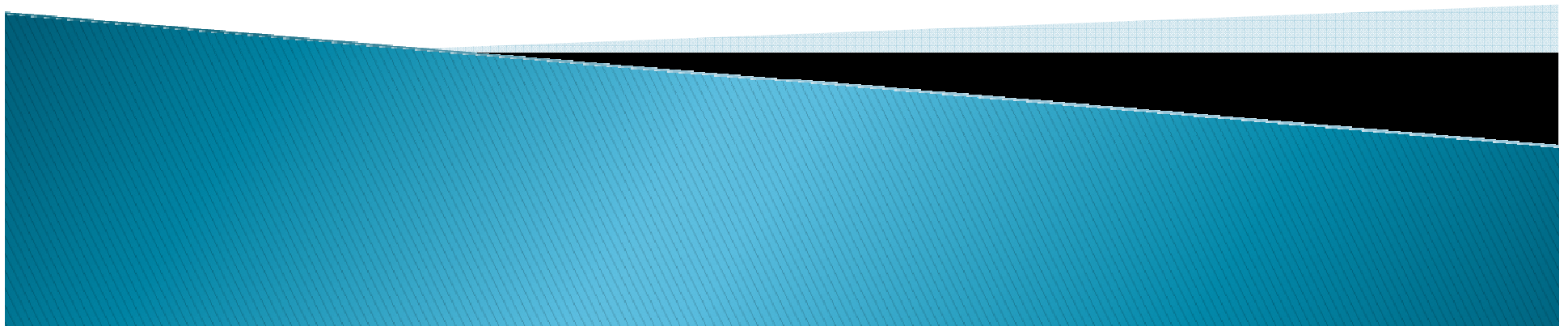


# Leadership and complexity – public administration and the challenge of 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Prof Sue Richards

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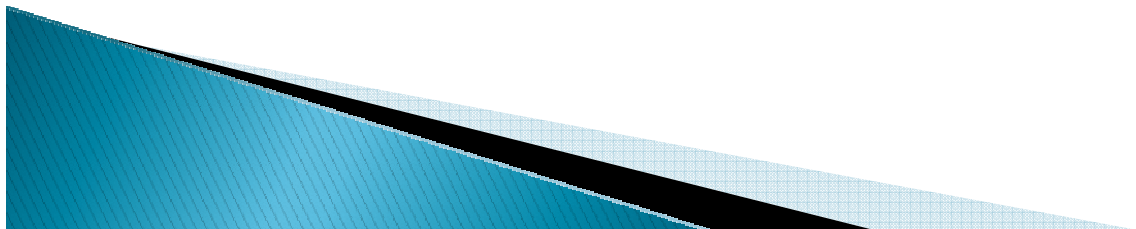
# LSE seminar 1 June 2011

## Sue Richards

- ▶ Is our mechanistic system of public administration and accountability migrating into a series of inter-linked complex adaptive systems. Presentation

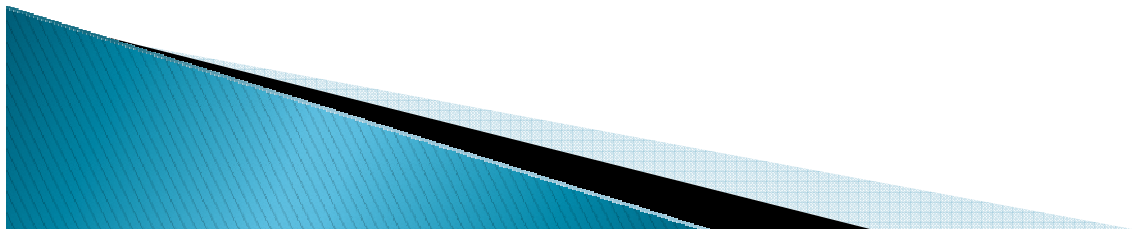
## Lynne Sedgmore

- ▶ What is the experience of being a leader in this context, what approaches to leadership are helpful, how can we develop the leaders we need? Conversation



