindsight, I think the question and my open response set the tone for the rest of the meeting.

We then got into the heart of the meeting where I proposed we work with SCT's adaptation of Lewin's force-field (Gantt & Agazarian, 2005: 17-19) to gather information on what was helping and what was getting in the way of the TMs working productively together. Drawing on my SCT training (which like other disciplines e.g. Appreciative Inquiry, Positive Psychology, Strengths-Based Approaches, orients to strengths before tackling challenges), I deliberately asked them to start with the 'positives'. They contributed with energy and built easily on one another's contributions. After a while, as the pace slowed down, I asked if they were ready to move to what was getting in the way. They said they were and again people contributed with energy.

They were surprised and satisfied to see how much they were committed to working together. I was surprised and satisfied with their openness about the behaviours that were getting in the way. Caroline pioneered this openness by asking if her anxiety, which tended to increase when their case-loads rose, affected them. The TMs said that it did at times. They also said that she was sometimes vague, which made it hard to work out what she wanted.

They also identified that, by not finding a space to explore their feelings, these often spilled over into the teams that they led (another boundary being crossed with not such positive consequences this time).

Using Lewin's research (Lewin 1997) that it is easier to reduce restraining forces than increase driving forces, I asked them to choose the easiest thing to change among the factors that were getting in the way. They decided that they wanted to change the way they were processing their feelings. They wanted to take breaks and find a room to discuss difficult issues and feelings, and to support each other. Below is the force-field from the first meeting with the TMs.

Factors helping	Factors getting in the way
▪ Supporting & warmly welcoming new member ▪ Supporting each other even when energy is low – keep problem solving & cover for each other ▪ Share values to do best for end-users – keep these even when going gets tough ▪ Able to be(mostly) open & honest with each other ▪ Great wealth of experience & knowledge re. service area ▪ All have experience of working & change within the organisation – shared history & commitment ▪ Able to ask for specifics ▪ Working in same space – spend lot of time together & meet face-to-face ▪ Recognise each other's strengths & weaknesses & organise work around these ▪ Keeping our sense of humour (just about) ▪ Enjoy working together ▪ Our reports tell us their 'moans' – don't hide these & we encourage this ▪ Mostly able to keep our moans within the team ▪ Choosing our moments to clarify & repair with each other ▪ Being aware of what it means to take up our authority & roles	▪ Service manager's anxiety spilling over into the team ▪ Knee-jerk reactions to messages from above leads to losing confidence in ourselves ▪ Service manager not being specific re expectations ▪ Not asking for clarification & thinking it's my fault/ something wrong with me – has led to friction between team members ▪ Team members reacting to service manager's tone ▪ At times we don't contain our body language / what we say in open plan office so spills over to others ▪ Don't find space to deal with high emotion/stress out of earshot of the teams we lead ▪ Service manager (& us with people we lead) trying too hard to make it 'comfortable' for the team & losing leadership role ▪ Recently struggled to keep a 'smiley' face ▪ Becoming 'robots' in how we respond even after positive rating of service ▪ Losing our authority & our roles **Next steps** Agreed to give ourselves a break together to process feelings/experience as a way of acknowledging & containing these within the team & moving from complaining to problem solving how do we work within this reality

As I re-read this force-field, I was struck by how willing the TMs were to cross that intra-personal boundary between saying what one knows and staying silent for fear of the impact that this might have. My hypothesis is that this did not happen by chance. Rather, it emerged from the communication climate we built. In my facilitator role, I encouraged actively from the start asking and answering questions, listening to what people said, paraphrasing and asking for specific examples where we weren't clear or agreeing when we were, slowing down when people interrupted each other and checking to see everyone had an opportunity to say what they wanted to. This built an inquiring, open climate and increased trust.

I typed up the force-field. We did not send this to Michael. We wanted to keep the boundary between the TMs and the rest of the organisation closed for the moment. Our aim was for the TMs to have the freedom to be as open as they wanted with each other.

Four more meetings

Over the following four months, we had four more meetings which included the TMs, Caroline and the Practice Development Consultants, each of 2.5 hours.

Before each of these, Caroline and I liaised by email and 'phone to catch up on any developments and think through how to structure the meetings and how to share our roles. Caroline then emailed the TMs with our outline plan and summarised our thinking.

Caroline took an increasingly active role leading the meetings on the Task or topic they were discussing and I gradually took more of a 'process' (Amado et al 2004) or coaching role whenever we got stuck; I wanted to support the work, or bring attention to what was happening in the moment. Typically, we started with reviewing what was working well and less well, and then chose an issue to focus on during the meeting.

After each meeting, Caroline and I met with Michael for an hour to let him know how we were doing and to explore the work we had done. We gave him broad details (without being specific about who had said what to keep this information within the TM boundary) and reviewed how we were doing in relation to the overall goals. We explored if we wanted to do anything different. After the second meeting, we agreed to add two more sessions to the original three as our sense was we needed more time to support the new ways the TMs were working on managing resources and workloads.

This sense-making time with Michael emerged spontaneously – we had not planned it at the beginning. After the first session, we decided to continue it. My experience was that it supported all of us as it crossed the boundary from the work with the TMs to the wider system, even if it was not always comfortable (see the description of the last meeting with Michael below).

During the five months of the work, the context continued to shift. The CEO and the Director of Service resigned and the work load continued to be high. The Head of Service, Alison, had said that, despite the uncertainty about the wider context, the TMs were to continue on their course, which they found helpful. I highlight below what seemed significant moments after the first meeting.

Stepping back – discriminating boundaries between what's my role and what's yours

After the first meeting, Caroline began to step back from detailed involvement in managing the service delivery, *'trying to manage but not be over-embroiled with the team'* as she put it. She let the TMs know that she wanted them to do more of the day-to-day decision-making (she stopped attending a weekly planning meeting, for example) and that they could come to her to consult on any issues that they weren't able to sort. This was working well for her and the team – she felt under less pressure and the TMs felt more trusted.

Reviewing what was working/not working

This became a regular feature of how the TMs assessed how they were working together outside of our meetings. As part of this, the two Practice Development consultants asked the Delivery Team members (i.e. the people the TMs managed) what was working and what was not working in organising the work-load. The Delivery Team members said they liked contributing to this – an example, of how the work in the TM meetings started to cross the boundary to the system below. The PD consultants also pulled together quantitative data used by the organisation to measure performance (e.g. how long it was taking to deliver services, work-loads and staff numbers). This report formed the basis for the TMs' proposed change to organising their workloads.

This highlights the fact that between the times I met with them, the TMs, Caroline and the PDs worked on addressing what was getting in the way. Our meetings increasingly became touch-points to reflect, practise new ways of communicating and plan what to do next. (In other words, we were engaging in learning on the job or action learning (McNiff, 2000).

