

## Editorial

### The Magical Management Mystery Tour

Dear all,

the year moves on and we find ourselves in front of the chaotic weather patterns of a climate in pain: it's too hot, too cold, too wet or too windy. There's just too much variety in the weather these days!

When you first start to get involved in using systemic approaches to analyse problem situations, it becomes very apparent very quickly that there is a plethora of techniques that are in use "out there" and many seem to be advocated as the solution to every type of problem. One of the characteristics of this "systems minefield" is that there are competing claims made about the approaches which are often promoted by cliques in a situation reminiscent of the tribulations of the People's Front of Judea in the Life of Brian (or was it the Popular Front?)

Most people who find themselves in this minefield usually end up there because they took a wrong turning at some point in the past. Suddenly they find a large amount of information but little in the way of guidance and it can be frustrating and difficult to find like-minded individuals to learn from and discuss with. It is this gap that SCiO is aiming to fill by providing a forum for practitioners and students of systems approaches to share experiences and learning.

Clearly SCiO as an organisation has its roots in one particular approach, the Viable Systems Model (VSM) developed by Beer, however, I think that it is clear from what we have seen over the last few issues of this Newsletter, that we are expanding our horizons and we are actively looking to place the VSM within the broader context of systemic practice. At the same time, because of its peculiarities, the VSM itself can have an aura of Magical Management Mystery because of the terms and concepts which are used and this means that we must pay extra attention to how to explain and communicate this particular approach. In order to do that, over the next few issues we are going to introduce a section of the Newsletter dedicated to illustrating VSM with reference to everyday events reported in the media, the aim being to illustrate through example.

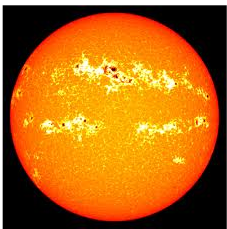
For now though, I'd like to thank the SCiO public for coming up with the goods yet again. This issue sees the second part of "systems thinking for adaptors and innovators" and a description of the use of the viable systems model at personal level as well as a couple of book reviews.

I hope that you will enjoy this issue and I would like to remind you that we are always interested in new materials, so if you have ideas and pen and paper please get writing!

Gordon

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## Reflections

*Interesting times bring a classical set of symptoms...*

So, in the spring missive I mentioned the classically systemic issue of dealing with the complexity and uncertainty of public sector reform as an example of the Chinese adage about “living in interesting times”. Don’t you sometimes hate it when you’re right?

Not surprisingly, this brings with it a classical set of symptoms: massive and accelerating instability, lack of coherence of direction, purpose or activity and bucketloads of obfuscation as managers frantically try to paper over the cracks. I say not surprisingly, but lack of surprise doesn’t really mitigate against the full impact of it all. As an example of the instability, we’ve had projects appear as possibilities, tagged by the client as essential and then disappear as irrelevant, at jaw dropping speed and with less rationale than the dog could muster on one of her lazier days.

So to the systems practitioner what are the opportunities and challenges?

Well at the technical level, this is a “target rich environment” – there’s no shortage of knotty intractable problems to go at and in some cases there is a new openness to try something different and dare I say more systemic. Less positively there has emerged a plethora of people, peddling half baked ideas.... It’s a bit of a jungle out there – fast, mad and occasionally exotic. How to survive and prosper?

I think the real challenges are around emotional resilience - both for those of us trying to help from outside and even more so for those inside public services.

Some of the positions the systems community has traditionally adopted help here and some I think don’t. So certainly having the discipline of systems helps enormously to differentiate us. It’s not just that there is a body of solid work and pedigree to point to, but it anchors us and provides a consistency and solid base of practice that others can and do see as different. And in “interesting times” that consistency is a key advantage. What I think is less helpful is the emotional position that the systems community has often adopted in the past - a sort of detached “if only the world would listen to us” stance – this is a comfortable, possibly even smug position which is itself a form of cynicism. It’s also a stance from which its hard to do good work. In times of uncertainty when managers are often scared – or as one CEO described it to me recently “terrified”, then stepping forward when others step back and being sure of your ground can be critically important and its hard to do that from a position of detachment.

