

Unleashing Innovation from a Systems Practice Perspective

Dr Luke Roberts

A guided tour of Applied Complexity

Hub Theatre

Day 2 from 15:20 to 15:45



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What is the paradigm that we are changing systems in?

Transcending Paradigms (Level 1): The highest form of leverage, according to Meadows, is the ability to rise above any single paradigm and recognize that no single mental model is "true". This critical reflection allows for greater flexibility and humility, making it possible to choose or create new paradigms that are better suited to a given purpose



Donella Meadows' work on paradigms explains that a society's deepest beliefs and assumptions form the foundation of its systems, goals, and behaviours. This is part of her "12 Leverage Points" framework; she identified changing the paradigm as the second most powerful way to intervene in and transform a system.



Whose words are coming out of our mouths in a meeting on a Tuesday afternoon?



Socks

My journey into System

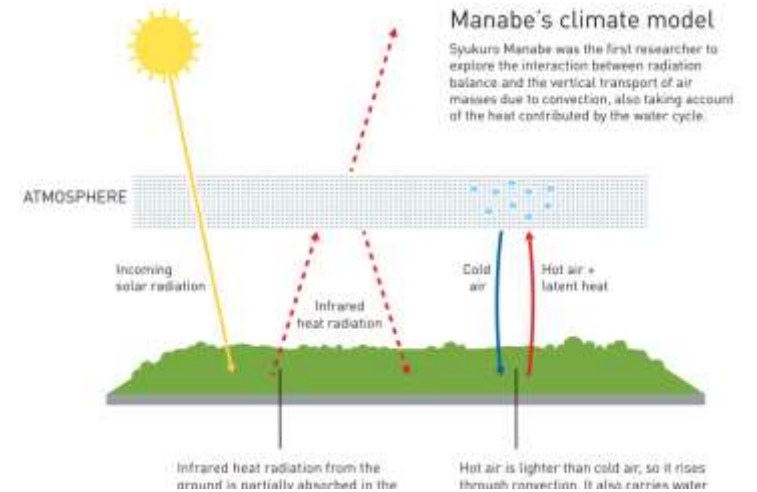
- Early in my career I read a book on whole system approaches and facilitation.
- I really liked creative facilitation such open space principles and world café.
- I did my MBA with the OU, and the last thing it covered was Systems.
- I did my System Practice course with the OU – and loved it!
- During my MEd, I looked at the Whole School Approach to system change...

What I discovered was...

- That the research did not support this model- though it was government mantra.
- The whole was hard to find.
- That the network shape in the system were strong indicators of failure.
- That time for change lasted three years then the school either reverted back or co-opted the language of change.