Crossing the boundary from outside to inside the meeting

We started the second meeting with me asking everyone to take a moment and check if their energy was in the room, or if they were distracted by anything from the outside. This is a Systems-Centered centring practice (Agazarian 1997: 288) whose goal is to get our working energy into the here-and-now and to discriminate facts from feelings. It is similar to other practices e.g. Mindfulness and Embodied Leadership (Hamill P, 2013).

One of the TMs said he was distracted by the amount of work he had outside of our meeting. I asked him how he felt about this fact and he replied *'frustrated'*. I asked him to make space for his feeling of frustration. He responded: *'What is this? Re-birthing?'* My internal conversation was something like: *'Oops – looks like you've introduced too much of a difference. Try putting it in a way that seems more similar'*. I was thinking Systems-Centered Theory – boundaries close to too much difference (Gantt & Agazarian, 2005: 14-15) and that leaving the locus of the decision-making with the client is likely to facilitate more sustainable change. I responded with something like *'No – it's just making space for the feeling. Are you willing to see if it makes a difference to your energy?'* He agreed. I then asked him to make eye contact with everyone in the room and asked if he felt he was more present in the meeting, less present or the same. He said *'More'*. Interestingly, at the last meeting he was surprised he had asked if it was re-birthing and had no memory of it.

We continued to check at the beginning of our meetings if everyone was present enough to start. My hypothesis is that centring helped us to integrate feelings and thoughts and to use more of our present experience to do our work.

Getting into reality – and moving from opinions about others to asking and answering questions

During the second meeting, I started to hear comments like *'I know you don't like doing that job'*. I pointed out that that was a thought about the other person and asked if they could check if it was true. In the back of my mind, I was applying the Systems-Centered technique for undoing Mind Reads (thoughts about others treated as if they are facts) which helps develop a reality-testing climate by enabling team members to cross the boundary from their opinions to checking reality with others. We undid lots of Mind Reads and had fun doing some of these. I was aware of how, at one level, this is so simple to do; at another, so much of our experience in organisations (and in our personal lives) is constructed from our thoughts. We often miss the step of crossing the boundary from our personal opinions to collecting reality-based data with others.

The rest of the second meeting focused on the task of how to improve the way that the work was managed.

As we worked, I asked the TMs to notice when they were getting 'wordy' or redundant and to say the heart of what they wanted to say to reduce 'noise'. When people interrupted or Yes-Butted each other, I asked them to slow down or first see if they or someone else could join the previous speaker's contribution before bringing in a difference.

I was using the Systems-Centered method of functional sub-grouping (Agazarian and Gantt 2000: 185 – 188) designed to interrupt Yes-butting patterns and instead explore the potentially useful information in differences. Systems-Centered Theory posits that, in a climate of similarity, we will discover just tolerable differences in what initially seemed only similar, and some similarities in what appeared to be only different. Functional sub-grouping, the SCT method for doing this, involves stating clearly when we have a difference, and agreeing to explore one side first, then the other. The theory posits this process of exploration is more likely to lead to integration and innovative outcomes (true in my and many others' experience).

The work flowed easily. The TMs came up with three options to explore further. I saw the TMs and Caroline stepping into their roles with more confidence – speaking up, checking out their thoughts, asking and answering questions, building on each other, explicitly bringing in differences and getting specific about what the issues were.

One of their agreed Next Steps was *'Keep checking out, speaking directly, and being specific with each other.'* As we reviewed our experience in and learnings from the meeting, people reported feeling energised by the work, relieved and more trusting of each other.

Opening up to differences

After the second meeting, differences in the way the TMs worked started to emerge explicitly, leading to some tension and *'snipey'* comments (in Caroline's words during our pre-meeting catch up call). One TM *'worked fast'*, another was *'methodical'*, yet another was *'disorganised and not on top of the work'*, and the fourth was *'very focused'* and *'not pushy'*. This was a sign of development in SCT theory which, in common with many other theories of change (Wheelan, 2005), posits that teams and groups go through predictable (but not linear) phases of development. From this perspective, the TMs were moving from Flight (where we tend to move away from differences for fear of rocking the boat) to more Fight (where we can either fight about our differences or see them as potentially useful resources for the work)[8].

As long as they could listen to each other and keep focused on the goal of working together, this was another step towards working in reality, in other words, sounding out their thinking with each other and engaging with the reality in the team and the wider context, rather than what they wished for or imagined.

Integrating thinking and feeling

By the time of the last meeting, the TMs were openly acknowledging how they were feeling in relation to taking up their roles in the organisation. There is now a body of work to support the hypothesis that our emotional or intuitive information is an essential part of effective reasoning and decision-making (Damasio, 2006; Goleman, 1998; Hamill P, 2013). In my experience, the importance of integrating the rational and the emotional knowledge we hold is often ignored or dismissed in organisations in favour of the exclusively cognitive or rational.

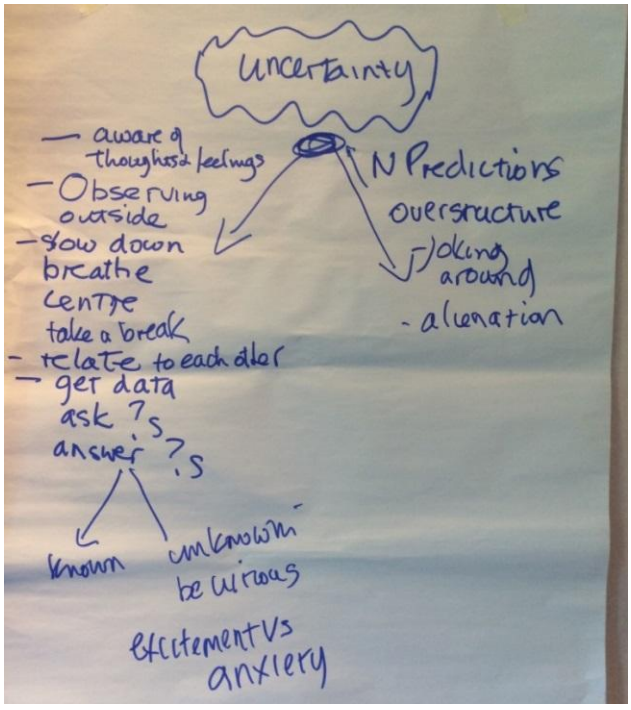
[8] Agazarian's unique contribution to Phases of Development is to have identified the typical behaviours that help and those that get in the way of change in each phase, and to propose that weakening the restraining behaviours facilitates development, cfr. Gantt, S.P. & Agazarian, Y.M. (2007).

An important moment had been during the fourth meeting when I asked the TMs to explore their experience of working in their roles. I normalised people's contributions and asked if anyone else shared the experience, by saying, for example, *'Sounds like a very normal response'* or *'Does anyone else have the experience of being frustrated with this situation?'*. Normalising and joining others so they are not left alone with their experience are SCT practices designed to reduce problematizing and personalising (Agazarian, Y.M. & Gantt, S.P., 2000: 132, 219).