And within SCiO we also live in change and flux. The AGM saw a significant turnover in the board and doubtless that will bring changes in approach and focus. My thanks to the directors who are standing down for their contribution and to those coming in – welcome, there’s lots to do!

One development that was flagged pre-AGM in the last newsletter was the initiation of development meetings in London. The first of these was hosted by Ben Taylor and by all accounts provided some constructive and wide ranging debate – further sessions will follow.

Patrick Hoverstadt

## Bookworm

**What Would Drucker Do Now?  
Solutions to Today's Toughest Challenges from  
the Father of Modern Management**

by Rick Wartzmann, Author of the Bloomberg Businessweek column “The Drucker Difference”

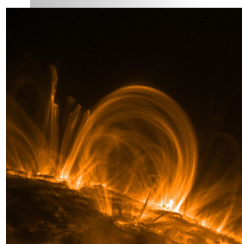
McGraw Hill 2012

The prolific management writer Peter F Drucker, 1909 to 2005, is described by nobel prize winning physicist Kenneth G Wilson as “what Newton was to mathematics, Darwin to biology, and Einstein to physics, Drucker was to our understanding of organizations and society”. A bold claim quoted by Rick Wartzmann in his new

book “What Would Drucker Do Now?”, the obvious answer being perhaps - write another book...

As executive director of California's Drucker Institute, Wartzmann's authority on the 39 books and countless articles of Drucker's career is uncontested. Arranged in seven subject headings this collection of columns written for Business Week, “The Drucker Difference”, examines 21st Century business successes and failures – and haven't there been some spectacular ones – through Drucker's published pearls of wisdom.

Drucker's many insights are now part of the business world's management DNA, and



Wartzmann's repeated reference to "classic" Drucker titles should send any management student or practitioner back to the library to renew acquaintance with them. But the severity of the economic crisis suggests Drucker's gospel of efficiency combined with humanity has fallen on deaf ears. Or should this US-centric orthodoxy of management-think be reassessed as contributing to a fundamentally flawed system? Is he part of the problem rather than the fountainhead of solutions?

In fact suggesting to executives that management is a science at all, a science that reveals the structural functionality of organizations and enables effective systemic control, may produce the response that it's "far too mathematical to be acceptable" as they scurry away to renew their management consultants' contracts. On the need for greater regulation of international financial markets, Joseph Stiglitz pointed out in 2008 that "we have neither the institutions, nor the mind-sets, to do this effectively", and this not only in the financial sector.

It seems hard on Drucker to lay too much cybernetic management myopia at his door, when in the 1960s he was recognising technology and globalisation as drivers of fundamental change causing a major shift in the near stasis of the developed world's economies of the previous 40 years. Now every business has a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policy, but he was promoting the concept then as "particularly important in a period of discontinuity". Writing in 1973 on scrutinising an organization's ongoing viability he proposed continuous "systematic analysis of all

existing products, services, processes, markets, end uses, and distribution channels". And as we are all in the hands of banks, governments, and providers of essential services, we can only agree that when these organizations aren't effectively managed and ethically led, society as a whole stands to suffer.

Without false modesty Drucker claimed his greatest contribution was establishing "the study of management as a discipline in its own right", to become the "governing organ of all institutions of modern society". How much greater could his contribution have been if his doctrine of "effectiveness" had been based on the principles of systemic viability? More than just observing standards of ethics and "responsibility" would the regulatory structures of our societies now be recognising, even adopting, the practices of variety management and viable system design?

As a reminder of the scope and foresight of Drucker's thought, his in-depth analysis that made him persona non grata at General Motors, his creation of "management by objective" and his identification of the "knowledge worker", this book preserves his standing as the father of modern management. But maybe the praises of nobel prize winners for the great names in the study of effective organization should be reserved for other contributors to the science of systems management and control.

