

ANARCHY WITHIN

STEPHEN MCCULLOCH

Festival of
Governance 2021 

Author: **Stephen McCulloch**

Anarchy within

"The only constant in life is change"

Heraclitus

Structure is important but it must be able to adapt to the changing needs of the people, organisations or society it was designed for. Skyscrapers, for example, are built with some flex for strong winds and extreme heat to stop them from toppling.

The more rigid a structure, the more likely it will have to be broken to allow for something more flexible to replace it.

I was asked to write this article and use it to argue the benefits of anarchy by demonstrating how a little bit of anarchy in any structure can help to create more sustainable frameworks and organisational structures.

The reluctant anarchist

So off I went, channelling as well as I could my inner anarchist, delving into research about people who have changed the world – or at least a small patch of it – from the outside in. Immediately I found myself falling down a wonderful, but misguided, rabbit hole.

At first, I was reluctant to face up to the chaos

caused by so many famous anarchists and anarchistic movements. But I was immediately attracted to the more collegial, egalitarian and collectivist elements of, for example, the Occupy movement. I was also attracted by the purpose of its mission for a fairer distribution of resources.

The humble anarchist is often in search of ways to make a better world for everyone. As the 19th Century American anarchist Voltairine de Cleyre said: "Anarchism, to me, means not only the denial of authority, not only a new economy, but a revision of the principles of morality.

"It means the development of the individual as well as the assertion of the individual. It means self-responsibility, and not leader worship."

As I dug deeper into anarchy, I realised there are different types, all of which I approve of, but some I feel more comfortable with. So here we will learn about three types:

Total anarchy – A society that is self-regulated by the educated and informed decisions they make on behalf of themselves and others. This type of anarchy would 'prefer to educate rather than to regulate' (Ted Baker, Chief Inspector of Hospitals, Care Quality Commission).

Managing chaos – A structured, ordered society with rules and frameworks that is also 'responsive, inclusive, experimental, entrepreneurial and innovative' (Professor Jaideep Prabhu, Jawaharlal Nehru professor of business and enterprise at the Judge Business School at the University of Cambridge).

Activism – The rule breakers, or the anarchists we're probably all most familiar with. "When

Continue on page. 102



Tim Nathan
Gallery item 8 display size 30x21

people in power don't show compassion, sometimes you have to up the ante." (Peter Tatchell, human rights campaigner).

Now I ask, what if there were no rules? Or at least, no rules from the centre but instead an autonomous approach? Individual autonomy is an idea that is generally understood to refer to the capacity to be one's own person, to live one's life according to reasons and motives that are taken as one's own and not the product of manipulative or distorting external forces; to be in this way independent. And examples of successful versions of this exist across the world.

Anarchy in the Netherlands

One example of such a system being introduced to reduce complexity is Buurtzorg in the Netherlands. A healthcare organisation with a nurse-led model of holistic care, Buurtzorg represents the ultimate anti-establishment approach, anarchistic to its core, but with few traditional anarchistic traits.

Buurtzorg was the brainchild of Jos de Blok, who has a background in economics and then became a nurse. He said: "At the beginning of the 90s, based on ideas of management a lot of things changed in the health system in the Netherlands. Patients were expecting more and becoming more dissatisfied, which led to many nurses leaving their roles."

Together with friends, de Blok decided to develop his own technology so that information and knowledge could be shared in the community, to relieve nurses of administrative tasks and allow them to monitor their own performance. Alongside this they developed a principles-based organisation

linked to community healthcare. They had a set of products that shared a vital principle: that nurses are able to create the right interventions to get the right outcome for patients.