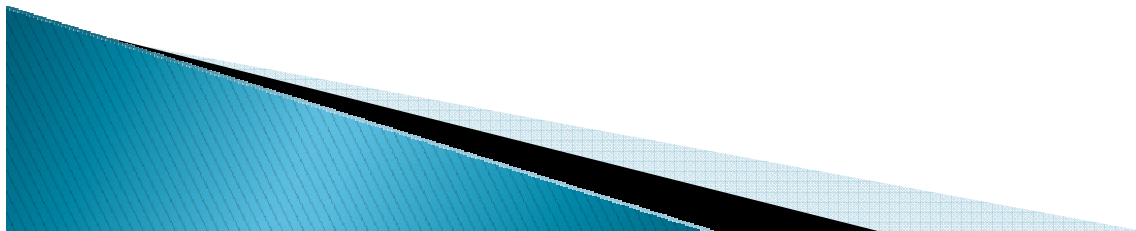
# Agenda

- ▶ Proposition – UK public administration is evolving toward better ways of handling the challenges of 21<sup>st</sup> century. Need leaders who can help
- ▶ Definitions – what is a complex adaptive system
- ▶ Tightening up the mechanism of the central state
- ▶ Experimenting outside the paradigm – examples
- ▶ Where are we now. Will the paradigm shift?
- ▶ What kind of leadership is needed in a complex adaptive system
- ▶ What should leaders do



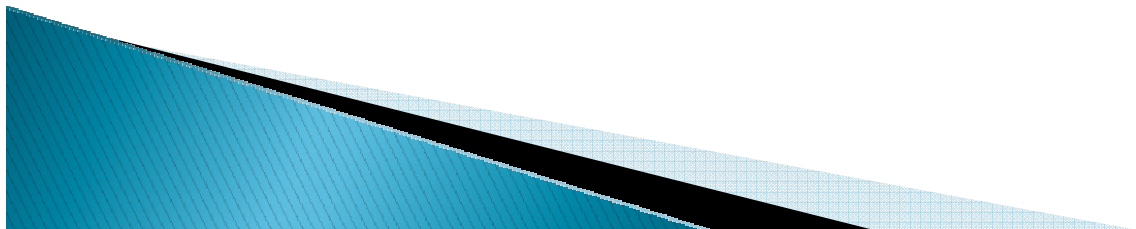
# Proposition

- ▶ New Synthesis. Public Administration for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century ([www.ns6newsynthesis.com](http://www.ns6newsynthesis.com))
- ▶ Change drivers – inter-connected world, technological revolution, behavioural outcomes, fragile biosphere, etc. Future not like the past
- ▶ UK strengths from past, such as state legitimacy – but path dependency?
- ▶ Can we learn to get better at achieving outcomes, working with people to innovate and adapt.



# Proposition

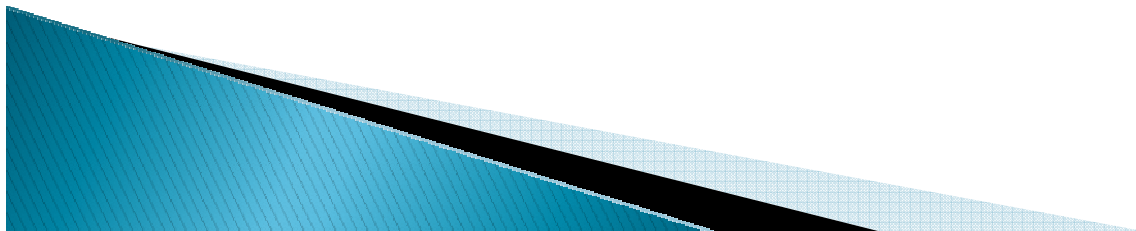
- ▶ The UK state has reached the end of the road on mechanistic centralisation. Diminishing returns.
- ▶ Pressing policy problems require a different approach
- ▶ Different approaches keep being tried, such as Total Place. Logic of paradigm shift builds. Change will happen despite...
- ▶ Current systems of governance lock down against change, but innovation possible
- ▶ Examples from elsewhere
- ▶ Speed of change / internat. competitiveness



# Complex adaptive systems – key features

(E.Mitleton Kelly)

- ▶ Braided together / interdependent
- ▶ Co-evolution within a social ecosystem
- ▶ De-stabilised equilibrium / new order
- ▶ Exploration of (adjacent) space of possibility
- ▶ Feedback processes, positive and negative
- ▶ Self-organisation and emergent properties
- ▶ Managing and leading appropriate for a complex adaptive system, not for a mechanism