Complexity Theory and a Complexity Approach

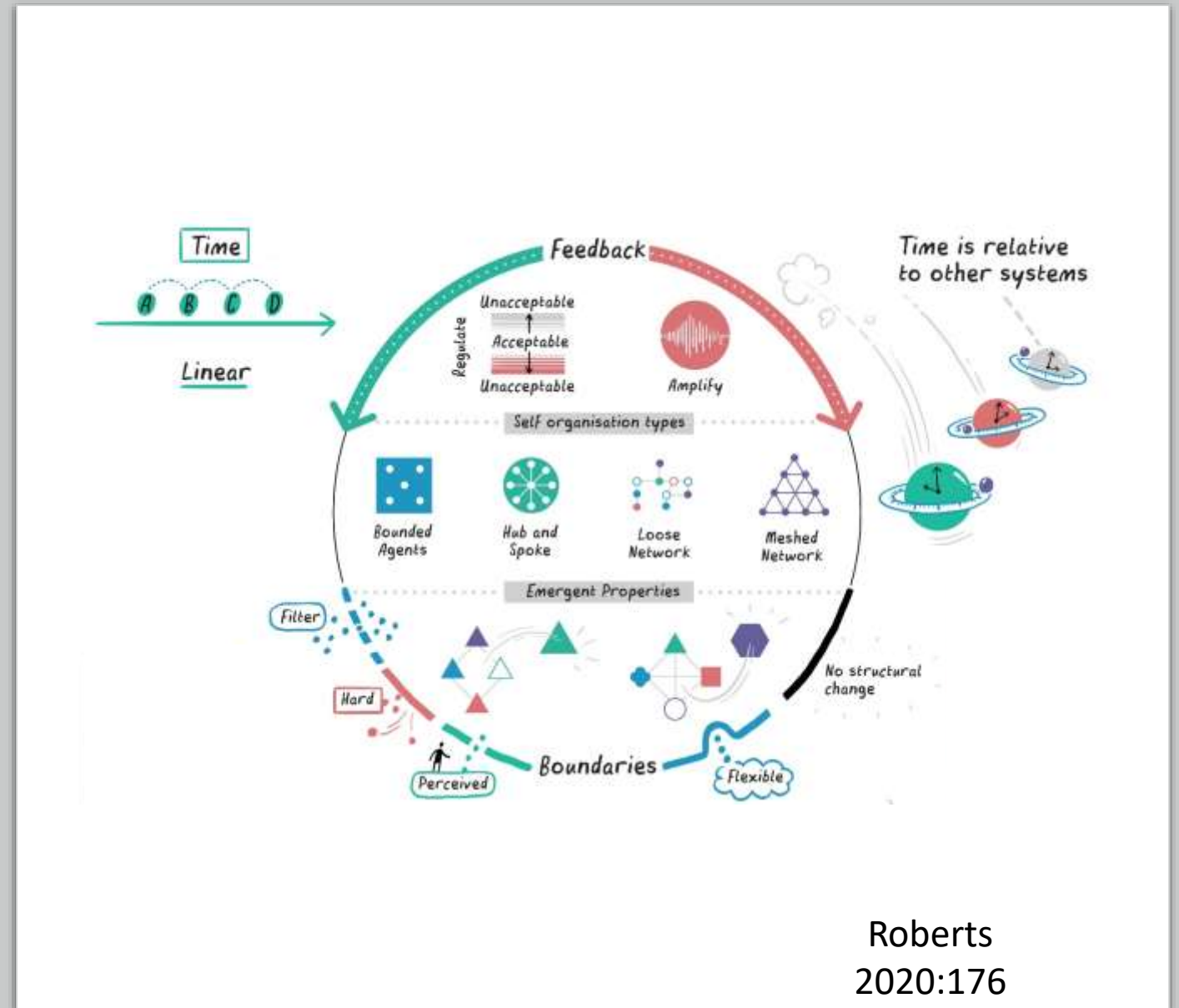
- Complexity Theory creates models of the world and then tests them against reality.
- A complexity approach engages with the world to create models of reality.



A Complex Adaptive System:

- *The interdisciplinary understanding of systems phenomena as composed of open systems with emergent properties (**feedback, self-organisation, emergence, system boundaries, and the relativity of system time**) and transformational potential through the interplay between human agency and the systems they are immersed within.*

Roberts 2020:76



Roberts
2020:176

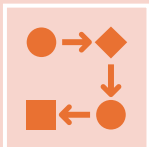
I like definitions:



For the purpose of this presentation



I am going to define Creativity as: "The act of new connections“.



I am going to define Innvoation as: **The emergence of a new feature/behaviour of the system that creates new capabilities, new ways of being or a metamorphosis in the system."**



A distinction between the methodology and analytical lens

- I started to be drawn to complexity theory as a means of understanding system phenomena.
- In my PhD I was told that I could not use complexity theory as a intervention and an analytical lens so I had to make a choice.
- I though I need a methodology that is practical and can deal with “messy, wicked and ambiguous situations and can also be hopefully empowering”

The intervention:

- Soft Systems Methodology can be defined as:

Soft systems methodology (SSM) is an approach for tackling problematic, messy situations for all kinds. It is an action-orientated process of enquiry into problematic situations in which users learn their way from finding out about the situation, to taking action to improve it.

Checkland P. and Poulter, J (2006), Learning for action: A short definitive account of soft systems methodology and its uses for practitioners.

Worldview from pupils

Case study school 1	Case study school 2	Case study school 3 and 4
Snitch Culture	Snitch Culture	3 – no issue 4 – not identified
Social Media and cyberbullying	Social media and Cyberbullying	Social Media and Cyberbullying
Restorative practice used for teacher-pupil	Very good sanctions model in place	3 Restorative practice used for teacher-pupil 4 Experience but a good idea

Worldview from staff

Case study school 1	Case study school 2	Case study school 3 and 4
Detention versus restorative justice	Banter becomes bullying	Bullying linked to financial and material things
Restorative Justice – get them sent out and then have a discussion	Social media – streaks	Impact of social media on pupils lowering empathy
Teachers not showing up for a restorative meeting	Issue of status in the school	3 Keeping language original tropes 4 challenge of moving pupils from a punitive system to a restorative systems

Worldview of Parents

Case study School 1	Case Study School 2	Case Study School 3 and 4
No parent interviews – school had hoped to achieve this but could not get engagement	Three parent interviews (one a member of the school)	10 parents in focus group
	Important for their child to have other trusted adults	Parents had selected the school because of its restorative work
	Concern over social media and impact having on pupils and bullying	Concern over social media and impact having on pupils and bullying
	No knowledge of restorative approaches in school	Fear of child being labelled but clear that this would be addressed restoratively

Using the SSM and realising that something else is going on:



DURING ONE OF THE SESSIONS, I REALISED THEY WERE NOT PRESENT.



