

PROGRAMME

SYSTEMS+40 @ the LSE on Friday afternoon, 22nd June¹

How can systems thinking and practice be better “harnessed” for public policy purposes?

The Munro Review has already influenced thinking and practice about child protection.² Significantly the approach taken and advocated by Professor Eileen Munro of the LSE was a ‘systems approach’. This year also marks the 40th anniversary of teaching and researching ‘systems approaches’ at the Open University (UK). This invitation-only event, co-hosted by the LSE and OU as part of the 40th Anniversary celebrations, is designed to bring together Systems Practitioners and public policy makers to create opportunities for more systemic public policy development and implementation.

Outline

Those who use systems thinking and practice in public sector settings know, through experience, and evidence in the public record, that systemic approaches deliver benefits. Such benefits are potentially multi-scalar as they can apply at the levels of issue clarification, policy formulation, policy delivery, implementation and of course monitoring and evaluation. Given this is ‘known’ by those who do it, why is it that there is not more widespread commissioning and use of systemic approaches? Why is there no effective institutionalised ‘demand pull’ that has as a result capability building from more educational offerings in HE and CPD? Is it because, as Professor John Seddon notes: *‘the evidence is strong currency amongst those whose job is to manage public sector services but is weak currency amongst policy-makers with ideological fixations on scale, competition, commissioning and inspection, to mention just the big ones’*.

¹ The +40 is both equivalent to the number of years since the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, from which concerns about sustainable development grew and the number of years since Systems was first taught at the OU.

² <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/CM%208062>

This conundrum can be framed by using the other Janus face of the issue. Why is it that so much public policy is framed and designed without systemic sensibility in relation to context, purpose and effectiveness (as well as efficiency)? As Professor Eileen Munro notes: *'Why does child protection not focus on helping children, rather than on the regulations, inspections and procedures that have thrown the system out of balance?'*

These questions extend beyond the health and social services sectors to fields such as energy policy, fracking regulations, implementation of the European Water Framework Directive, in effect across all of government. At this historical moment, what is now called by many the Anthropocene, do we have governance that fails to be systemic and adaptive?

You are cordially invited to a half day seminar-workshop to explore these issues. Our invitation has been extended to systems practitioners and policy makers. Professors Eileen Munro (LSE) and Ray Ison (OU) have drawn on their own personal research and practice to design the half-day event. The three hour session will be organised as a *systemic inquiry* into the issues that have been posed above. To do this, expertise in the room will be drawn upon interactively and supplemented by a series of short case study presentations. Out of the inquiry we hope to formulate a Policy Briefing for government and others.

Venue: London School of Economics (Vera Anstey Room)

Time: 2 - 5pm on 22nd June 2012

Please arrive before 2pm. The venue will be open from 1.30pm

The Vera Anstey Room is between the ground and first floor, Old Building – see <http://www2.lse.ac.uk/mapsAndDirections/findingYourWayAroundLSE.aspx> .

Hosts

Professor Eileen Munro CBE

Professor of Social Policy

Department of Social Policy

The London School of Economics and
Political Science

E.Munro@lse.ac.uk

Professor Ray Ison

Professor of Systems

Systemic and Adaptive Governance
Research Programme

Communication & Systems Department

The Open University (UK)

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IMPORTANT!!!

RSVP: 15th June 2012

Please send an email to p.a.telford@open.ac.uk to confirm your attendance (or that of a close colleague) at this event.

SPEAKER GUIDELINES

The role of invited speakers is to contribute 'evidence' to the collective 'systemic inquiry'. This 'evidence' will of course be based on the speakers experience and context. What is important however is that in the limited time available (i.e., 10 minutes per speaker): (i) the case for systems approaches needs to be addressed drawing on experience; (ii) constraints to more widespread use articulated, and (iii) opportunities now and in the future suggested.