Some were feeling frustrated that they didn't have more certainty about the wider service re-design. I said one way to see frustration is that it's just energy which doesn't yet have a goal (Agazarian, Y.M. & Gantt, S.P., 2000: 40, 192) and one TM said he felt relieved to hear this. Others were feeling *'drained of energy holding everyone's anxieties and questions if we plan now, will it be relevant?'* Others were angry that *'rumours were flying around'* about a staff promotion. Just naming the feelings and letting them be – not trying to 'do' something with them – was helpful.

During the last meeting, we revisited my point that these feelings are normal human responses to uncertainty (Systems-Centered Theory emphasises opening up to uncertainty with curiosity as an alternative to defending against our experience – see Agazarian & Gantt, 2000: 204). I drew a diagram on a flip chart where I pointed out, if we can notice the feelings in the moment, we can have more choice about how to react to them. I listed some common default responses (often learned in childhood) to managing uncertainty and the TMs built on these.

We identified making negative predictions about the future; over-structuring and micro-managing tasks (which struck a chord with Caroline as her default mode); joking around; going it alone or becoming alienated from others (a response in the TMs when they weren't sharing the impact of the work openly). The TMs felt relieved to say these out loud and see them as normal responses. We brainstormed alternative strategies including slowing down, breathing, taking a break, relating to each other, collecting data by asking and answering questions and checking if it was anxiety or excitement they were experiencing.



At this point, I suggested having compassion for ourselves and others as we have these normal human reactions. Compassion is an important – indeed some would say essential – component in change in many practices, including Buddhism and SCT. I like this quote from the Dalai Lama (2009): *'If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.'* This seemed important for the TMs. As one person said: '*We have compassion for [our clients], but not for ourselves'*.

What did we achieve?

The TMs described what changed as a result of our work in two ways. These highlight a boundary between the 'process' (how we and the TMs worked together through the communication climate we co-created) and the 'task' we had been set (the explicit goals of the work – i.e. improving delivery times and the way the TMs were organising their teams).

Process

Process-wise, we achieved a shift in the way the TMs and Caroline were taking up their leadership roles and how they were working together. They reported having more confidence, communicating more openly and using each other as a resource, both when things were working smoothly and when they got stuck. (I noted down the following comments during our last meeting while the TMs described the work to Michael. I was largely an observer and hence able to take notes.) *'We have learnt relatedness and coming together; we're more open and less defensive; we've learnt how to check out our mind-reads of each other; we are more saying how we are feeling in the moment; all of this has increased our sense of trust and safety and our ability to solve problems.'*

At the end of the final meeting, Michael acknowledged the process shift and said: *'There's clearly a very powerful shift in the way you're functioning together and with Caroline. There's a quiet purposefulness and sense of being 'lighter'. You're still clearly very busy. The [delivery teams] appear to be more positive. What you're doing is remarkable in shifting from one way of working to another after working together for such a long time [in the old way of working]. It's inspiring and I want to think how to use this way of working in other parts of the organisation. It has happened in a relatively short space of time.'* This was evidence that Michael had seen changes and was explicitly supporting these – a first step in crossing the boundary from the TMs to the wider organisation.

In the last meeting, the TMs rated their Satisfaction, on a scale of 0 to 10, at being a member of the team and their Energy for the work. They compared these with the way they remembered feeling at the start of our work (the numbers in brackets). Here are the scores The one TM whose scores had dropped was feeling drained by what they experienced as others' negativity.

Satisfaction	Energy
5 (1)	7 (4)
5 (2)	6.5 (3)
6 (7)	5 (8)
6.5 (1)	6.5 (2.5)
7 (3.5)	8 (3.5)

We explored how they could bring this in and ask for support from the other TMs. So here was a boundary that still needed crossing.

Task

In terms of the 'task', the TMs had produced a proposal for how to re-organise their resources. They had found that simply being told to match what was being done in the East didn't work for them. They had been freed up when they heard that they could develop their own model. They used the performance data that the PD consultants had compiled and they consulted with their Delivery Teams to get ideas and refine the plan. The major change was to have TMs working as *'twins'* (their phrase), instead of individually, when they were on duty. They acknowledged that there would be some differences *'due to personality and skills'* in the way

that the different twins worked with the plan. They felt confident they could manage the differences, as long as they communicated these honestly and that if, the twins couldn't manage, they'd go to the other two TMs and then to Caroline.

They put the proposal to Michael during our final meeting. His response was *'It sounds like a really strong model'* and he said he supported it.

The TMs were clear that paying attention to the 'process' part of how they worked had enabled them to do the 'task' part of the work – i.e. come up with a plan. The TM who had been the most sceptical at the start, and who questioned the value of what we were doing, said at the end: *'We couldn't have done the plan without the process bit.'*

On reflection, I think that the crucial piece was opening up the boundaries within the TM system as we worked over the five meetings. Gradually, the information that people were holding was seen as just that – information that was potentially useful to the work of the team. I encouraged them to put it in a factual or enquiring way, make it brief and clear. They discovered that this made it easier to listen to than if it was complaining or blaming, long-winded or ambiguous. I did hypothesise at the start (based on my experience using SAVI and SCT) that getting a clearer, less 'noisy' communication climate would shift the dynamic but was not sure how it would play out in *this particular context*.

Crossing the boundary between organisational levels – work in progress

One of the Next Steps that came from the final meeting was how to cross from the TM system to the wider organisation – particularly up the hierarchy to Alison. The TMs had already started to communicate successfully and enact their changed ways of working with the Delivery Teams who reported to them. We agreed that one option was to present the new plan and talk through what they had learnt from the process of our work with Alison.

At the final review session with Michael and Caroline, we bumped up against a closed boundary again. Caroline was describing what she had learnt from the process. This included her shift from 'micro-managing' the TMs to trusting them more. She said she might want Michael's help if she reverted back to being more controlling in the future. Michael didn't seem to hear this and instead started asking her several questions about what she'd learnt. I noticed Caroline's body posture slump, her eyes look down and her facial expression change from smiling and lively to blank. I had the bodily experience of shock. I felt 'jumbled 'and on high alert (this is the Flight/Fight/Freeze response that gets activated in 10-12 milliseconds – Le Doux 2010). I wondered if this was what Caroline was experiencing and I asked if she felt put on the spot. She said *'Yes'.* Michael was also shocked and confused how this had happened. We made sense of this later as potentially useful information about how the organisation might try to relate to Caroline and the TMs 'as if' nothing had changed. This is a normal response for keeping things as they are and for getting rid of differences that are too different (Agazarian,1997: 19). Michael and Caroline reflected that they were able to notice this better now and had strategies for how to deal with it, e.g. stop the conversation and ask what was happening; ask the other to paraphrase what had been said; bring in their experience in the moment, and see what sense they could jointly make of it.