Reviewed by Howard Lane

*Peter  
Drucker: a  
gospel of  
efficiency  
combined  
with  
humanity*

### **Debt: the first 5000 years**

by David Graeber

Melville House, 2011

Since the year 2008 CE, the global financial system has lurched from one crisis to another. The "experts" appear to be as bewildered as everyone else. If we are to understand what is going on, perhaps we need to raise our eyes from the here and now and look for a broader perspective? If so, David Graeber's book appears to be a good place to start.

Graeber is a well-respected American anthropologist who now lives in London and teaches at Goldsmiths College. Like most anthropologists, he has carried out field work in an unfamiliar culture (Madagascar), but he seems to have taken to heart the adage "Anthropology begins at home", and turned his skills to examining our own culture's beliefs

about economics. Rather than doing so within the narrow context of current political debate, he places the subject in a global context by tracing the history of ideas about credit, debt and money right from the dawn of agrarian civilisation in Sumer five thousand years ago up to the present and across all the known cultures of the world. The resulting book is a *tour de force* of over five hundred pages, but is full of surprises and fascinating facts which put the current travails of our financial system into perspective.

Graeber points out that every economics textbook claims that money was invented to replace clumsy and complicated barter systems, and that sophisticated notions of credit and debit developed later. However, there is not a scrap of evidence that this is so. In reality, complex notions of debit and credit were invented at the dawn of civilisation in about 3,000 BCE, despite the fact that money in the form of coinage was not invented until about 700 BCE. Graeber goes

**Graeber shows that ideas about debt originate and are deeply embedded in the spiritual traditions of the world's civilisations**

on to describe the standard view as the “great founding myth of the discipline of economics” which he points out was invented by Adam Smith, the Professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Glasgow, when he wrote “The Wealth of Nations” in 1776.

Adam Smith was a great admirer of Isaac Newton’s physics, and he wanted to establish economics as a discipline that “operated by its own rules, separate from moral or political life”. In order to do so, he had to invent something called “the economy” which he could claim operated by laws not unlike those that governed Newton’s physical bodies. He succeeded in establishing classical economics, with its perfectly rational economic agents, who act purely in their own self-interest. He also established the claim that free markets are self-regulating natural systems which work perfectly if governments can resist the temptation to interfere with them.

Graeber shows, by examining the real history of credit, debt and money, that these ideas have no factual basis. Ideas about debt originate, and are deeply embedded, in the spiritual traditions of the world’s civilisations. For example, the management of what we would call “the economy” in ancient Sumer, was the responsibility of the temple. Likewise, the Parthenon was the treasury of classical Athens and in classical Buddhism, the monks managed the local economy.

He also shows that markets were created by governments, who also enforced the use of their coinage to pay for the goods on sale. Coinage was invented in order to pay mercenary soldiers, who then spent that coinage in the local markets. The government then forced people to use their coinage by demanding it back for the payment of the taxes which ultimately funded their wars. In the absence of such coercion, people tend to invent their own forms of money.

Graeber’s book is full of surprises, amongst which are the following:

- He states that Adam Smith had Latin translations of Ghazali & Tusi’s works in his library, confirming the idea that Smith got his ideas about free market economics from medieval Persian works. This confirms that Smith’s illustration of the division of labour by a pin factory almost certainly comes from Ghazali, who used the example of a needle factory to illustrate the same point eight hundred years

earlier. However, Adam Smith changed Ghazali’s view that markets work because people like to cooperate to the view that market participants are only interested in selfish gain.

- Graeber documents the historical transitions from credit-based money to bullion-based money and back again, and their relationships to periods of warfare and public disorder. He shows that bullion-based money arises in order for states to fund warfare. In more peaceful eras, credit-based money tends to be used instead.

- He shows that almost all the silver bullion extracted by the Spaniards from Latin America ended up in China and that most of the gold extorted by the Conquistadors ended up in temples in India.

- He shows that coinage was invented independently in Asia Minor, India and China in the seventh century BCE. In all three cases, it appears to have been invented for the same reason - to enable city states to pay for their wars.