I ALSO HAD TWO SCHOOLS THAT REALLY STRUGGLED TO PARTICIPATE.

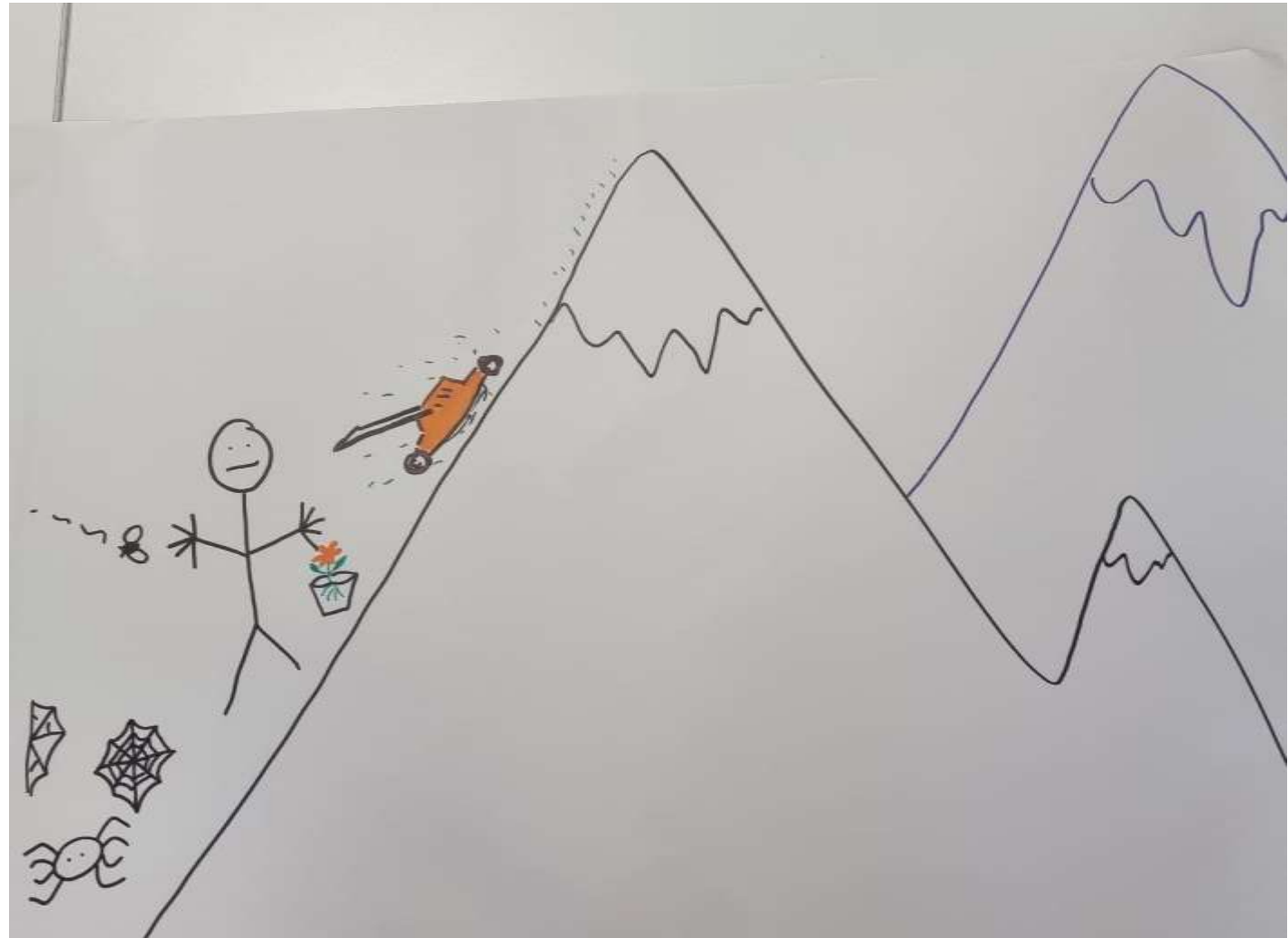


NO FEEDBACK AS A FORM OF FEEDBACK.