This last piece highlights the fact that the work is still in process – in the words of one of the TMs during the last meeting *'We are only mid-way and it will take all our energy to keep going.'*

Conclusion

As I left and travelled back to London, I was aware of how fresh and potentially vulnerable the team and Caroline were in their new ways of relating and working. I was dissatisfied we had not paid more attention to how to communicate the changes across the organisational boundaries and felt regret that the work was not finished. As I thought about this, I saw that work is always ongoing and I sent an email to Caroline and Michael with my reflections. Caroline responded that they were feeling confident they could take the work forward. They planned to invite Alison to a meeting to describe the new model and the work we'd done. She ended by saying *'It is important to convey that rather than being at the end of our work, we are really at the beginning of the next phase and that we need to keep working on our new confidences to provide the best possible leadership for our staff.'*

In terms of my learning about using SCT in my practice, I see the work as supporting the theory statement that *'All living human systems survive, develop and transform from simple to complex through an ongoing process of recognizing differences and integrating them*' (Agazarian, 1997: 41) and that *'boundaries open to similarities and close to difference*' (ibid: 19). I did not explicitly teach SCT or SAVI to the people I worked with as that was not the goal of the work. Rather, I used both SCT and SAVI to guide my work and found them invaluable maps in moments when I was trying to make sense of what was happening or to decide what to do. I introduced bits of theory when I sensed they might help understand what was happening (for example, the notions of integrating thinking and feeling, boundary permeability and 'noise') and adapted the methods (mostly successfully) e.g. undoing Mind Reads. I was not so successful in introducing Centring the first time (and did self-correct once I realised I'd introduced too much of a difference). As mentioned, we did not pay enough attention to how to cross the boundary up the hierarchy before the work ended. Mostly, I am left with admiration for and feel moved by the amount of change the TMs achieved with relatively little help. This reinforces my experience of SCT as an effective and efficient method for change. Like all skills and practices worth their salt, it also requires discipline to master and takes time to be able to integrate fluidly into one's practice http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_stages_of_competence .

About six weeks later, when I asked Michael and Caroline to comment on the first draft of this article, Caroline responded:

> *'I have now read through your article and found myself quite moved by our story and I want to say thank you (again) for your experienced and wise guidance through a difficult time. I am very happy with it and pleased (not sure if that is the best word) that we reached such a positive conclusion. We haven't managed to find a date to meet with 'Alison' and now it seems hard to make it a priority when there is so much going on. However, I think we should, so I will renew my energy to do this, even if it feels a bit later than would be ideal. Our 5th TM has joined us and we are producing some very positive results in terms of our performance against timescales. There is a positive atmosphere in the team and on the whole, the managers are working well together. I retain my 'can-do/want-to' approach and 'Michael' and I have [sic] are benefitting from productive communication. All in all, things are good. Masses of change going on, and I feel we are in a good place to rise to the challenges.'*

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Susan Gantt, Alison Donaldson and Chris Rodgers for their comments on earlier versions of this article.

Bibliography

Agazarian, Y.M. (1997). *Systems-Centered Therapy for Groups*, New York: The Guildford Press

Agazarian, Y.M. & Gantt, S.P. (2000). *Autobiography of a Theory,* London & Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley

Amado, G, Ambrose, A and Edwards, A (2004). *The Transitional Approach to Change (The Harold Bridger Transitional Series).* London: Karnac

Dalai Lama XIV(2009). *The Art of Happiness.* London: Hodder and Stoughton

Damasio, A (2006). ***Descartes' Error***. London, New York: Vintage

Gantt, S.P. & Agazarian, Y.M. (2007). Phases of system development in organizational work groups: The systems-centered approach for intervening in context. Organizational & Social Dynamics, 7(2), pp. 253-291. Downloadable with permission from the publisher at: http://www.systemscentered.com/SystemsCentered/Readings

Gantt, S.P. & Agazarian, Y.M. (2005). *SCT in Action: Applying the Systems-Centered Approach in Organizations*, New York: iUniverse

Gantt, S.P., & Agazarian, Y.M. (2004). Systems-centered emotional intelligence: Beyond individual systems to organizational systems. Organizational Analysis, 12 (2), 147-169. Downloadable with permission from the publisher at: http://www.systemscentered.com/SystemsCentered/Readings

Goleman, G. (1998). *Working with Emotional Intelligence.* London: Bloomsbury

Hamill, P. (2013). *Embodied Leadership.* London, Philadelphia, New Delhi: Kogan Page

Lewin, K. (1997). *Resolving Social Conflicts and Field Theory in Social Science.* Washington: American Psychological Association.

LeDoux, J. (2010) Why you might be scared of X. http://bigthink.com/ideas/20453

McNiff, J. (2000). *Action Research in Organisations.* London & New York: Routledge.

Rodgers, C. (2007). *Informal Coalitions: Mastering the Hidden Dynamics of Organizational Change.* London, New York: Palgrave Macmillan

Stacey, R & Griffin, D (2006). ***Complexity*** *and the Experience of Managing in Public Sector Organizations*, London & New York: Routledge

Stacey, R & Griffin, D (2005). *A* ***Complexity*** *Perspective on Researching Organizations.* London & New York: Routledge

Weick, KE (1995). *Sensemaking in Organizations*. Thousand Oaks: Sage

Weick KE (2001). *Making Sense of the Organization*. Oxford: Blackwell

Wheelan, SA (2005). *Group Processes: A Developmental Perspective*. Boston: Pearson

About the author

Rowena Davis is an organizational consultant working with public, private and not-for-profit organizations in the UK and internationally. Her work combines coaching individuals and teams; strategic marketing and planning; mapping systems; and action learning. She runs SCT and SAVI trainings in the US and Europe. She is a licensed Systems-Centered Training practitioner, a certified SAVI trainer and a member of the Systems-Centered Training and Research Institute Board. She holds a Masters in Change Agent Skills & Strategies (Distinction) from the University of Surrey, a Dott. in Sociologia from the University of Trento, Italy, and a BSc (Econ) from the London School of Economics. Rowena is based in London. rdavis@rdaconsulting.net; www.rdaconsulting.net

The sweet bitter of 'No'

Louie Gardiner

In our summer edition, anticipating the Scottish Independence Referendum, Louie examined the complex network of issues lying behind the simplistic, binary choice, Yes or No. Here she reflects on the outcome and wonders, what now?

That Germany lost the war has made it arguably the most socially and politically advanced nation in Europe. A ridiculously grand claim from someone who has absolutely zero credentials to comment. My conclusion is however, drawn from those who know much more – researchers of the exhibition *'Made in Germany'* in the British Museum from which it's Director, Neil MacGregor has pulled together his article (Review section of The Guardian, 27 September 2014); and his current radio series *'Germany: Memories of a Nation'*. I was humbled to read how the German people have consciously chosen to use history and monuments as a reminder and warning to act differently in the future. According to MacGregor, this is in stark contrast to Britain and France where most monuments 'honour valour and heroism' with scant public acknowledgment of each nation's own wrongdoings.

