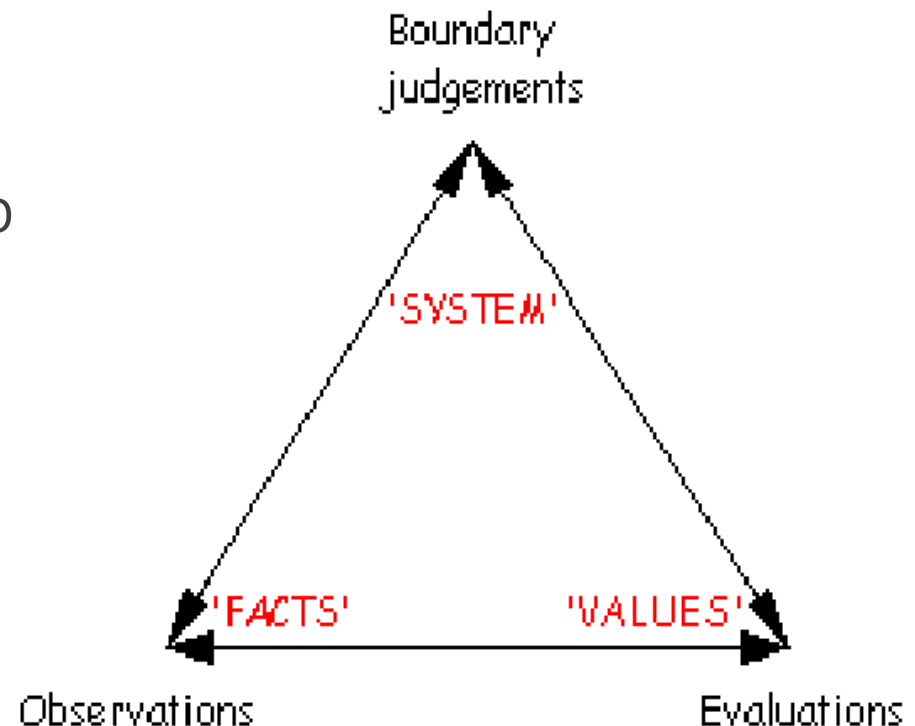


Systems Thinking using Critical Systems Heuristics

Tony Korycki – M GOO
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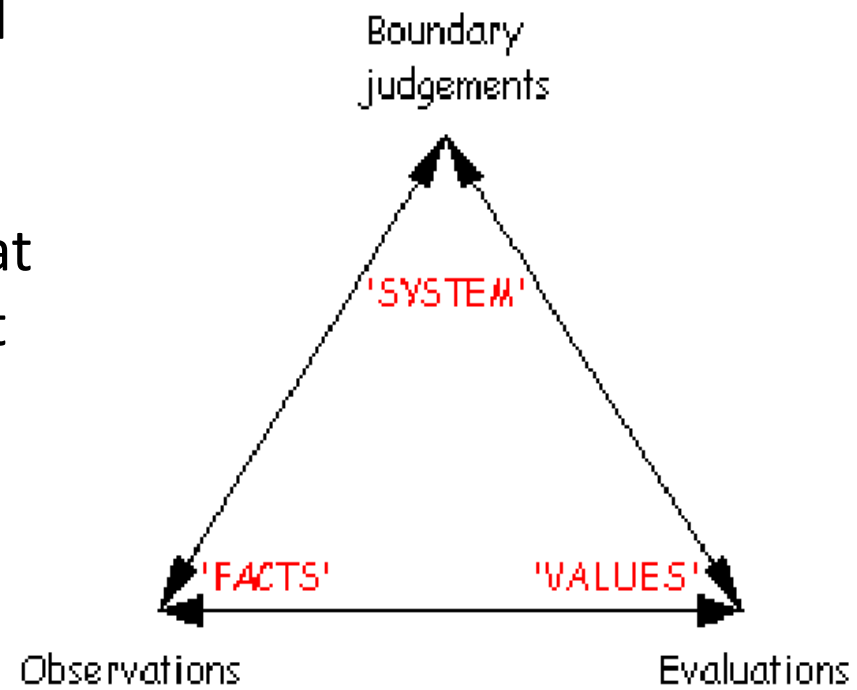


Systems Thinking practice – a reminder ...