# Comparisons between complex adaptive and mechanistic systems

|              | Complex system  | Mechanism  |
|--------------|---|--|
| Key concepts | Non-linear, conflict and its resolution part of the process, solutions internal to system | Linear, conflict resolved through use of power/authority, solutions come from outside system |
| Causality    | Mutually influencing causes, emergent outcomes, relationships and structures inter-active | Simple, linear causes, designed and intended outcome, structures determine relationships     |
| Evidence     | Holistic synthesis, learn from others, judgement  | Reductive analysis, comparative measures   |
| Planning     | Decisions emergent, adapt /co-evolve  | Decisions as events, big problems / big solutions  |

# Tightening up the mechanism of the central state – 30 years on

## Pre –1979

Power shared between central and local government and between both and public service professionals

## Post–1979

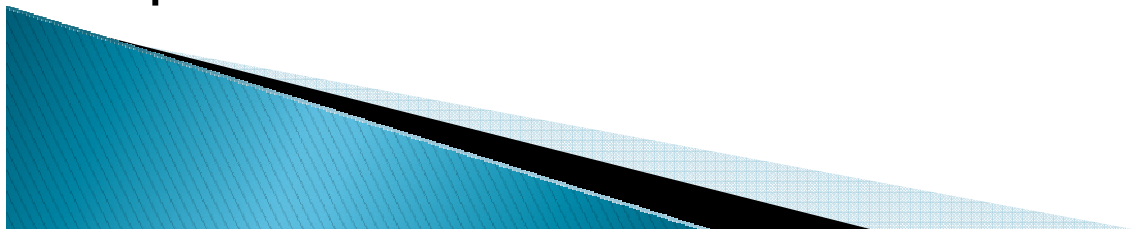
Reduce the power of the local state. De-privilege (some) public service professionals

## Post–1997

As post–1979, but with increased weaponry. Sub-set  
Loss of legitimacy for the central state?

## Post–2010

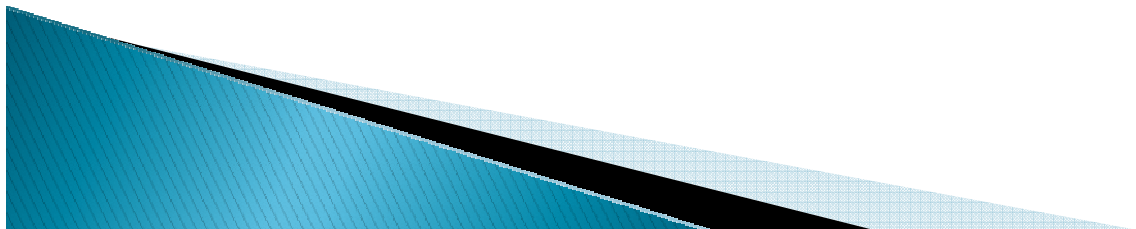
?





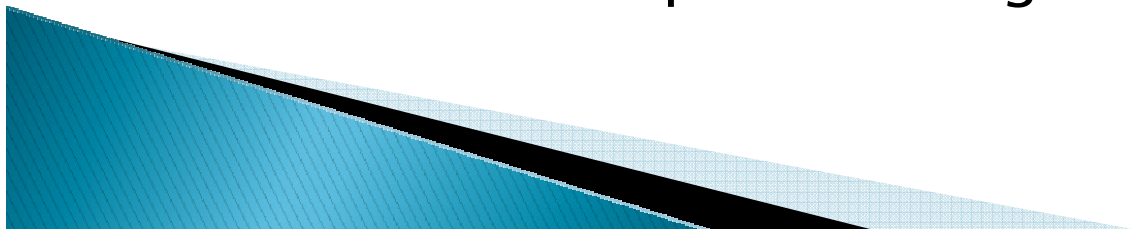
# Experimenting outside the paradigm

- ▶ Urban Programme, City Challenge, Single Regeneration Budget, Neighbourhood Renewal, action zones, Local Area Agreements. (Place-focused)
- ▶ SureStart
- ▶ Crime and disorder partnerships
- ▶ Joint commissioning in health and social care
- ▶ Total Place