In particular, I was struck by MacGregor's description of the Reichstag which was restored following the reunification of East and West Germany 25 years ago. The restoration retained marks of the 1933 fire and

> *'…graffiti made by Soviet Soldiers were left untouched as a reminder to legislators that if you get things as wrong as Germany did, then the consequences are unimaginably terrible'.*

En route to the Reichstag, MPs pass memorials to the killing of Jewish people, homosexuals, disabled people and Roma. Even more striking is the huge glass dome atop the building to which the public have access. Not only does this represent an emblem of transparent legislature but the public can

> *'literally exercise oversight over their government – a direct reversal of the situation under both the Nazis and the Stasi'.*

MacGregor comments:

> *'I can't think of another country in the world that lives so closely with the acutely uncomfortable reminders of its past in order to help it act more wisely in the future'.*

I found myself reflecting on my many tours inside the Scottish Parliament and how the building was designed to make it a place that is run for and by the people of Scotland. I began pondering (once again) on the result of the Scottish Referendum and wondered about the current and potential impact and unfolding consequences.

As I continued to read MacGregor's piece I was stopped in my tracks by a striking fact that brought my attention to something else – that in the following quote at least, he was comparing Germany with England:

> *'the regional identity of Germany is still flourishing in a way that has probably never been the case in England, where there has been a centralised government in a dominant London for 1,000 years'.*

I'm not sure I agree with his conclusions regarding regional identity in England. However, I was shocked by his statement *'a centralised government in a dominant London for 1,000 years*'. One thousand years! A Millennium. This brings a whole new dimension to my understanding of the result of the Scottish Referendum. The 'YES/NO' vote was not simply threatening the break-up of a 300 year Union between England and Scotland; it was potentially heralding the next stage of disintegration of a 1,000 year socio-political force that has come to rest within Westminster - centralised power in the hands of the few, who are disconnected from the reality and diversity of the many.

Germany of the past and Germany of today has much to teach us about the dangers of centralised forces that seek to manipulate the very people they pretend to serve. The Scottish Referendum was a call from part of the system for change and for powers to come closer to its people. The question beguiling me is: Can we effect a civil and just socio-political change without violent revolution or disintegration in the UK?

The dome of the German Reichstag, Berlin.
Photo from: lukelukeluke, Creative Commons

According to Nobel Prize-winner Ilya Prigogine, when a complex adaptive system (such as a human system) is near to the point of bifurcation i.e. when it is far from equilibrium, 'chance' comes into play. We cannot predict if it will tip into disintegration (chaos) or leap into a new, more differentiated, higher level order or 'organisation' i.e. a 'dissipative structure'. Neither can we predict when the tip might occur. Why? Because there are simply too many unknown and unknowable factors at play in the system to afford any certainty. However, despite all that is unknown and uncertain, we can equip ourselves to anticipate and influence better by increasing our understanding of what is playing out – seeking to notice shifting systemic patterns and what might be shaping those patterns. This gives us clues as to what action we **could** take that **might** nudge the system in the ways we **hope** will be more helpful – holding all the while that ***every intervention is an experiment with uncertain consequences***.

Some FACTS: The governing powers in Scotland called for a referendum which took place on 18 September 2014. Change was promised. A vow was made. 45% of all votes cast voted YES for separation from the Union. 55% voted NO. We do not know all the reasons why people voted YES or NO. The polls showed a shift of YES voters from less than a third to nearly 50% in a little over two years. One day after the result, 5,000 Scots became signed up members of the SNP; two days after, 10,000 had signed up; five days after the vote this had risen to 26,000. Other YES parties have also had increased membership. NO Parties in Scotland lost members. Northern cities in England have raised the issue of greater powers. UKIP has secured more votes in recent elections than it has ever had before. The British Government has just agreed to take Britain into another armed conflict.

It seems that our UK socio-political landscape/ system IS shifting. Parts of the system are far from equilibrium. It is not hard to imagine that if the vows made by Westminster party leaders are broken, the perturbation in the system will amplify generating even greater disequilibrium. Perhaps if the vows to Scotland are kept, this will give rise to greater perturbation in other parts of the system elsewhere in the UK? Leonard Cohen's lyrics come to mind:

> *'Ring, ring the bells that still can ring.*
>
> *There is a crack, a crack in everything.*
>
> *That's how the light gets in'.*

There is a crack. Perhaps the tsunami of bifurcation is already upon us? If we think we can predict and control what is happening - believing we can block the tipping wave - we will be sitting in denial of reality; we will risk getting lost IN the boiling and roiling of the turmoil. Alternatively, we can choose to become surf-riders and community bridge-builders ready to enter into the turbulence to make something out of what might otherwise become wholesale destruction.

Chamber of the Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh
Photo from: pschemp, Wikimedia Commons

A few years ago at the Edinburgh Book Festival, Richard Holloway, former Bishop of Edinburgh, said that when people hold fundamentalist views, dialogue is impossible. So consider this: just as domestic violence does not begin but ends with broken bones and bodies, neither does fundamentalism begin with shocking violence by extremist forces.

The seeds of both are sown somewhere far closer to home. They grow in our living rooms, bedrooms, community spaces, organisations and adversarial debating chambers. They begin when we hold a fixed point of view from which we refuse to entertain the possibility that 'the other' might have something valid and worthy of consideration. They begin when we disregard, disrespect and debase the other - in the ways we talk about and behave towards them.

The derivation of the words 'debate' and 'discuss' mean 'to beat or break down'. These words are about winning so as not to lose. In contrast, 'dialogue' is about 'meaning flowing through' and this can only happen when we open ourselves up to the possibility that we and/or our views might be changed through our exchange with 'the other'. Consider how improbable it would have been for politicians in both the YES and NO camps to say:

> *'Hang on a minute! This is crazy! What is it you are really trying to say? How are your needs not being met? What are you afraid of? What are your hopes and dreams? How could we address all our fears and needs and hopes and dreams; and take care of each other at the same time?'*

Fundamentalism begins with taking a position on something and continually gathering more and more data to substantiate that position – to the exclusion of all other data and possible perspectives. I witnessed 'Yes' voters going to Yes' meetings, listening to people who think like them, thereby reinforcing their views and their positions. I witnessed 'No' voters going to 'No' meetings listening to people who think like them, thereby reinforcing their views and their positions. I witnessed a 'No' voter getting agitated when a 'Yes' voter contributed to proceedings by trying to call Gordon Brown to account for his part in the Iraq war. The No' voter shouted out '*what are YOU doing here? This is a* No' *rally!*' Fundamentalism begins with getting stuck in binary debate: yes/ no; this or that; either/ or; with us/ agin us. There HAS to be another way. Surely we are better than this? More advanced than this? And so I come back to where this article began. What does Germany have to teach us? What does Prigogine have to help us?

