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**Leading Across Boundaries –  
Inclusive System Leadership  
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**14 July 2020**

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## John-Paul Marks

Director General Work and Health Services  
Department for Work and Pensions

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## Introduction to the Panel

- Dame Shan Morgan, Permanent Secretary of the Welsh Government
- Stephen Alambritis, Leader of the Council, Labour, Merton Council
- Emran Mian, Director General, Decentralisation and Growth, Ministries of Housing, Communities and Local Government
- Steve Oldfield, Chief Commercial Officer, Department of Health and Social Care
- Prathiba Ramsingh, District Operations Manager, Department for Work and Pensions
- Debbie Sorkin, National Director of Systems Leadership, the Leadership Centre

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## Format for the session

- Introduction to Systems Leadership: short presentation by Debbie Sorkin
- Questions to the panel members on aspects of Systems Leadership and their own experience
- Summing up and related sessions, and how to continue the conversation

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Strategic Framework

“....A different way of delivering the major, complex Ministerial priorities which do not fit easily into our departmental or organisational barriers...**using systems thinking to address complex policy challenges**”

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## Leadership in Action

Every day we see the best Civil Service leaders...

...creating a sense of purpose and focusing on outcomes

...demonstrating passion and wanting to change things for the better

...exercising judgement and making good, evidence-based decisions

...guiding teams using experience and expertise

...empowering and developing individuals and teams

...building inclusive teams and encouraging challenge

...collaborating, making connections and encouraging cross system working

...continually reflecting on their leadership style and developing self awareness

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What we've seen recently – some great, and some not so great, cross-system working



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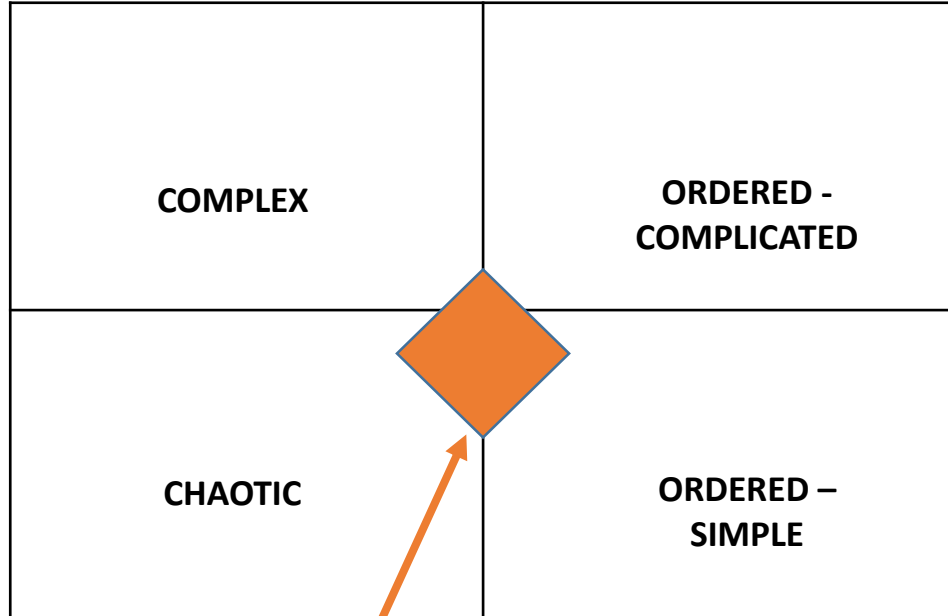


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# Not all situation requires collaboration in the same way - First thing is to know what you're dealing with

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*Cynefin Framework  
Dave Snowden, Cognitive Edge*

Where people can end up:  
treating a complex issue  
as simple or complicated,  
and ending up with chaos

## Simple

X causes Y

## Complicated

X causes Y, but determinable only by expertise

## Complex

No cause and effect –so you can't pull a lever and expect something to happen. You can't predict with certainty in advance: X might lead to Y, but it might lead to something entirely different, or make no difference at all. You'll only know after the event.