- He shows that the social stresses caused by excessive debt have repeatedly led to the state writing off all debts, as in the original meaning of Jubilee in ancient Israel.

- He shows that, for most of its history, China has operated highly regulated markets while forbidding usury. He suggests that this might explain why China managed to sustain the highest standard of living in the world for thousands of years, a position which it only relinquished in the nineteenth century CE.

- From the rise of Islam until the late 15th century CE, the Indian Ocean was a demilitarised and highly successful free trade area. This happy state of affairs was brought to an end when the Portuguese, having rounded the Cape of Good Hope, broke into the area and used extreme violence to gain control of the trading networks.

This remarkable book shows that most of what we believe about economic affairs is based on a set of false assumptions, many of which are also being challenged by recent research in what has become known as “behavioural economics”. It also suggests that Adam Smith’s attempt to detach economics from moral and political life was much less successful than it appeared to be, and, perhaps, was entirely misconceived. Anyone with a serious interest in the past and future of wealth creation in our globalised world should read this book.

Reviewed by Trevor Hilder



## Systems Thinking Approaches or Approaches to Systems Thinking?

*continued from the last newsletter:*

*It is simple human nature to apply what we know, in contrast to what is needed. This is evident in the current fixation on lean methods as the one solution to improving efficiency; without asking questions of effectiveness. we need to understand where, when and if this is an appropriate response. Many excellent ST approaches are featured in the academic literature; such as Systems Dynamics, Senge's organisational learning school or the interest in wicked messy problems.*

So what are we to do – our common challenge is how to teach Systems Thinking and Systems Practice usually in a practice setting but also academically. Typically our audience comprises 'middle experience' staff usually with a background in lean and Six Sigma. Usually we struggle with the gap between the strong analytical traits often well developed in such groups and the conceptual understanding needed for Systems Thinking. In this respect many people do not understand the difference between analysis and synthesis or to put it another way, convergent and divergent thinking.

In response to a request from one such group for a checklist of Systems Thinking we realised the

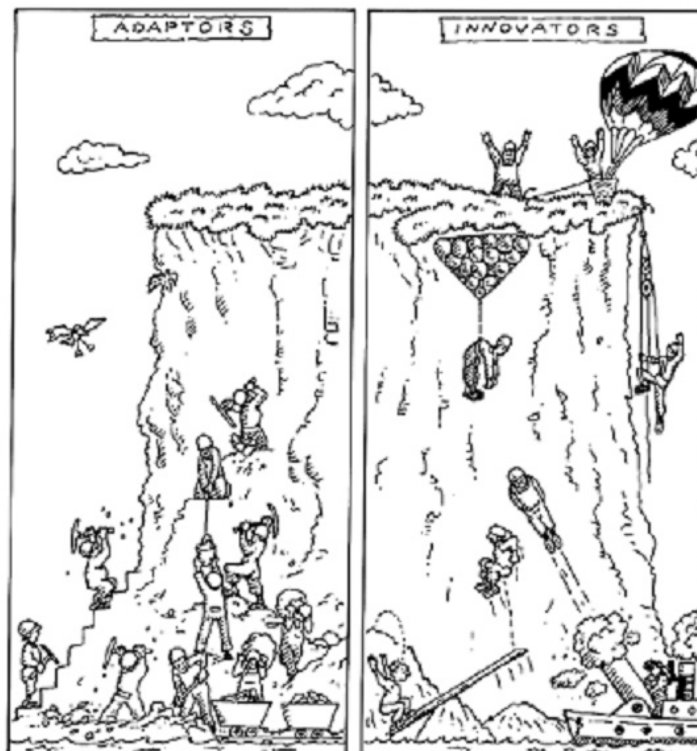
central problem, it was the problem epitomised in the following cartoon [taken from the Open University course on creativity). Based on occupational profiling studies by McBer reported in *Competence at Work* suggests 5% or less of individuals are naturally conceptual thinkers [the innovators of the cartoon].