What will it take to make possible a 'higher level order'; a 'more differentiated dissipative' governance structure? It starts and ends with individual agents in the system. Us. More of us engaging in ways that break ancient, adversarial patterns. More of us learning to create opportunities and structures for working with distributed power that engender greater accountability by the many not the few. This will take effort. Huge effort because we will be calling on ourselves to do what we are unused to doing. Dissipative structures are more differentiated and therefore more complex so they take more energy to sustain them. True dialogue takes more energy in the 'coming to solutions', yet in the longer run, it means our solutions are likely to be more successful; more generative; more enduring. To succeed, *more* of us need to be engaged *more* of the time on *more* issues that affect our lives. Are we ready? Are we up for the complexity of the challenge and the commitment to stay engaged in the process wherever it takes us?

Coherence and equilibrium in a complex adaptive system - a human system - comes not through external controls but through local interactions amongst individuals wherever they are in the system. We continually self-organise in relation to each other and the shifting conditions in the system. So shifting patterns starts with us. No. In this, it starts with me. In writing and in knowing what I know from the complexity science world, I call myself to account. What will I do? How will I change? I choose to follow these behaviours in the

hope that I may play a part in seeding the conditions for creating a new governing order in the UK. And perhaps in the future, I might, with humble pride, be amongst many who are able to say: we led the way, we did this ourselves and we did it well without war:

1. Engage with curiosity and caritas
2. Safeguard my own trustworthiness
3. Act for the wellbeing of the whole, part and greater whole
4. Make more of what we've got
5. Celebrate and share the best of ourselves
6. Follow through on promises

Tweet me @Potent6 and share these Seed Behaviours with others if you feel like joining in the experiment!

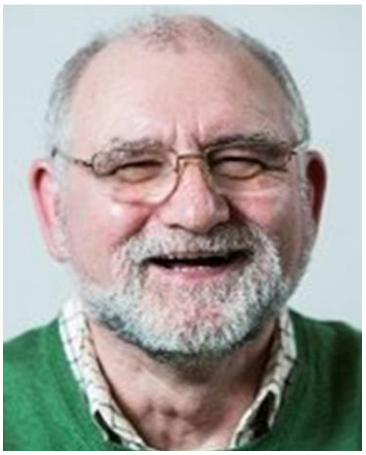
About the author

Louie Gardiner is the founding partner of Potent 6 and creator of The Potent 6 Constellation. She is a PhD Researcher in Systems Sciences, master-accredited coach, facilitator and Human Systems Dynamics Consultant. Louie has a passion for illuminating, connecting and liberating flow in human systems - enabling people to take action and work collaboratively through complex, challenging situations with, within and across organisations and communities. She is hungry to learn, and demonstrates her commitment to being curious, courageous, authentic and constantly questioning how we make and manage meaning in the world.

Louie can be contacted at: louie.gardiner@potent6.co.uk www.potent6.co.uk twitter: Potent6

A Narrow Escape

Peter Sheal



In our summer edition, anticipating the Scottish Independence Referendum, Peter expressed his strong feelings that a 'Yes' vote would be a terrible mistake. Here's his postscript

'It's just emotion,' the Bosnian wife of a friend commented from Sarajevo. Over Skype I'd been trying to explain the Scottish Referendum, but she understood within a few sentences. She'd suffered from the Balkan nationalist wars of the 1990s which destroyed the multi-national state of Yugoslavia and left a wrecked society and hundreds of thousands dead and wounded.

A Lebanese friend, who'd rescued his extended family from the Lebanese civil wars of the 1980s, was similarly bewildered. Ironically, he'd relocated his family to Quebec, Canada, and been shocked by the separatist referendum there. Significantly, it was immigrant families like his own fleeing from oppression and war who'd made the difference when that referendum was close.

We live in a prosperous and peaceful social democratic bubble. We tend to assume that this is how the rest of the world lives or wants to live. We watch the atrocities in Northern Ireland, the Middle East and the Ukraine as if they couldn't happen here. Our society is more fragile than we think and history teaches us that nationalism has its dark side and looks for scapegoats, particularly when through its policies there is economic failure.

On the night after the No vote there were violent scuffles between Nationalists and Loyalists in Glasgow. A Yes vote followed by a flight of capital and economic crisis would have brought Scotland and the UK into new and more dangerous territory. Negotiations would have become more hostile and as in Northern Ireland, questions about the reliability of the police and the role of the army would have begun to be asked. We have experienced a narrow escape.

About the author

Peter Sheal is a writer and training consultant with MDT International www.mdtinternational.com and delivers management development courses for the international oil and gas industry. He is the author of *How To Develop & Present Staff Training Courses* and the *Staff Development Handbook* published by Kogan Page.

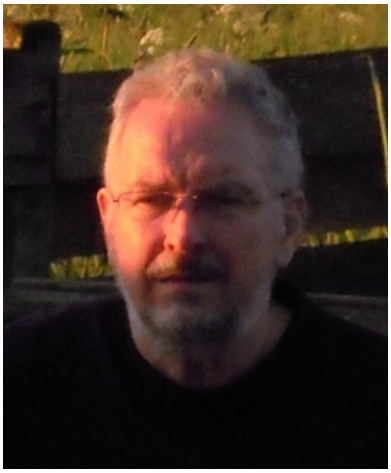
Peter was born in Manchester of Scottish ancestors who took advantage of the opportunities afforded by the United Kingdom to move between Ireland, Scotland and England in pursuit of personal and family prosperity. He describes himself as British and has lived in Aberdeenshire for over 30 years.

Peter can be contacted at: p.sheal@btinternet.com

Working across boundaries

David has a dream

David McAra



To make some cross-boundary working happen, the editorial team planned a 'Gathering' for September, so I thought it would be interesting to try to join up some of the LinkedIn groups I follow. I posted a question in the AMED group ("How should we describe the radical re-think we need about organising?") and 'shared' it across a number of other groups under the heading: "... wondering about synergy." There were a number of interesting responses though I can't really claim they amounted to much in the way of synergy.

***Louie Gardiner** was kind enough to review my draft and I found her comments helpful so have included them in the blue panels.*

It's a bit presumptuous of me, I know, to reference Dr King in my title but I believe that the transformation of society is necessary and possible.

- *Necessary ...* because our existing models of organising are not sustainable and cause too much suffering
- *Possible ...* if we can unlock the synergy between the many wonderful and creative ideas which are currently on the loose.

The problems of society are profound and complex. How shall we learn to adopt sustainable lifestyles? How shall we educate the young? How shall we take care of our elderly? How shall we reconcile strident adversarial ideologies? ... or even moderately conflicting short term interests?