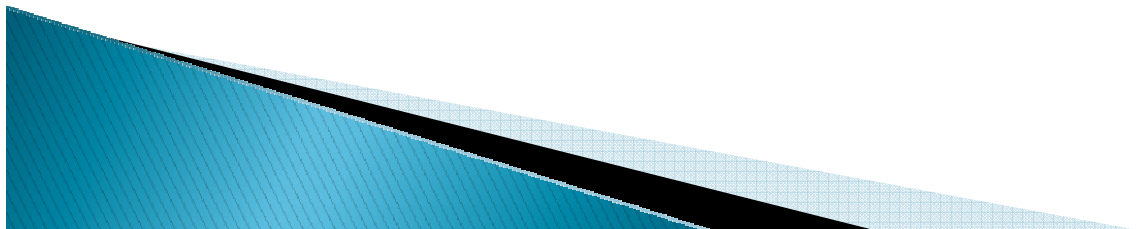
# Experimenting outside the paradigm – Total Place

- ▶ Excellence and Fairness White Paper 2008
- ▶ Operational Efficiency Programme of HMT
- ▶ Michael Bichard and High Level Officials Group – *not* a Programme Board. Many ex-LG officials
- ▶ Mediated through Leadership Centre for Local Government
- ▶ 13 local projects – focus on citizen needs, work across organisational structures, increase effectiveness and reduce cost
- ▶ Now Community Budgets – for families with ‘complex needs’
- ▶ Money saved through early intervention, joining up, reducing duplication, sharing assets etc.
- ▶ Moves towards pooled budgets and local discretion



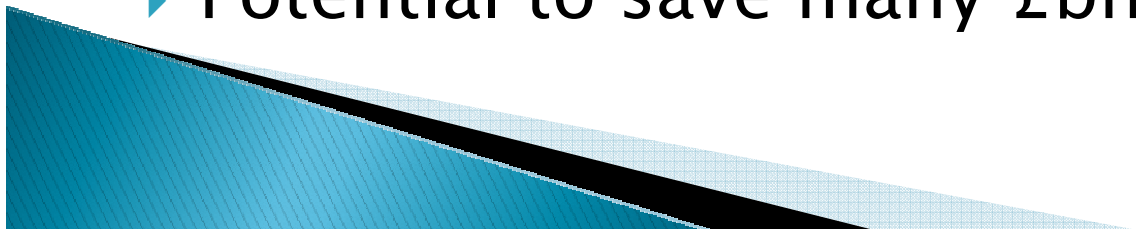
# Experimenting outside the paradigm – **Croydon** (Total Place Pilot)

- ▶ Partnership between local authority and Primary Care Trust– building on a long history
- ▶ Focus on savings through joined up service for young children
- ▶ Creative facilitation / video ethnography
- ▶ Joint customer journey mapping and other work to explore the nature of the problems
- ▶ Long–list of potential interventions whittled down to a few, including joint area teams which shared information and professional knowledge, mobilisation of volunteer ‘grandparents’, local information exchange.
- ▶ Results – savings through fewer children in care, long–term conditions caught early, parenting improvements, early indication of educational attainment improvement



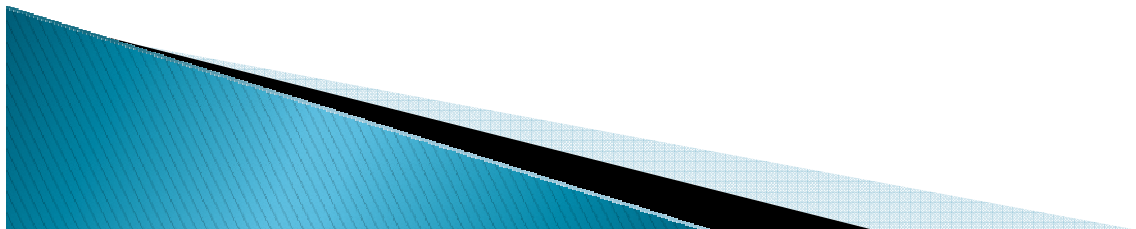
# Experimenting outside the paradigm – **Swindon** Family Life

- ▶ Allied to Total Place, but not a pilot
- ▶ Deep engagement with families in crisis
- ▶ Inspiring facilitation (liberation anthropology)
- ▶ Multi-disciplinary team
- ▶ Small scale project working for months with most excluded (and costly)
- ▶ Specific rejection of Family Intervention Programme framework
- ▶ Savings in interventions forgone outweigh costs within the year
- ▶ Potential to save many £bns over time