- Employed where complex situations exist that cannot be solved by any one organisation or person, but which require cross-boundary collaboration within and across organisations.
- Supports decision-makers in strategic leadership roles to understand and address complex and 'wicked' situations through analysis, advice and facilitation. Typically have no single 'owner' or cause, and no simple solution (all attempted solutions have consequences, some unintended).
- Requires multidisciplinary, multi-organisational responses with sensitive attention to diverse viewpoints, behaviour, culture and politics.
- Characterised by:
 - collaborative enquiry and analysis using systemic models and tools,
 - gathering and synthesizing of diverse evidence types,
 - development of options for intervention and investment,
 - facilitation of dialogue,
 - learning – single, meta and triple-loop,
 - empathetic navigation of power dynamics and politics.

Critical Systems Heuristics (CSH) – Introduction

- A framework of questions about a situation including what is (and what ought to be) its purpose and its source of legitimacy and who are (and who ought to be) its beneficiaries.
- Developed by Werner Ulrich, CSH is used to surface, elaborate, and critically consider boundary judgments, that is, the ways in which people/groups decide what is relevant to a system of interest (in a situation of concern).
- Not pictorial, but may draw on causal models or systems maps.



- Reflective practice based on practical philosophy and systems thinking*.
- Three major concerns:
 - aim is to enhance the ‘critical’ (reflective) competence not only of well-trained professionals and decision-makers but also of ordinary people (actors in a situation).
 - reflective practice cannot be secured by theoretical means only but requires ‘heuristic’ support in the form of questions and argumentation tools that make a difference in practice.
 - ‘systems’ thinking can provide us with a useful starting point for understanding the methodological requirements of such an approach to reflective practice.

CSH Practice Principles

Critical approach ...

- No single right way to decide issues; answers depend on personal interests and views, value assumptions, etc,
- Does not yield any single right answers; but can support processes of reflection and debate about alternative assumptions.

Systems thinking ...

- All problem definitions, solution proposals, evaluations of outcomes, depend on prior judgments about the relevant 'whole system' to be looked at,
- These support 'boundary judgments', as they define boundaries of a reference system that is constitutive of the meaning of a proposition ... for which it is valid.

Heuristics ...

- 'the art (or practice) of discovery'; Greek verb 'heurisk-ein' means to find or to discover,
- Professional practice cannot do without heuristics; it usually starts from 'soft' (ill-defined, qualitative) issues and what kinds of change represent improvement,
- Heuristic procedures serve to identify and explore relevant problem aspects, assumptions, questions, or solution strategies.

CSH Framework

Boundary categories

1. Client
2. Purpose
3. Measure of improvement
4. Decision-maker
5. Resources
6. Decision environment
7. Professional
8. Expertise
9. Guarantee
10. Witness
11. Emancipation
12. World view

Boundary issues

Sources of
motivation

Sources of
power

Sources of
knowledge

Sources of
legitimation

Those
involved

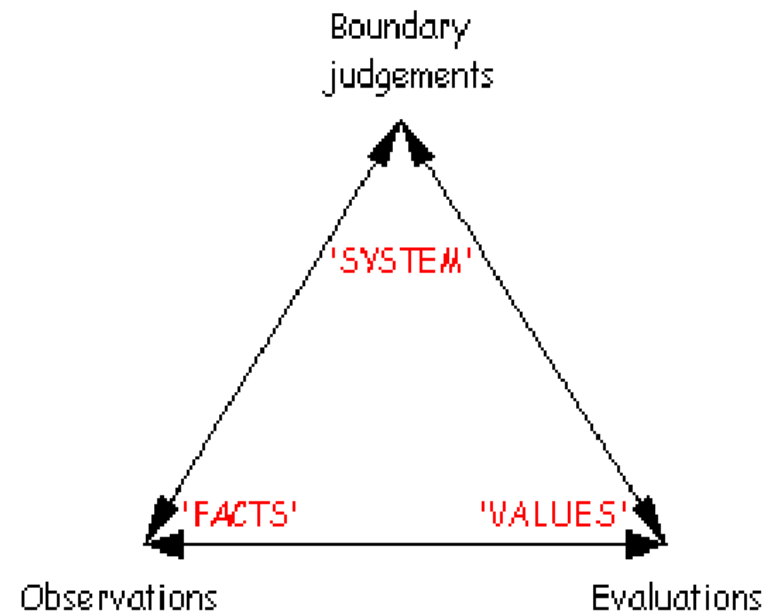
Those
affected

*Reference system (of
concern) ...*

*... to determine what
observations (facts)
and evaluations
(values) are
considered relevant ...*