According to Complex Adaptive Systems theory, change happens through local to local interactions i.e. local to us as individuals rather than thinking about local in terms of geographical place. We create patterns through our exchanges with those in our realms. Like Glenda Eoyang, I suggest that we need to find new ways of seeing to shift our understanding what is going on – when this happens, the next 'now what?' becomes self-evident…. So in essence, it is always about emergence and awareness of emergence; integrating and adapting what we do as each new moment arises. In a complex, uncertain, world and an unknowable future, we can never know what we will need to know to cope, ahead of time. We only come to know it in retrospect!!! So – in agreement with Eoyang – I believe that all we can do is grow our Adaptive Capacity.

No central body, however wise and well-intentioned, will ever be able to sort it out. We must learn new ways of working together, or slide into chaos.

Ah! Chaos!

I'm not very optimistic about our capacity to learn as individuals, never mind as a society. So perhaps the slide into chaos is inevitable. Now ... the concept of chaos (in my layman's understanding) offers the possibility of the emergence of a new order.

Perhaps we can slide through - or with - chaos. I understand that the prospect of emergence is enhanced by optimising three aspects of the chaotic brew:

- The **diversity** of the ingredients – because an understanding of the challenges and the opportunities is not accessible to any one person or group, but is scattered through many minds in our infinitely varied ways of seeing the world

Eoyang in her PhD research identified 3 pattern-influencing conditions CDE: Differences – that hold the potential for change to occur

Eoyang would call this condition 'Container' – i.e. similarities that bring and hold agents or agencies together. These can be physical, perceptual, metaphysical etc and are often overlapping and massively entangled.

- The **connectedness** of the ingredients. For emergence to occur, the scattered pieces of knowledge must be able to find each other, to cohere – if momentarily, to form a new picture which we will only be able to see when we can all see it

- The **quality** of the connections – so insights can be perceived through the noise.

Again Eoyang would speak of 'Exchanges' – which is more about the channel across which 'differences' can pass

"... synergy between the many wonderful and creative ideas ..."

For something productive to arise, the three conditions CDE need to be 'coherent'. A great HSD (Human Systems Dynamics) model that conveys this without needing to understand the underpinning science is the STAR

*S = balance of **similarities** and differences - Diversity*

*T = effective balance and quality of **talking** and listening (Exchanges)*

*A = **Authentic** work = **action** i.e. a needed, useful task / focus of activity (container)*

*R = **Reason** for being – intention/ purpose (Container)*

If these are not in place / balance / coherent then the group of people (agents) will not be generative. This can help to understand why stuff simply does not start, continue or regenerate.

To try and make some cross-boundary working happen, the e-O&P editorial team planned a 'Gathering' for

11 September, so I thought it would be interesting to try to join up some of the LinkedIn groups I follow. I posted a question in the AMED group ("How should we describe the radical re-think we need about organising?") and 'shared' it across a number of other groups under the heading: "... wondering about synergy."

A reasonable number of responses appeared in four of the groups (see table below) but there seemed to be more speaking than listening and more energy for introducing solutions to cross-boundary working than inquiry and open sharing of experience and triumphs and disappointments.

Perhaps I am naive to hope for anything else from a networking social media site. It felt like a party with everyone constantly scanning for someone more interesting to speak to. It is an incredibly crowded party, after all. Social media has infinite diversity and connectedness. How can we improve the signal quality and enable more fruitful dialogue?

Looking at Eoyang's criteria, presented by Louie, above, I think we need to be building a container.

The responsive groups

The blue link in the group name will take you to the relevant LinkedIn pages.

Link to group discussion topics	AMED	Great Insiders	Unreasonable Learners	Lancaster University MAMLL,	Totals
Group's area of interest	Management education and development	Mutual support for internal consultants	New thinking about gov't and business	Management learning and leadership	Connections across boundaries
Comments	23	13	15	10	61
Contributors	9	5	6	4	24

All these groups share some appreciation for the problems with hierarchies and the value of cross-boundary working. While agendas are subtly different, I feel we are all pulling in more or less the same direction.

I left out a group which didn't seem to recognise the collaborative spirit of inquiry I was hoping for. There was only one response: "the <group> virtually always has 'Joined up Thinking' as a way of life, with masses of accredited positive outcomes and not the average 70% failure rates that plague all the non-joined up thinking projects".

Any suggestions for further experimentation or exploration will be greatly appreciated. Please post your thoughts here, or contact me directly: david.mcara@petrotechnics.com.

About the author

David McAra is a member of AMED Council and of the e-O&P editorial board.

Some forthcoming events

You are most welcome to join us

Please click on the links if you'd like to find out more.

Here is a selection of events on the AMED website. Individual Members and Networkers are also welcome to post their own events, provided they offer fellow AMED Members a discount of at least 10%.

Date	Event	Link
21 October, 5.30-8.00 pm	***Exploring Conscious Business practice: a free joint CPL/AMED event***, with Rob Warwick, Pete Burden and the Conscious Business community, London Metropolitan University, EC2	http://www.amed.org.uk/events/exploring-conscious-business-practice-a-free-joint-cpl-amed-event
30 November	Publication of the Winter 2014 edition of e-O&P: ***The future of coaching and mentoring***	http://www.amed.org.uk/forum/topics/the-future-of-coaching-and-mentoring-evolution-revolution-or-exti
Friday 12 December, 1.15-4.30 pm	***The AMED Writers' Group annual fest: 'Private Passions: Highlights of Our Writing Year'***, Open Session – everyone is welcome. London SE11	http://www.amed.org.uk/events/the-amed-writers-group-annual-fest-private-passions-highlights-of
2015	***Watch this space for our emerging calendar of events,*** *including more gatherings for collaborating across boundaries.*	http://www.amed.org.uk/events

e-O&P, Vol 21, No 4, Winter 2014 (November/December)

The future of coaching and mentoring: evolution, revolution or extinction?

Pauline Willis and Anna Britnor

How might coaching and mentoring develop in the coming decades?

Please share your questions, predictions and hopes in this important conversation

AMED and the Coaching & Mentoring Network (CMN) have teamed up for this special edition of AMED's quarterly online journal *e-Organisations and People (e-O&P)*. Together, we are creating a forum to facilitate a broad and eclectic conversation about the coaching and mentoring landscape and how it might look in the future. We are inviting diverse contributions in a variety of formats. Whether you consider yourself a 'thought-leader', a practitioner, an academic or a hybrid of these, whether you are previously published or unpublished, we're keen to hear from you. There are many ways to become involved in this unusual publishing project.

We'd particularly like to hear from people who are doing interesting, challenging and disruptive things in this field and who are ready to bring their ideas to a wider audience.

Focus

Since the 1990s, the nature of both coaching and mentoring has been much debated. Some have sought to converge definitions and practices; others to diverge. The debate continues. Consensus is elusive yet the use of coaching and mentoring as descriptive terms for a diverse range of development services has continued to grow and evolve. This prompts a number of questions, including:

Might coaching and mentoring be absorbed within a blend of development processes? What role will non-clinical supervision have? What new language and disciplines might come to the fore by, say, 2029? What impact will diversity and multiculturalism have? What influence will economic factors and changing business practices have? These and many other questions arise.