Social Energy in Complex Adaptive Systems A.I.M

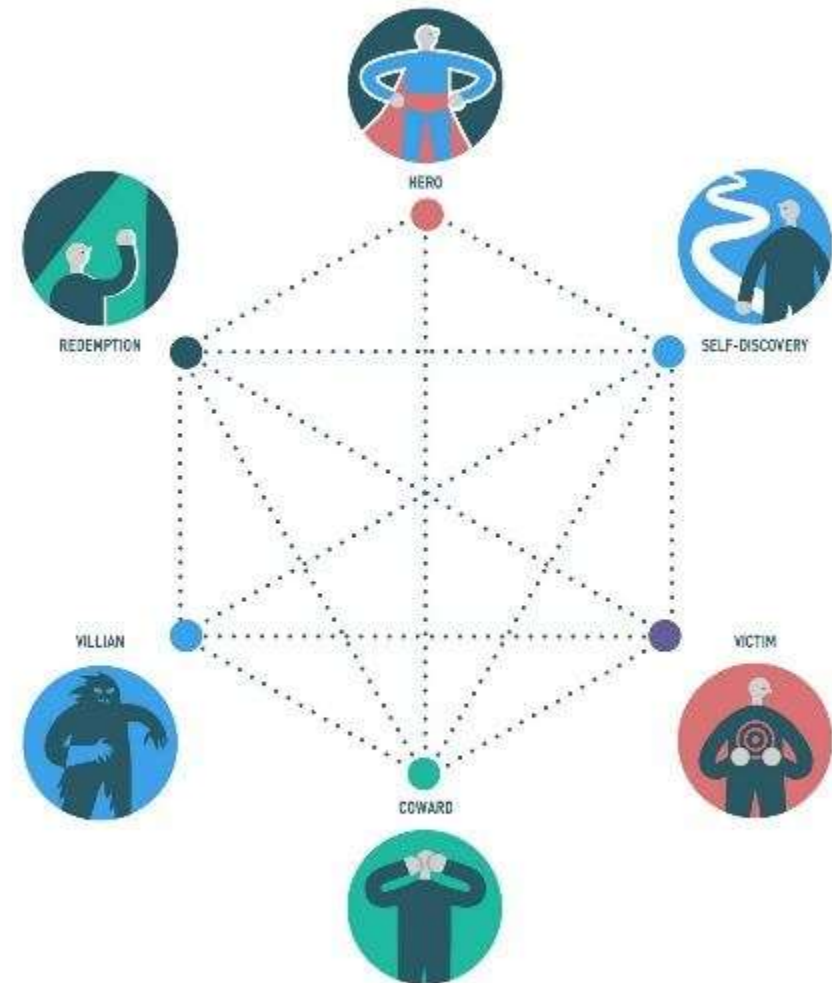
- Attention as a form of energy.
- Information – as distinct from data – is a form of energy.
- Money as a form of energy.

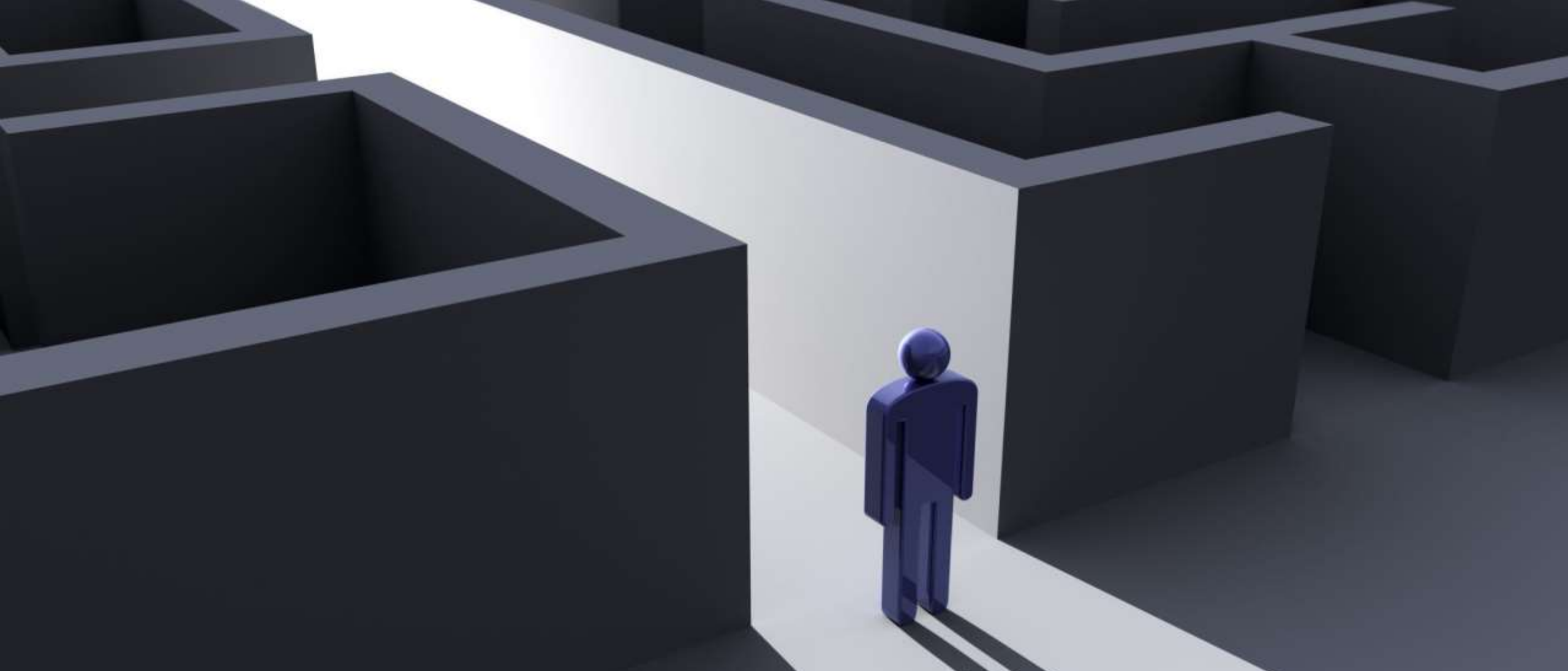
Present system state:
a broken cobweb,
whilst mowing the
grass on the side of a
mountain, with a
plant which is never
given time to root.