In our consulting the difference is obvious and immediate, a few individuals are instinctive Systems Thinkers the majority, adaptors, are the ones who need a checklist for Systems Thinking whose focus are the steps and stages of the approach rather than the concepts and the problem. Individuals looking to Systems Thinking as the next step from a procedural discipline such as Lean or Six Sigma become trapped in the detail without appreciating the conceptual basis.

### **A step-by-step Systems Thinking approach for Adaptors**

Russell Ackoff in his work had the opportunity for the grand gestures and sweeping critiques – excellent in conference but poor as an instructional technique. Looking for a checklist approach adapted for adaptors we began with the series of articles on Systems Thinking by William Dettmer . In Part 6, entitled Systems and Constraints: The Concept of Leverage,

*...a few individuals are instinctive systems thinkers, the majority are adaptors who need a checklist...*



Dettmer introduces the Theory of Constraints reminding us of the importance of the system constraint as the only point of useful intervention.

This is the complete antithesis of the typical wicked problem but, usefully, it represents one end of a spectrum of systems intervention – the end represented by a closed system, defined by analysis and requiring the optimisation of a single variable. As we study any systems – under conditions of change, longer timescales, the introduction of social factors – we can start to identify where the models weaken and approximations become invalid. This is the practical illustration of George Box’s dictum “all models are wrong some models are useful”, our practical world is comprised of a number of simplifying assumptions which allow us to be efficient but which, unless challenged, ultimately cause us to be ineffective.

Systems Thinker often criticise reductionism, breaking a system into smaller and smaller parts, but as explained by Anderson the real challenge is to understand constructionism – how to move our students from the narrowing reductionist approach to the correct constructionist thinking. Anderson in More is Different makes the fundamental point that reductionism and constructionism are asymmetric, you can always disassemble a system by reductionism but there is never a guarantee that you can re-assemble the parts to the original, or to a coherent, whole.

We may borrow the funnel experiment from Deming to explain the operational difference between reductionism and constructionism. Whilst pouring liquid into a funnel the flow is

aligned and narrowed to a finer and finer focus: reductionism works! Reverse the simple linear flow from the narrow spout and the output is complex, the direction is unpredictable and the asymmetry is evident: constructionism is problematic!

This brings us to one of our techniques that help bridge the gap ... the new factors prism .

On the left we have the approaches for closed systems within limited problem dimensionality, often requiring optimisation. As we move right, driven by conditions of change or open systems, the difficulty of resolving the situation is made more difficult as the number of dimensions increases. As the situation becomes more complex and the problem becomes more wicked we require a systems thinking approach, such as VSM, SSM, CSH and so on. The challenge is to first recognise that the situation being studied is no longer a closed system and then to identify which, of many possible, Systems Thinking approaches will provide insight.

The challenge, introduced in the section on tools, is that the danger is that we force the approach before we understand the problem and here we offer our prism technique to use the problem characteristics to guide us towards an appropriate approach. It uses reductionist techniques to identify constructionist approach and bridges the adaptors world of analysis to the innovators world of synthesis.

Geoff Elliott and Roger James

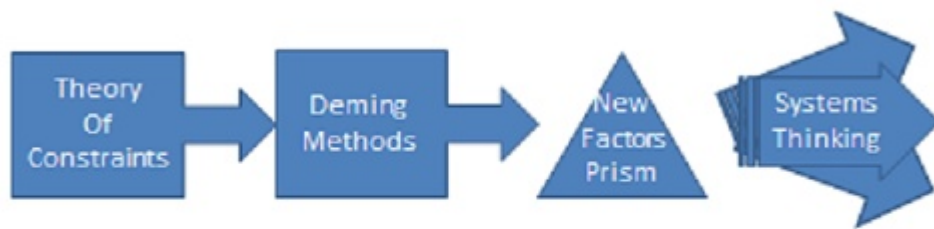


Figure 1 The spectrum of problem solving approaches applicable to the closed physical systems on the left ‘the world of manufacturing’ to the open often social systems on the right ‘the world of purposeful systems’