How you can contribute

We want to include a wide range of perspectives and experiences, and you can contribute in a variety of creative and unusual ways. For example, you can:

- Write an article in fairly typical format (perhaps 1500 - 3000 words), illustrating in-depth and real-world experiences, particularly those that represent and give voice to a wider group of practitioners. Case studies and commentary on practical developments are very welcome here.
- Post lively views and opinions on the AMED website (blog/Discussion Forum), saying whatever you like about the subject (as long as it's legal and not libellous!). We will search the posts for extracts to include in a commentary in the journal.
- Offer quick soundbites via twitter #AMEDCMN or, for a few more words, the blog/Discussion Forum we've created here (maximum 150 words), or email them direct to us.
- Provide short videos (3 or 4 minutes maximum), illustrating your views on coaching or mentoring, sharing case studies or clips from events or presentations. Links to sites like YouTube or Vimeo are perfectly acceptable.
- Comment on and share hyperlinks to published web content or resources you think are relevant and interesting
- If writing isn't your thing, send in your original songs, poems, images, sketches, paintings or drawings, inspired by or inspiring a particular theme or idea.
- Participate in **a post-publication event (provisionally in March 2015, at Oxford Brookes University**), which will develop further our discussions. You'll have every opportunity to contribute towards shaping the nature of this event, and to participate in evolving this conversation.
- If all else fails, answers on a postcard!

Please note that we do not publish articles that are overtly self-promotional or advertorial, and we will need reassurance that copyright hasn't been breached.

What to do now

You can start to contribute your thoughts and ideas immediately in the Discussion Forum or blog or tweet using #AMEDCMN

What support can you expect?

If you have ideas, we can help you to shape them into publishable content. The *e-O&P* Editorial Board and the Guest Editors of this edition will support you in developing your contribution in any way we can to co-create a vibrant, exciting and unusual publication. Resources we may be able to offer include 'critical friends' to help you with informal writing support, a form of editorial coaching or mentoring if appropriate, access to the AMED Writers' Group, and generally a friendly, understanding and supportive presence.

How this special edition has come about

Recently Oxford Brookes University's Coaching and Mentoring Society (OBCAMS) hosted a special retrospective gathering to celebrate the work of the Coaching and Mentoring Network (CMN) over the last 15 years, and to initiate a conversation about what the future might hold.

The whole process has re-kindled long standing relationships including those between AMED and CMN, which began around 15 years ago. It reminded us that we were both formed with a similar ethos of connecting communities to share and collaborate whilst also having distinctive yet complementary identities and aspirations. This retrospective sparked a discussion about future possibilities for coaching and mentoring, and also presented AMED and the CMN with an opportunity to collaborate once again.

We are all excited about the explorations and collaborations that will emerge through this special edition, and we invite you most warmly to help shape this conversation.

Best wishes

Pauline Willis E: paulinew@coachingnetwork.org.uk; T: 01865 784388, and

Anna Britnor Guest, E: annabg@coachingnetwork.org.uk; T: 01488 638119

Guest Editors, Winter 2014 *e-O&P*

Your invitation to become more involved with e-O&P

About e-O&P:

e-O&P is AMED's quarterly online journal, available in pdf format, for academics, professionals, managers and consultants at all stages of their careers. It addresses innovative approaches to personal, professional and organisational development in a reflective and accessible way. It has a practical bias with a balance of well-written thought pieces, case studies, interviews, articles, reviews and editorials. Our articles are succinct, engaging, authentic and easy to read. We maintain our high standards of writing through the careful selection of relevant themes and our support of outstanding guest editors.

About our guest editors:

Once selected, our editors have a pretty free hand within a broad set of guidelines. Guest editors deliver to the *e-O&P* editorial board a set of articles of suitable quality, ready for publication, according to a pre-arranged schedule. This involves editors in inviting proposals for contributions, identifying authors, commissioning stimulating articles, reviewing, and where appropriate, critiquing drafts and proof-reading final copy.

About our 'Critical Friends':

For their particular edition, guest editors often find it useful to create a small, temporary editorial team to support them, including 'Critical Friends'. The *e-O&P* editorial board is happy to help them find such collaborators, and is on hand to explore any issues or concerns that arise, bearing in mind our limited time to engage in extensive, detailed reading or conversations.

We are always looking to expand *e-O&P*'s network of 'Critical Friends', who would be available to guest editors or individual authors on request. Depending on their preferences and any specific need, Critical Friends can help by reading drafts, offering constructive feedback, clarifying ideas, commenting on style, providing encouragement, or by proof-reading or copy-editing pre-publication texts. In return, this offers Critical Friends the opportunity to develop greater insight into, and awareness of possibilities for, their own writing and professional practice. They might even consider subsequently becoming a guest editor or author for *e-O&P*.

Are you interested in joining our exciting project?

If so, please contact one of us on the *e-O&P* editorial board as soon as possible. We'd love to hear from you.

Bob MacKenzie Tel: 02380-238458 bob_mackenzie@btinternet.com

David McAra Tel: 07917-689344 David.McAra@petrotechnics.com

A note about inter-logics

We are specialists in learning and development – with particular emphasis on collaborative management and organisational learning. We have extensive experience in public, governmental and commercial sectors and are pioneers of effective methodologies for enabling 'integration', 'co-production', multi-stakeholder working and resolving 'wicked problems'.

Our registered office is in S. Yorkshire with a satellite office in Dumfries & Galloway we have extensive UK and international experience.

Directors and associates are renowned practitioners and authors (Pedler, Burgoyne & Boydell) of seminal works on organisational learning and self development.

Contact Chris Blantern or Tom Boydell: cblantern@inter-logics.net or tboydell@inter-logics.net

A note about AMED

AMED stands for the Association for Management Education and Development, www.amed.org.uk. We are a long-established membership organisation and educational charity devoted to developing people and organisations. Our purpose is to serve as a forum for people who want to share, learn and experiment, and find support, encouragement, and innovative ways of communicating. Our conversations are open, constructive, and facilitated.

At AMED, we strive to benefit our members and the wider society. Exclusive Member benefits include excellent, discounted professional indemnity cover, free copies of the quarterly journal *e-O&P*, and discounted fees for participation in a range of face-to-face events, special interest groups, and our interactive website. We aim to build on our three cornerstones of ***knowledge***, ***innovation*** and ***networking*** in the digital age. Wherever we can, AMED Members, Networkers and Guests seek to work with likeminded individuals and organisations, to generate synergy and critical mass for change.

To find out more about us, you are welcome to visit our website www.amed.org.uk, or contact Linda Williams, our Membership Administrator, E: amedoffice@amed.org.uk, T: 0300 365 1247