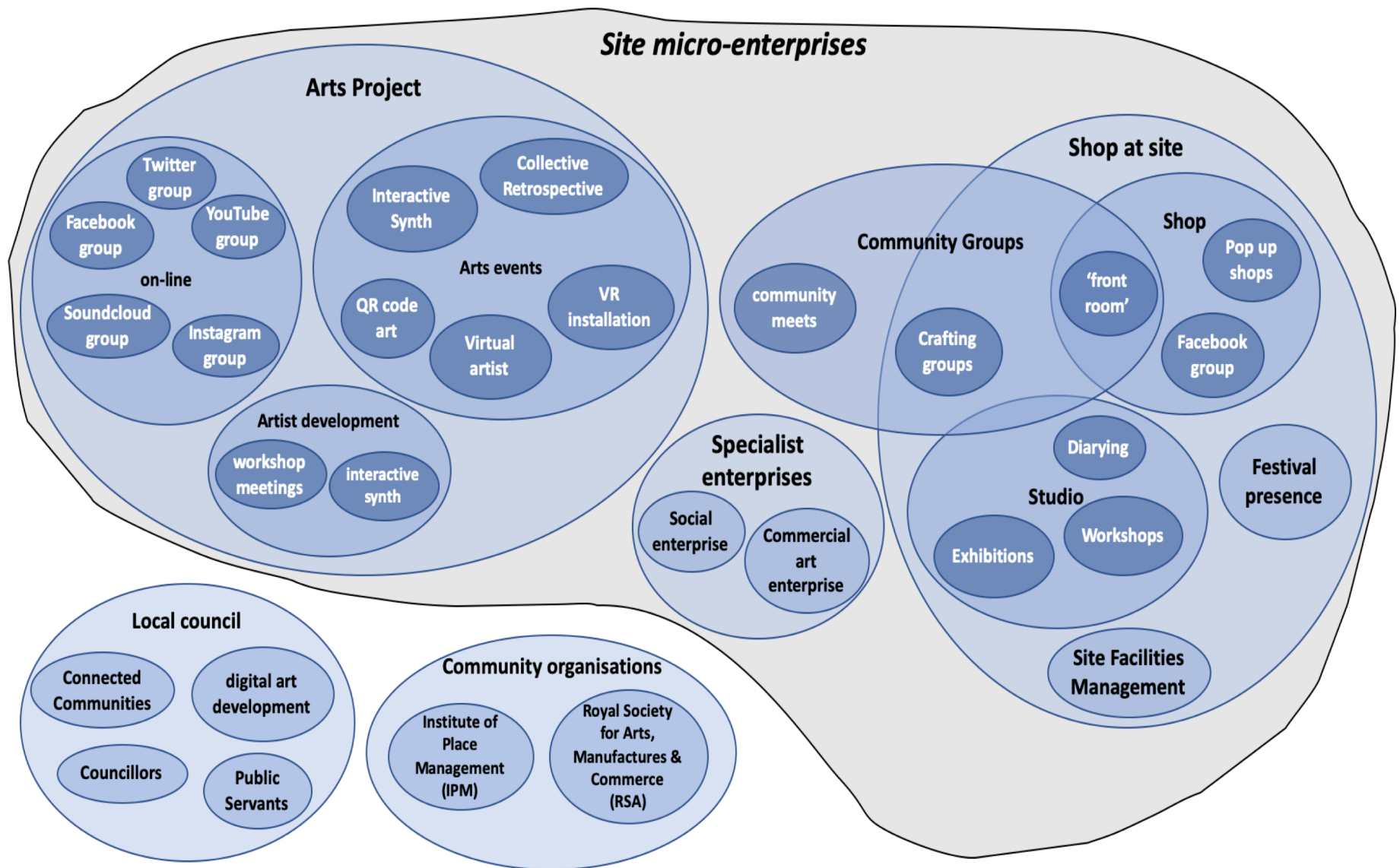
*... when it comes to
assessing the merits
or defects of a
proposition (about
action).*

- CSH is concerned not only with **purposive evaluation**, where a system has a defined goal and the focus lies in evaluating the means of reaching it, but more broadly with **purposeful evaluation**, where both means and ends become subjects of inquiry.
- Premise - our understandings of any situation are inherently incomplete, and based on selective application of knowledge. By systematically questioning sources of motivation, control, expertise, and legitimation, we make boundary judgments explicit and defensible.
- Goal is to elaborate **many perspectives** on a situation, with a broader aim to share these and cut down on actors 'talking past' each other; promoting mutual understanding.
- Don't forget to gain a basic understanding of scope and shape.