*...the real challenge is to understand constructionism - how to move from the narrowing reductionist approach to constructionist thinking.*

## SCiO Open Day (London)

SCiO Open Day (London)

**Monday 9th July 2012 (10am-4.30pm) BT Centre (BTC), 81 Newgate Street, London EC1A 7AJ**

### **Session 1: Using System Thinking Frameworks to understand complexity and re-shape the use of social media at the Organisation/Environment Interface**

Mike Mike Parker

Synopsis:

Mike will present frameworks to approach the problems created by massive change in the organisation / environment interface. The overarching context of the problem is that companies used to be able to control much of how they were perceived. This is no longer true.

### **Session 2: Knowledge Leadership and the Practice of Strategic Knowledge Management**

Prof. Victor Newman

Synopsis:

Systemic thinking requires at least 2 types of thinking: open and closed. Open thinking is about the dynamic relationship of the organisation in terms of its environment, and closed thinking about those transactional acts that are worth improving or migrating to partners.

Similarly, there are at least 2 kinds of knowledge management practice, one is about supporting the organization's current strategy, the other is about crafting the strategy that the company will need to survive in tomorrow's world. Most organizations are decaying in the sense that their current strategy cannot be the basis for long-term survival.

Victor will contextualise and introduce core ideas behind the emerging practice of Knowledge Leadership as described in: "Power House: Strategic Knowledge Management - Insights, Practical Tools & Techniques" ( [Blurb.com](http://Blurb.com) )

### **Session 3: Assessing Intelligence**

Richard Veryard

Synopsis:

Following his presentation 'No Intelligence Without Feedback' at a previous SCiO open meeting, Richard will lead an interactive workshop trying to detect and evaluate the systematic and dynamic feedback loops in some notorious organizations and ecosystems. By examining their apparent behaviour and outcomes, he will attempt to draw some conclusions about their organizational intelligence, both current and potential. The UK Health Service is an obvious candidate for this kind of analysis and we shall also look at a small selection of contrasting organizations.

### **Session 4: A Systemic view of Strategy**

Patrick Hoverstadt

Synopsis:

Strategy is a much used and abused term in business. Despite a huge literature and industry that has developed around business strategy, it has a dismal track record. This session looks at business strategy from a systems perspective, provides a short critique of traditional approaches, some radical perspectives on what strategy is and some very different models of strategy and its critical dimensions.

## An investigation into the use of a personal VSM

An investigation into the use of a personal VSM as a learning tool to help managers understand and appreciate the VSM and its use in their organisational domain

This is a summary of a short research study I undertook for OU module T847: The MSC Professional Project towards my Masters in Systems Thinking in Practice (MSc STiP). The study investigated the introduction of the Viable System Model (VSM) to a group of busy managers in an organisation in turmoil. It explored the use of a personal construct of the VSM developed by Allenna Leonard (Leonard, n.d.) to engage and introduce managers to the VSM and used a collaborative inquiry (see Kakabadese et. al, 2007) to enable them to develop their VSM learning to interrogate their organisational domain through the VSM lens. This study was designed as systemic action research and is an example of systems thinking in practice.

The context for this research is the organisational turmoil that managers in the author's department at work were facing, undergoing a second restructuring within 12 months owing to the significant change to the higher education funding environment in the UK. The external and internal environments, therefore, are highly complex and turbulent. The study investigated how managers responded to and used the model which can help them appreciate the organisational turmoil they face. The wider application of the research was to inform the systems thinking community on one method of introducing managers to the VSM and its application in an organisation in the midst of significant change as well as report on the managers' responses. It also provided the managers with a brief introduction to a systems thinking tool and some new skills as part of their professional development.