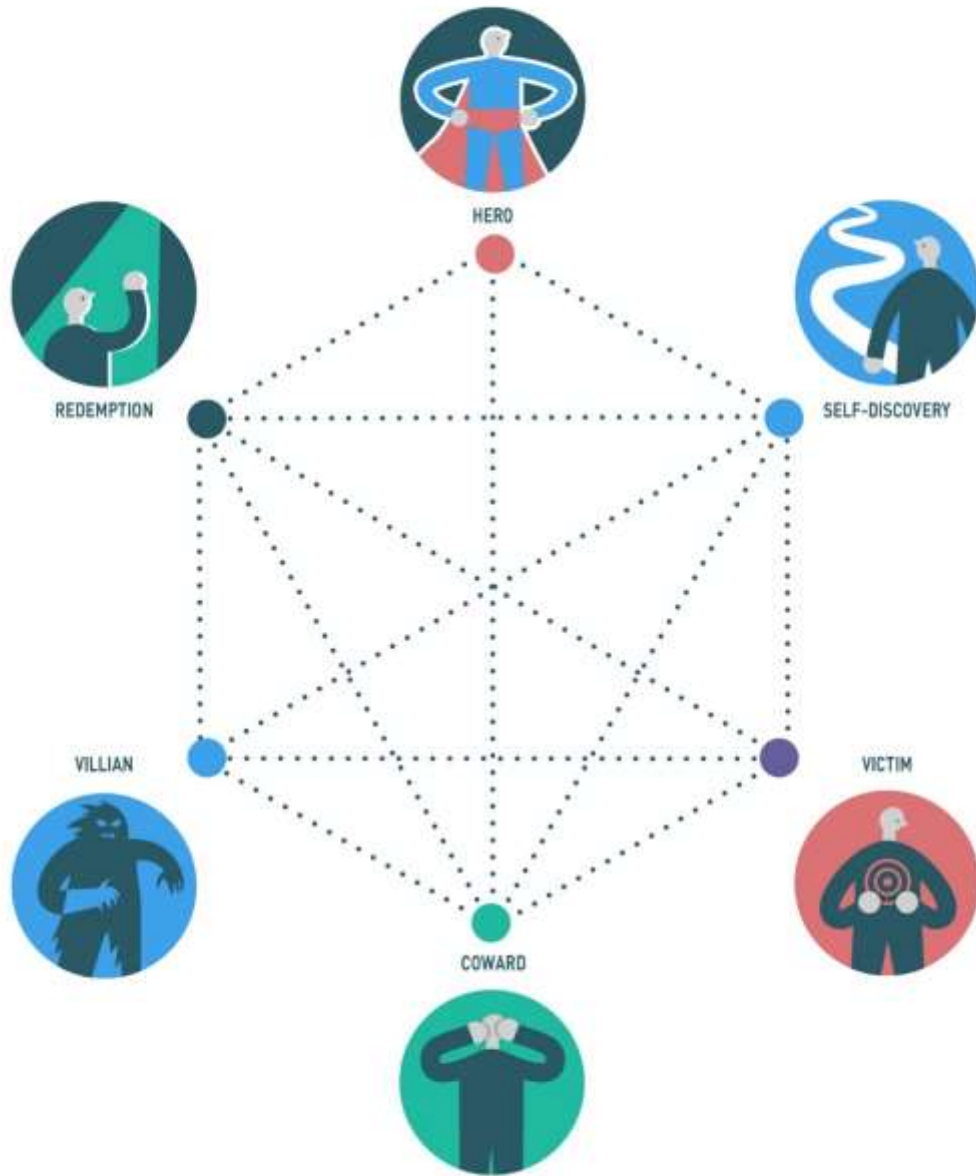
Who is addressing the narrative in the system?