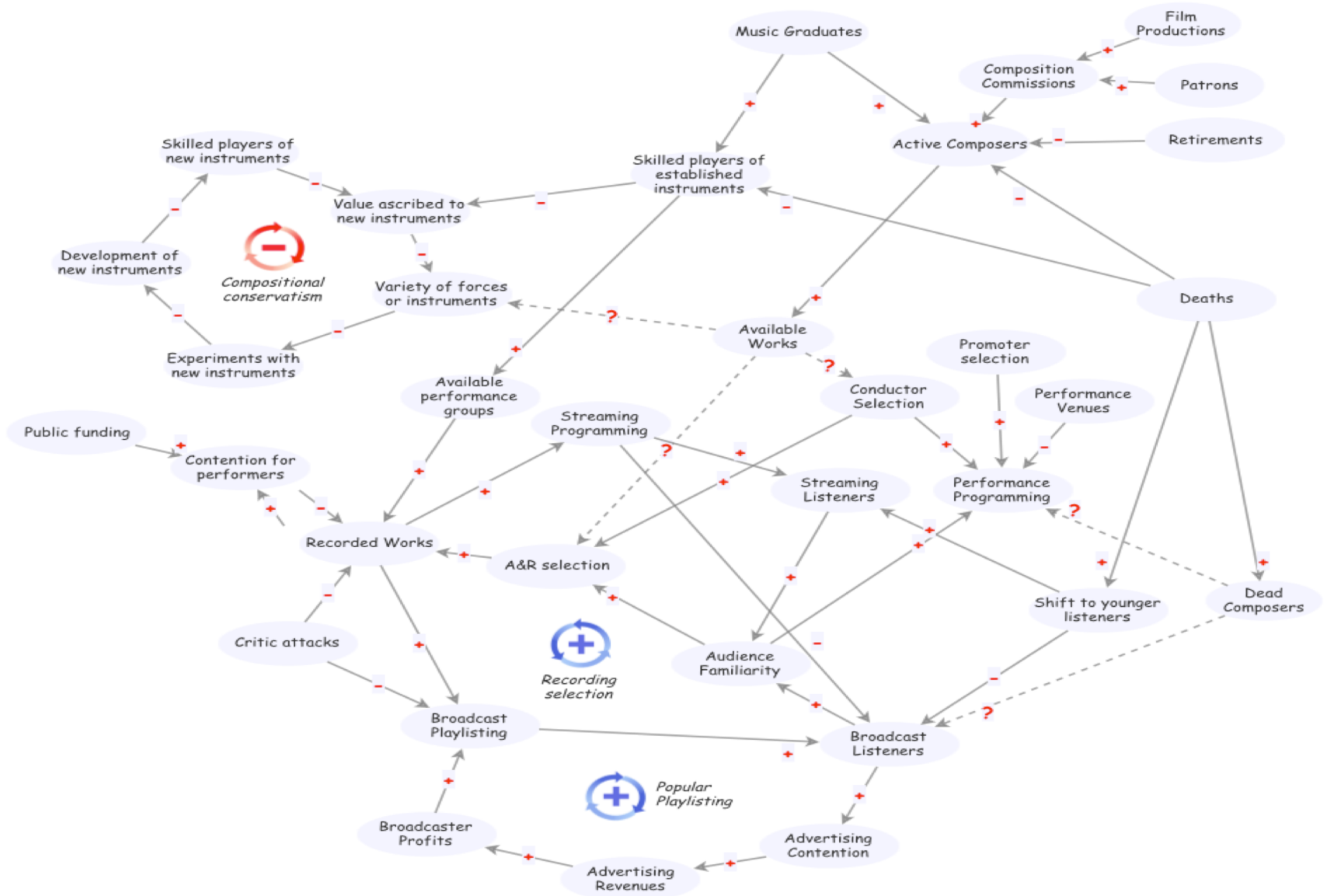
Be prepared to do supporting Systems Mapping

... to understand the structure and boundary of what you want to critically evaluate



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... to understand the dynamic influences and feedback loops in a situation



CSH Reference System Definition

	What (stakes)	Who (stakeholders)	Key issues (stakeholdings)
Sources of Motivation	(<u>purpose</u> , q2) What ought to be/is the purpose of system (S)?	(<u>beneficiary</u> , q1) Who ought to be/is the intended beneficiary of S?	(<u>measure of success</u> , q3) What ought to be/is S's measure(s) of success?
Sources of Control	(<u>resources</u> , q5) What conditions of success ought to be/are under the control of S?	(<u>decision maker</u> , q4) Who ought to be/is in control of the conditions of success of S?	(<u>decision environment</u> , q6) What conditions of success ought to be/are outside the control of decision maker?
Sources of Knowledge	(<u>expertise</u> , q8) What ought to be/are relevant knowledge and skills for S?	(<u>expert</u> , q7) Who ought to be/is providing relevant knowledge and skills for S?	(<u>guarantor</u> , q9) What ought to be/are regarded as assurances of successful implementation of S?
Sources of Legitimacy	(<u>emancipation</u> , q11) What ought to be/are the opportunities for the interests of those negatively affected to have expression and freedom from the worldview of S?	(<u>witness</u> , q10) Who ought to be/is representing the interests of those negatively affected by but not involved with S?	(<u>worldviews</u> , q12) What space ought to be/is available for reconciling differing worldviews regarding S, among those involved and affected?