Significant changes in an organisation's operating environment frequently result in restructuring or reorganisation which often fails to deliver the benefits expected and undermines the health and well-being of staff. Several authors (e.g. Hoverstadt, 2008, Pfiffner, 2010) discussed in more detail in the full research report suggest that reorganisation is unhelpful and turn to Stafford Beer's work (e.g. Beer, 1989) on the Viable System Model (VSM) to attempt to demonstrate that long term organisational stability (homeostasis) can be developed and maintained if the organisation is designed correctly. The VSM however is not well understood or routinely used in current

management thinking.

The purpose of the research was to investigate the use of personal VSM as a learning tool through individual action research and collaborative inquiry in order to help a small group of managers in my department to appreciate its use in their organisational domain – an organisation in turmoil. It aimed to answer the questions:

- Can the use of a personal VSM motivate managers to appreciate the VSM's use in how their organisation is functioning?

and

- What insights into an organisation in turmoil would this give them?

Neither the use of personal VSM amongst managers nor this specific approach to introduce the VSM has been reported in the literature and therefore the research provides a useful means to fill a gap in knowledge in academically rigorous circumstances. The research touched on individual and organisational learning, emancipation of understanding and learning through professional development which are important to the considerations of managing change systemically in 21st century complex working environments.

The research design adopted a naturalist paradigm because the social, interactive and collaborative nature of the research has coherence with the purpose (aims), objectives and model of causality in this study. It takes a constructivist perspective and qualitative approach using systemic action research to explore deeper issues of meaning, themes, attitudes and behaviours.

A representative sample of 6 managers from within the department agreed to participate. Data generation was achieved through recorded semi-structured interviews and the collaborative inquiry was recorded to capture the conversations followed by a structured questionnaire on their experiences and involvement in the study. The managers engaged well with the process and five managers completed the personal VSM task. Because the research was done as part of an OU module, it was time limited and there was no opportunity to do more than one collaborative pass yet sufficient data was generated for analysis. The managers engaged well with the personal VSM (PVSM) and the collaborative

*Significant changes in an organisation's operating environment frequently result in restructuring or reorganisation which often fails to deliver the benefits expected and undermines the health and well-being of staff.*



inquiry. All the managers reported that the PVSM was a useful learning tool and provided beneficial professional development to help clarify activities, priorities and their roles. They reported that the collaborative meeting was a very useful means to help them see others' perspectives and work towards gaining a shared understanding of the issues and challenges within the organisation the VSM lens. However within the timeframe for this study, the managers showed a clear lack of detailed understanding of the model to enable them to demonstrate whether they could use it routinely as a diagnostic or organisational design tool. Nevertheless some useful insights were reported and the managers' attitudes to the VSM were positive.

In summary, the research demonstrated a number of positive merits of using Leonard's personal VSM as part of systemic action learning to introduce the VSM as a learning tool to managers in an organisation in turmoil. The managers in this study, in the midst of organisation turmoil found the introduction to the VSM through a personal VSM as motivation to review their thinking and interrogate, albeit briefly and collaboratively, their personal and organisation domains. The personal VSM provided a useful tool for future use by other groups of managers because it has been shown to be:

- Easily understood and applied (albeit

with the need for further depth)

- Able to liberate managers from their day to day role-based preoccupations into their own personal work-life challenges
- Capable of offering managers with a new way of looking at organisations

The managers found that working collaboratively with the model developed their initial understanding of the VSM, and gain new insights in their thinking and as other perspectives emerged but there is a need to deepen the engagement of managers with the model and its application. Their involvement this research and into the VSM was useful and beneficial professional development, the learning from which that liberated their thinking consistent with recent theoretical understanding. Their attitudes to the VSM and their organisation changed positively throughout the research despite time and work pressures they were encountering.

The approach offers greater scope for further research in using this approach to introduce the VSM into mainstream management thinking in order to help managers appreciate the challenges of 21st century organisational complexity.

David Robinson

## Mandelbulbs

A little bit of poetry never goes amiss (well, I know, it does depend on who and what). Our attention was caught by this poem written in the 17th Century by Margaret Lucas Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, the well-educated daughter of Sir Thomas Lucas and his wife Elizabeth. She came into contact with science and philosophy through her marriage to William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle.