## Chaotic

No cause and effect relationship – act to regain control



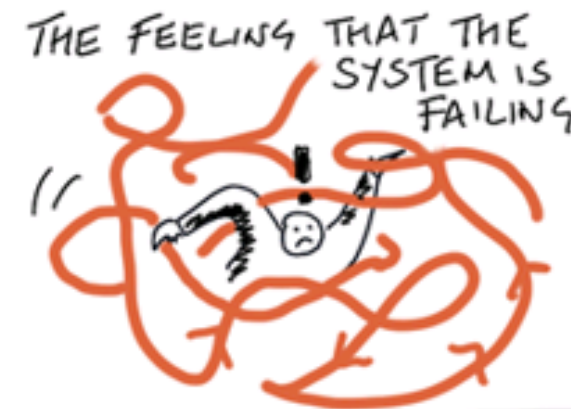
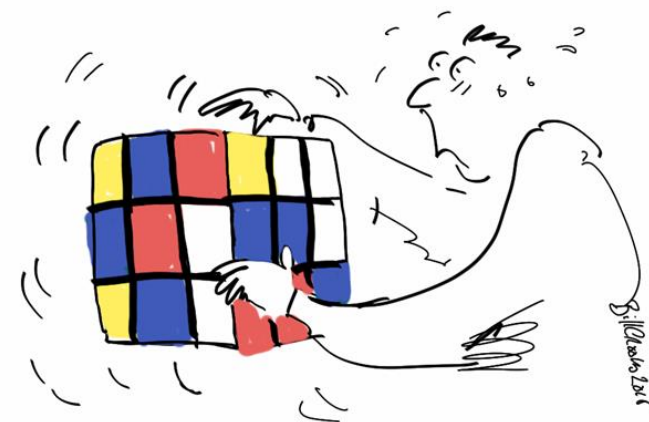
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## Look out for these kinds of situations

- New situations – no-one knows what to do
- You work with and normalise sub-optimal systems/processes
- Issues that keep changing shape
- Lots of different people/organisations and different sectors
- Where there's a political dimension – large and small 'p'
- No one person is – or can be - in sole charge

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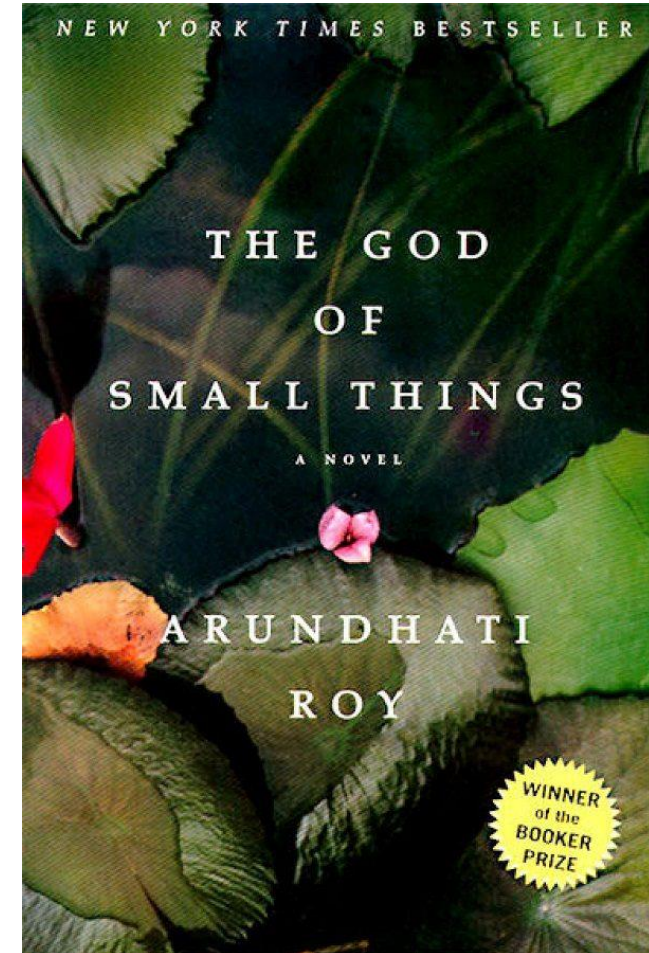
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And this is where systems, or adaptive, leadership comes in

The **collaborative** leadership of a **network** of people in different places and at different levels, creating a **common purpose** and co-operating to make significant change

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- Keep going, even if it feels hard and unrewarding
- Take small steps: you're looking for progress, not change in a single bound
- Start with common purpose
- Emergent, not elegant, solutions: focus on outcomes, not processes
- Relationships, trust, influence, networks, inclusivity – across boundaries
- Sometimes it's the wrong time/place/people
- But make a start with some real work, and persevere
- And behave in ways that lead to change: dancefloor/balcony, narratives, reframing to change perspectives, asking questions so that people change their own minds

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Eric Ravilious, *Interior at Furlongs*, 1939

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**Q1. Covid-19 has been a very hard test of systems leadership; do you agree and what has been your personal leadership learning since this pandemic began?**

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**Q2. What do we all need to do as senior leaders to ensure systems leadership can flourish and thrive at every level, tolerating more risk taking, accepting we cannot guarantee success? And for system leadership to really thrive, we need to be better at working across boundaries and sectors, connected at national and local levels – how do you build inclusive teams to thrive across boundaries?**

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**Visit the forum discussion area  
to share your views and  
continue the discussion**

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