The process will be run as a Systemic Inquiry.³ This will involve table-based inquiry groups of five people per group using conversation mapping (i.e. 8 tables in total). We have 180 minutes altogether. We will take 10 minutes for welcome and scene setting the event leaving 170 minutes.

We have a design that is based on 6 x 10 minute presentations from invited speakers (see above). Speakers will present in groups of two (with some time for questions of clarification) interspersed by table-based discussions (25 minutes per session). The groups will extract key themes from their conversation maps as summary statements about current constraints and future possibilities for systems approaches in the public sector. These will be presented in a final plenary wrap-up of 25 minutes.

Speakers

- (i) *Academic contributors to public sector reform*

Professor Eileen Munro CBE is a Professor of Social Policy at the LSE. The Munro Review, which has had a very positive reception, began by using 'systems' theory to examine how the current conditions relating to child protection have evolved. The review's first report in October 2010 described the child protection system in recent times as one that has been shaped by four key driving forces. The review's second report, in February this year, considered the child's journey through the child protection system - from needing to receiving help - to show

³ See Ison, R.L. (2010) Systems Practice. How to Act in a Climate-Change World. Springer, London.

how the system could be improved. Preparation of the two reports involved extensive consultation on the reform areas.

Dr David Lane is Reader in Management Science at the LSE. He contributed expertise in problem structuring techniques for strategic analysis, particularly system dynamics, strategic modelling and systems thinking to the Munro Review. Application areas for David's work include the dynamics of project management and healthcare management.

Dr Kevin Collins is a Lecturer in Environment and Systems at the Open University, UK. A social scientist and a systems thinker and practitioner, his main interests are systems approaches to natural resource management and environmental policy and practice. An experienced designer and facilitator of public and stakeholder / expert meetings, he has conducted international research with policy-makers, stakeholders and scientists focussing on innovative systemic social learning approaches, especially in relation to water resources. He will draw on work with Environment Agency of England & Wales.

Systems consulting to the public sector

Andy Brogan is Wellbeing Practice Lead at Vanguard Consulting, where he has worked since 2008 following roles within local government and the NHS. Over the last 18 months Andy, with colleagues at Vanguard, has been exploring the application of John Seddon's 'Vanguard Method' within the UK health and care system. Unsurprisingly, the scope for improvement which is being revealed is enormous!

Mike Haynes has, since taking his first Systems courses at the Open University in the 1980s and a Masters at Lancaster, been a full time consultant, mainly to public sector organisations and in particular the NHS. In his work Mike has developed experience in the use of SSM, the systems approach developed by Peter Checkland. After retraining from a first career in engineering and public sector management Mike is now a professional systems-informed consultant in information management and health informatics.

(ii) *Systems practice within the public sector*

Helen Wilding works in Newcastle upon Tyne developing and facilitating partnership working in the field of wellbeing and health policy. She achieved an MBA with the Open University in 2006 and has more recently continued her studies towards the new OU MSc in Systems Thinking in Practice. Helen blogs at <http://helen.wilding.name/>

Nick Bailey is an Inspector and Western Area Operations Commander with Cheshire Police. His position involves a large amount of partnership working, particularly in the safeguarding arena and the emergent combined budgets arena, of which his area is working with Whitehall as one of four pilot areas nationally. Latterly he led the force change program, *Transforming Policing*, which was responsible for the introduction of system thinking to the organisation, whereby a greater emphasis is placed on delivering against public expectations

than internal drivers and targets. He is a co-author of a chapter entitled 'No soft option: changing thinking across an entire police force' in the recent book 'Delivering Public Services that Work.'

Capability-building in systems thinking and practice

Professor Ray Ison has been Professor of Systems at The Open University (UK) since 1994. At the OU he has contributed to the development of a wide range of Systems courses and programmes, and understands what is required to develop systems thinking and practice capability. In his own research he has contributed systemic understandings and practices to the reform of water and river governance practices in Europe, Australia, China and South Africa, most of which has been connected with the public sector.