In the poem "many worlds", she describes the sense of things within things, the little bugs with lesser bugs if you will. It is this sense of recursive self-similarity, the scale-free nature of the patterns that we see all around us in the natural world that she is contemplating. We are used to "seeing" the fractal forms of mountains, river deltas and the dried-up flood-plains of Mars now that they have been pointed out to us, but just because we are used to them, that shouldn't stop us from pausing a moment to reflect on the recursive nature of the worlds that can be found within worlds.

For those wanting a fuller critique of style and

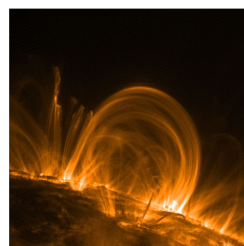
form please consult the following:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2012/jul/02/poem-many-worlds-margaret-cavendish>

### Of Many Worlds in This World

*Just like as in a nest of boxes round,  
Degrees of sizes in each box are found.  
So, in this world, may many others be  
Thinner and less, and less still by degree:  
Although they are not subject to our sense,  
A world may be no bigger than two-pence.  
Nature is curious, and such works may shape,  
Which our dull senses easily escape:  
For creatures, small as atoms, may be there,  
If every one a creature's figure bear.  
If atoms four, a world can make, then see  
What several worlds might in an ear-ring be:  
For millions of those atoms may be in  
The head of one small, little, single pin.  
And if thus small, then ladies may well wear  
A world of worlds, as pendants in each ear.*

Gordon Kennedy



## New SCiO website

Instead of another 'the new website is coming' article, this is actually a 'the new website is there' article! Seriously though, I have been working with a web developer for the last six months as he first got a design confirmed, then started to build the functionality for our new website. The first version is now live.

As well as the existing content, the new site contains proper Event management functionality which will make it a lot easier to keep the future events up to date. Old ones will eventually also be available in an archive where we hope to be able to make some of the presentations available to members.

There is a payment module which should allow members to join and to renew their membership online. We hope this will make it easier for you (and us!) to keep membership payments up to date. We will be asking you to optionally let us know your postcodes so that we can start to get a better idea of where people are located and hence where it may be worth holding meetings in future.

Unfortunately this is currently 'hidden' behind the 'Join/Login' button, but once you've gone through the first page, you will be asked if you want to pay. Also, unfortunately, the only payment option currently is PayPal. This is

because, as we are not yet a charity, we would have to pay to use credit cards. We hope to resolve this in the future.

In the next stage, we will be looking at the Members' area: We are probably not going to try and build a bespoke forum as Google groups offers the functionality we need and is already well used. We will also encourage CIGs to set up their own forums in whatever tool they wish - Google, Yahoo, Smartgroups, LinkedIn. It is simply not worth the cost of building this functionality afresh. The 'forum' area will provide links to all these.

What we will try to provide is the ability to post files into the 'forum' area for these various groups, as this functionality is missing from some of the forum offerings. We are also looking at providing a members profile area - again optional - as well as an area for members to post book recommendations and reviews.

There will be more photos in the new site - you may recognise yourselves in some of them. These are easy to change, so should you be unhappy about appearing, please do contact me and the offending photo will be replaced!

Steve Hales

## Calendar 2012

Dates for your diary

Mon. 9th July - SCiO Open Meeting - London

Sun 7th Oct. - SCiO Development Day

Mon. 8th Oct. - SCiO Open Meeting

## SCiO Board 2012

Chair	Patrick Hoverstadt	Webmaster	Steve Hales
Membership	Jane Searles	CPD	Roger Duck
Secretary	Jane Searles	Outreach	Sally Bean
Treasurer	Steve Hales	Non-Exec	Alex Hough
Meetings	Doug Haynes	Non-Exec	Denis Adams
Newsletter	Gordon Kennedy	Non-Exec	Trevor Hilder

Website: [scio.org.uk/systems](http://scio.org.uk/systems)

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