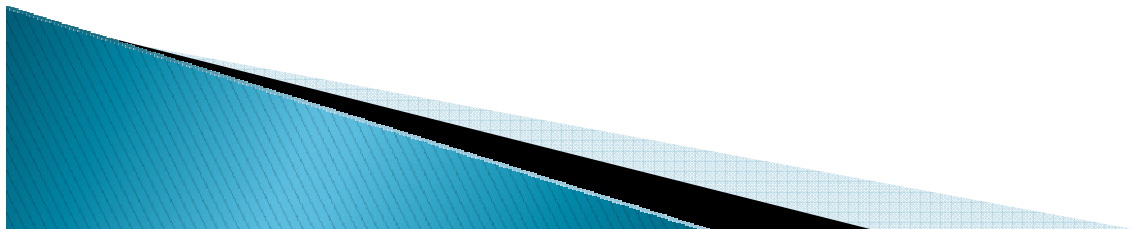
# Where are we now. Will the paradigm shift?

- ▶ Both parties in the coalition believe(d) in shrinking the central state – different angles
- ▶ Localism (aka Centralism) Bill primarily about reducing the powers of local government.
- ▶ Other service reforms will lead to local fragmentation
- ▶ Should be exploring the space of adjacent possibility – danger of disintegration
- ▶ Danger that the centralised controls – culture and formal rules –will be re-introduced



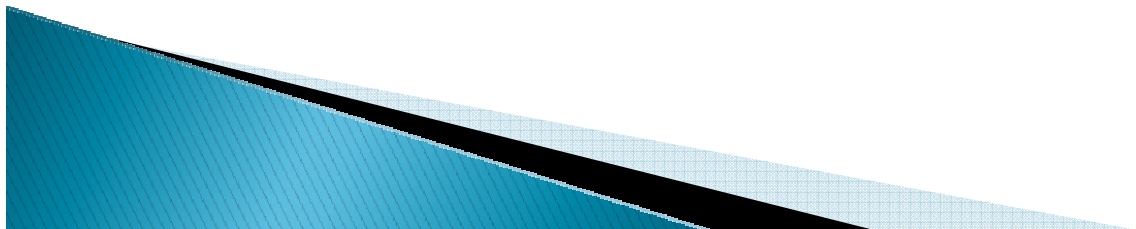
# See **Brazilian health** example

- ▶ 1990, Brazil one of worst rates of HIV
- ▶ World Bank recommendations about **drug-rationing** to make improvement affordable
- ▶ Brazil used the contribution of many to reframe the problem and therefore the solution – **how can we reduce costs so that all who need treatment will get it**
- ▶ Developed generic drugs policy, faced down Pharma, embraced community action
- ▶ Infection rates now low



# What kind of leaders do we need to work more effectively in complex adaptive systems

- ▶ Diversity– new senior presence in Whitehall of many people with experience of wider public policy system – **leaders with multiple perspectives, with a holistic capability**
- ▶ Burning platform of public expenditure forces a re–think on wasteful mechanistic approach – driven by **values of service to public**
- ▶ Capable of working with the rules of the game to re–shape them to be fit for purpose (cf **work of the civil service in setting up the coalition**)



# What should leaders do (NS6)

- ▶ **Acknowledge** complexity – governance, policy and management approaches
- ▶ **Government** as one **actor among many**, but with a **pivotal role** in influencing
- ▶ Embrace the **power of self-organization** but set-out the **parameters**
- ▶ Harness the **power of small changes** that can produce large results, but **course correction** will be required;
- ▶ Both **competition and collaboration** will be part of the dynamic of any complex endeavour;
- ▶ Connect with a wide array of other actors – **gain knowledge and relationships**
- ▶ Learn to **reframe public issues in affirmative ways** that build on strengths, dissolves tensions and leads to action;
- ▶ Embrace diversity as it provides **new energy for innovation**
- ▶ Build capacities for both “exploration” and “exploitation” and maintain an appropriate balance;
- ▶ Explore the potential of multi-level governance arrangements in (i) managing the cross-scale interactions that characterize complex public issues and (ii) to buffer the negative effects of surprises, tipping points and cascading crisis