Remember: critique 'is/are' against 'ought to be', forms basis for action!

... to corporate Process Governance

	What (stakes)	Who (stakeholders)	Key issues (stakeholdings)
Sources of Motivation	(purpose, q2) To ensure a fit for purpose set of primary and supporting processes, to serve customers and stakeholders, in a common structure, in which we manage ownership and effective change control.	(beneficiary, q1) Management, in having a reference point for how the critical activities of the business fit together and are managed. Our customers (secondary), in terms of receiving a consistent service experience.	(measure of success, q3) Assessment of process maturity. Customers and people agree that our processes serve them well and are effective and efficient in use.
Critique 'is' against 'ought'	Ownership technocratic and seen as consultant led, rather than owned by organisation. Little interest and adoption of process maturity assessment as a mechanism to support improvement and development of the system of process governance – many Operational Process Owners partially engaged.		
Sources of Control	(resources, q5) Process architecture, RAPID, RACI models and agreed methods for process governance, modelling, review and publication.	(decision maker, q4) Service operating model director, supported by recommendations and expertise from team.	(decision environment, q6) Group decisions about tools, architecture and methods. Customer and peoples' expectations about processes.
Critique 'is' against 'ought'	Too much consultant-led activity, with disjoints between processes, RACI and RAPID as yet unresolved. Poor understanding of what's important for customers and how it drives process change. Fiddling around with procedural change, without reflecting this back into real process change, e.g. via operational communications and joint improvement activity.		

... to corporate Process Governance

	What (stakes)	Who (stakeholders)	Key issues (stakeholdings)
Sources of Knowledge	(expertise, q8) Service operating model process leads, and all process design authorities and product and service developers.	(expert, q7) Transformation team, via service operating model team, so that headcount for product and service development is sufficient.	(guarantor, q9) Director and head of dept, via governance mechanisms. Use of process maturity assessment.
Critique 'is' against 'ought'	<p>Knowledge aspects of role largely neglected.</p> <p>Still don't have a rational approach to resourcing key roles, with programme disciplines that understand transitional deliverables and not the need for ongoing and consistent governance of the entire process estate.</p>		

	What (stakes)	Who (stakeholders)	Key issues (stakeholdings)
Sources of Legitimacy	(emancipation, q11) Process governance forums at relevant levels to surface issues. Contract service wraps to be allowed to 'justify' variants where contractually essential.	(witness, q10) Operational Process Owners and Process Managers - to express needs, concerns, requirements and priorities for those involved in process governance.	(worldviews, q12) Use of process governance forums, along with intranet content feedback. Community KM events to identify concerns and issues, along with employee satisfaction measures of effectiveness.
Critique 'is' against 'ought'	<p>Virtually no knowledge environment to connect process practitioners to owners and managers, except on an individual process level.</p> <p>Understanding of their roles are still quite poor and need strengthening, to effect a shift from process perceived as a 'necessary evil', to a genuine benefit for better operation.</p>		

- A framework of questions about a **situation** including purpose, sources of legitimacy and beneficiaries; comparing what is and what ought-to-be.
- Used to surface, elaborate, and critically consider boundary judgments; ways to decide what is **relevant to a system of interest** (within situation of concern).
- Not pictorial, but may draw on causal models or systems maps.
- Concerned not only with **purposive evaluation**, where a system has a goal and focus lies in evaluating the means of reaching it, but also **purposeful evaluation**, where both means and ends are subjects of inquiry.
- Based on the premise that our understandings of a situation are incomplete; a selective application of knowledge.
- Systematically questions sources of motivation, control, expertise, and legitimation, boundary judgments are made explicit and defensible.
- Immediate goal is to **elaborate multiple perspectives**, share these and promote mutual understanding.
- No such thing as objective evidence; need to accommodate ambiguity!

Useful Resources:

- **Systems Approaches to Making Change: A Practical Guide** 2020 Reynolds & Holwell
- **A Brief Introduction to Critical Systems Heuristics**, 2005, Ulrich
- **https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Critical_systems_thinking**

Thank You

Tony Korycki

tony@mgoo.co.uk

+44 (0)7565 827167