- The story of a social system is as important the performance of the system.
 - Recognizing the type of story that is being told helps to identify flows and resistance in the system.
1. Hero narrative
 2. Self-discovery narrative
 3. Victim narrative
 4. Coward narrative
 5. Villain narrative
 6. Redemption narrative





The most powerful narrative for inaction?



The narrative in the prisons:

- Prison staff were very defensive.
- “you don’t understand”
- “it will never work”
- “the boys won’t engage”
- “things are getting worse”
- “we need more staff”
- “they are more dangerous than ever”

VERBAL

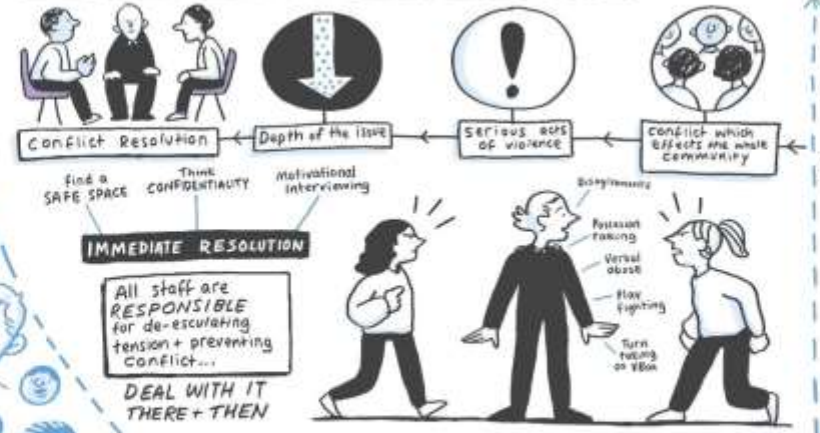
Gossip
RUMOUR

RESTRICTS FREE-FLOW IN OUR COMMUNITY

Everyday tensions that build up from LIVING TOGETHER

MEDWAY STC

What is resolved and by whom...



IMMEDIATE RESOLUTION

All staff are RESPONSIBLE for de-escalating tension + preventing conflict...

DEAL WITH IT THERE + THEN



Young People



LOW

HIGH



SCALE OF CONFLICT



CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Helps maintain FREE-FLOW in our community

Improves SKILLS FOR LIFE

LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

Staff need to be CLEAR about the SKILLS Young People develop in CONFLICT RESOLUTION

MATURITY

LOOKING BEYOND THE CONFLICT TO SEE MY FUTURE SELF



GANG ISSUES



BULLYING



Disrespecting TAGS



ONCE I'm LABELLED a BULLY, I might as well behave like one!



TYPES OF CONFLICT

GRAFFITI



CONFLICT RESOLUTION



The Purpose
of the Systems
is what is
does. -
Stanford Beer.

- Worldviews will give you insights into the different perspectives of the system.
- How participants in the system engage with a system perspective.
- Focus on the behaviour of the complex adaptive system rather than what it is exposed of the intentions of the designers.

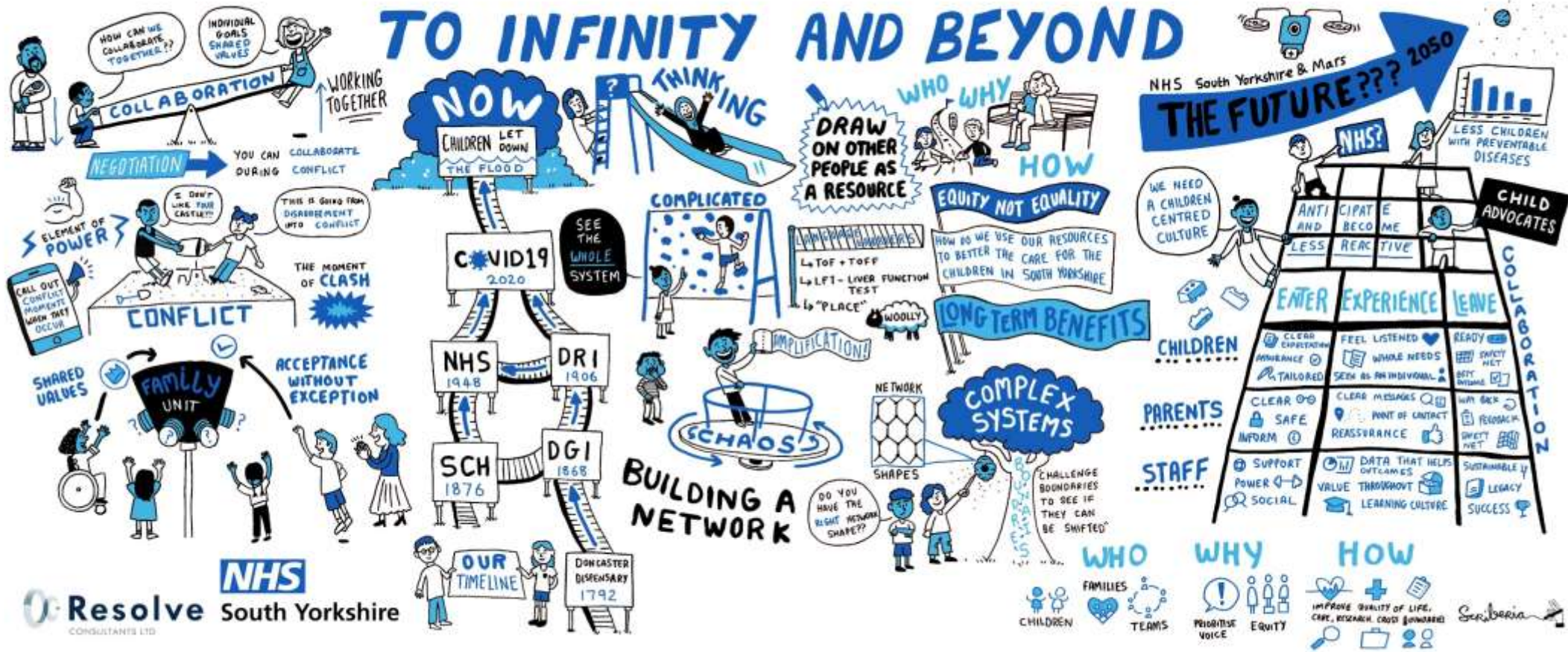
Using social energy in the system

Where they put their attention was important – because it influenced the information and where money flowed.

Deficit models where form of avoidance rather than system change, the system change needed to be goal orientated.

In the prison service, this means a different focus – peace.

TO INFINITY AND BEYOND



NHS MAPPING SYSTEMS

SYSTEMS ARE EVERYWHERE
- MAKING A CUP OF TEA
IS A SYSTEM!



THE SYSTEM IS ORGANIC
AND CAN CHANGE,
METAMORPHISE



EMERGENCE
is the key to a
COMPLEX SYSTEM

COMPLEX ADAPTIVE SYSTEMS
HAVE THE ABILITY TO CREATE
NEW PROPERTIES AND ABILITIES

IF WE DON'T HAVE A SHARED
VISION & PURPOSE...

WE WON'T KNOW WHERE
WE'RE GOING, AND SO WE
DON'T KNOW WHEN
WE'VE ARRIVED



LANGUAGE IS CRITICAL
TO UNDERSTANDING
WHAT ROLES WE PLAY
AND ON INCLUSION
AND BOUNDARIES

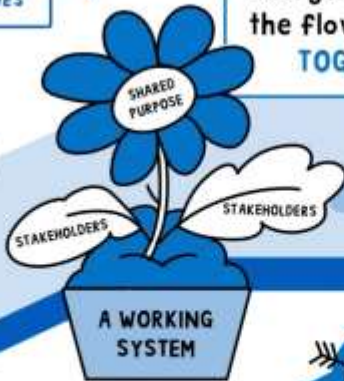


Emergence is when
we have shared
COMMUNICATION AND
COLLABORATION

Emergence needs
TIME AND SPACE
to change

Emergence can be
PLANNED or ORGANIC

Emergence is when
the flower COMES
TOGETHER!



Collaborating to benefit
all the community, not
just some sections of it



Having shared goals
and outcome, and a
common language



OUR SYSTEM STATEMENT

Joining up processes and
creating a sense of shared
accountability and building
relationships



Creating better
integrations of
pathways and better
use of resources



Working together on
population health and
wellbeing, benefiting
individuals and the
population and
organisations

CURRENT SYSTEM METAPHOR

A SCHOOL PLAYGROUND:
DEPENDING ON WHERE
YOU ARE YOU ARE IN A
FOG OR HAVE CLARITY

A JEWEL ON THE
CROWN THAT
NEEDS
POLISHING

A FLOURISHING GARDEN
WITH THE RIGHT SOIL
AND FOUNDATION TO
NURTURE NEW GROWTH

AN ARGUMENTATIVE
TEENAGER! PUSHING
AGAINST THE RULES

BAKING THE PERFECT
CAKE. DO WE ALL
FOLLOW THE SAME
RECIPE? WHO GETS
TO EAT THE CAKE?



FUTURE SYSTEM METAPHOR

Services at place
in GENUINE
PARTNERSHIP



Patient choice at the
HEART of what we do

THE HEART CAN
BE REAL AND
DIGITAL!

A utopia of all the
previous metaphors

A more
empathetic
society

WHAT THE FUTURE BRINGS IN 2050

AN AGEING
POPULATION - AGE
WELL, LIVE WELL



INVESTING
RESOURCES IN
UPSTREAM
PREVENTION



FEWER CRISIS
RESPONSES, MORE
INVESTMENT IN
WHOLE WELLBEING



ADVANCEMENT IN
TECHNOLOGY TO ENABLE
EARLY IDENTIFICATION
OF DISEASES

IMPROVEMENT OF
MENTAL HEALTH, OR
A REGRESSION



VIRTUAL
HEALTHCARE,
INCREASE IN
AUTONOMY



YOUNG PEOPLE WITH CARE EXPERIENCE

JOURNEY THROUGH THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEMS

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

Adverse Childhood Experiences



SCHOOL

School Exclusion

Peer relationships experiment with crime

CHILDRENS HOMES



HIGH DEPENDENCY LOW EMPATHY SYSTEM

Childrens Home/Foster parents – criminalisation of behaviour incidents



Police engagement which escalates

SILOED RESPONSIBILITIES



FRAGMENTED VIEW

TURNING 18:



Expected to live independently



Staff to child ratio disappears



Dropped into the adult system

THE FIRST CLIFF EDGE

THE ADULT SYSTEM

BUT THERE IS A BETTER WAY!

RESTORATIVE PRACTICE



Short and long term goals

Aim high!

THE ASPIRATION ENGINE



AMBITIOUS FOR THE FUTURE TOGETHER



Professional training on care experience linked to trauma and attachment

Leaving custody with no relationship support

Prison

THE SECOND CLIFF EDGE

No place to live



Drugs



Suicide risk

COLLABORATION INDICATORS

- Universal family
- Empathy
- Young person centred training



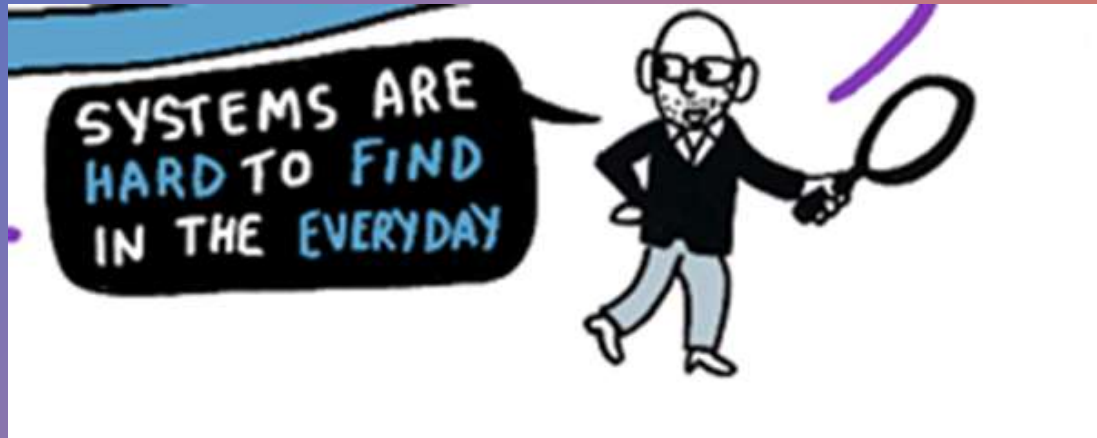
Measuring the interaction of services up-lifting the experience of young people with care experience

COLLABORATION LEVELS

National Regional
Ministers Local



CARE LEAVER COVENANT



In conclusion

- System practice allows engagement with actors to understand and empathise with the system as is.
- It has the power to unleash innovation in a context that is relevant and relatable to the system of interest.
- The risk is that it can be co-opted into mechanistic/component paradigms to give the illusion of the change.
- A complexity approach allows for the focus to remain on the social energy present in the system – what makes social systems adapt.

If you want to know more:

- My book is *Leading Schools and Sustaining Innovation: How to Think Big and Differently in Complex Adaptive Systems*.
- Website: <https://www.resolve-consultants.co.uk/>
- LinkedIn Luke Roberts (Complexity Thinking)