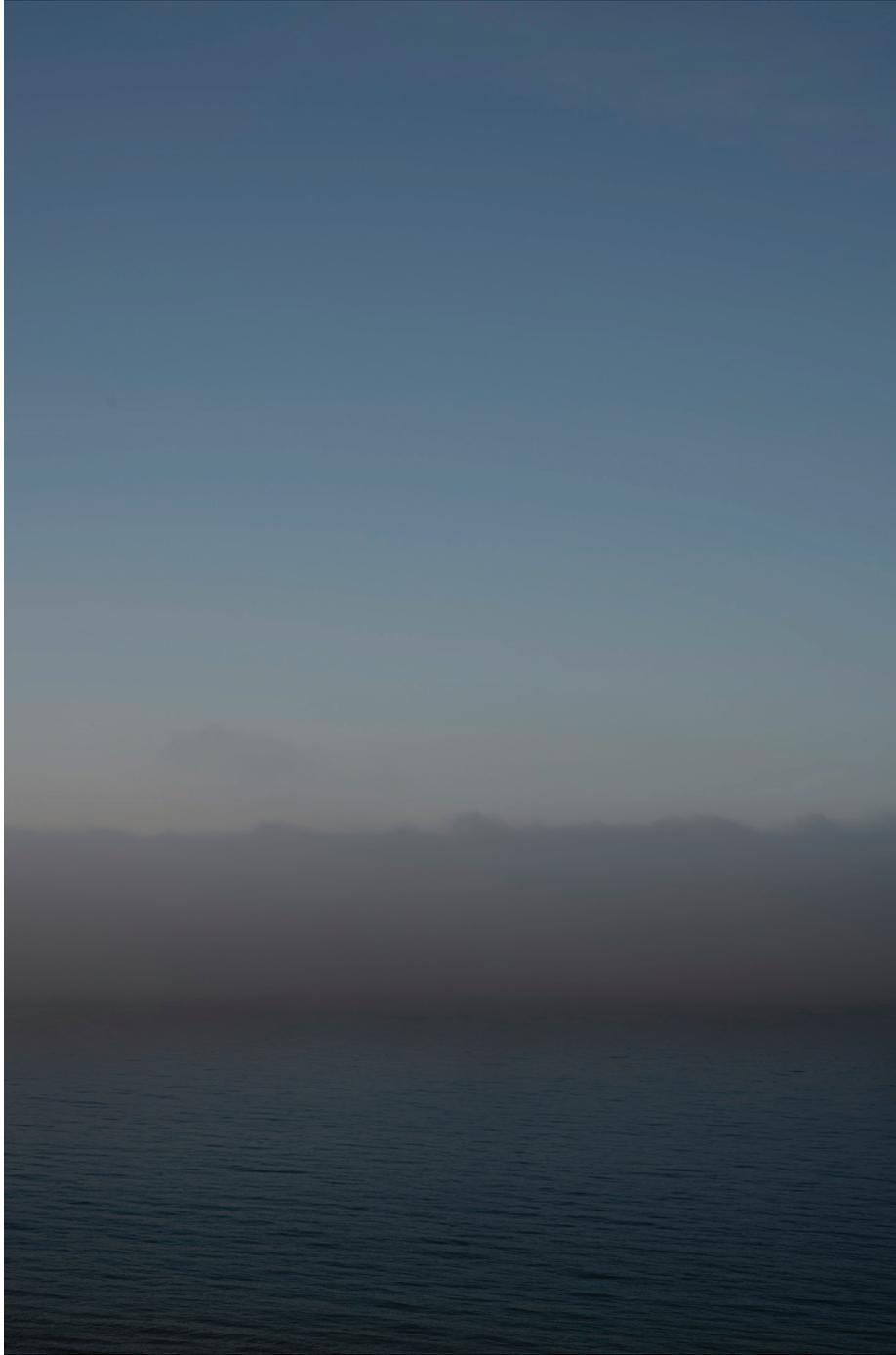
The key to the Buurtzorg model is that there are no systems and structures of management, nor targets or goals from a board. Each neighbourhood team can set up these community health services in whatever way they want. Complete individual autonomy.

Buurtzorg has been incredibly successful, becoming the largest community care organisation in Holland. Its performance has been studied and favourably reported on by large, multinational consultancies, commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare & Sport as part of its regulatory and monitoring duties. It's also been voted the best employer in Holland for five consecutive years. All of this strongly suggests it's a model that works.

One of the reasons for Buurtzorg's success is that the Dutch government supports the system and has stimulated other organisations to work in a similar way. Therefore, despite being autonomous and independent, it still has a blessing from the structured and regulated centre. It is also regulated itself to ensure that the quality of care is excellent. But Buurtzorg's autonomy allows this regulation to be a small part of the way it works rather than an all-encompassing need.

The Netherlands is known as a high performing society – its education ranks as seventh in the world and its economy is 17th in the world, according to gross domestic product (GDP) ratings. The Dutch approach to healthcare,

Continue on page. 106



Tim Nathan
Gallery item 261 display size 4x4

About the author

Stephen McCulloch

Director of Communications, GGI

Stephen joined GGI in July 2020 and is GGI's communications director. Prior to joining GGI he led a diverse range of regulatory and health engagement and communications teams for over a decade.

Most recently his work with Ofwat, the water regulator, included leading the corporate communications team to develop national stakeholder engagement and influence campaigns alongside media and events. He led the stakeholder relationship programme for the development of a pivotal new strategy for the sector, which included working with water companies to better integrate with their communities and cross-sector local organisations to become true anchor organisations. For this programme of work Stephen developed and delivered a central digital hub for citizens and water companies to share their stories and learning with others.

He has also led communications teams for major London acute, mental health and specialist hospitals as well as leading CCG campaigns for community engagement across south London. This has included managing and designing community networks to

I would like to flip the script on how we perceive issues and information all the time. Having fresh perspectives, provides insight into possible new solutions.

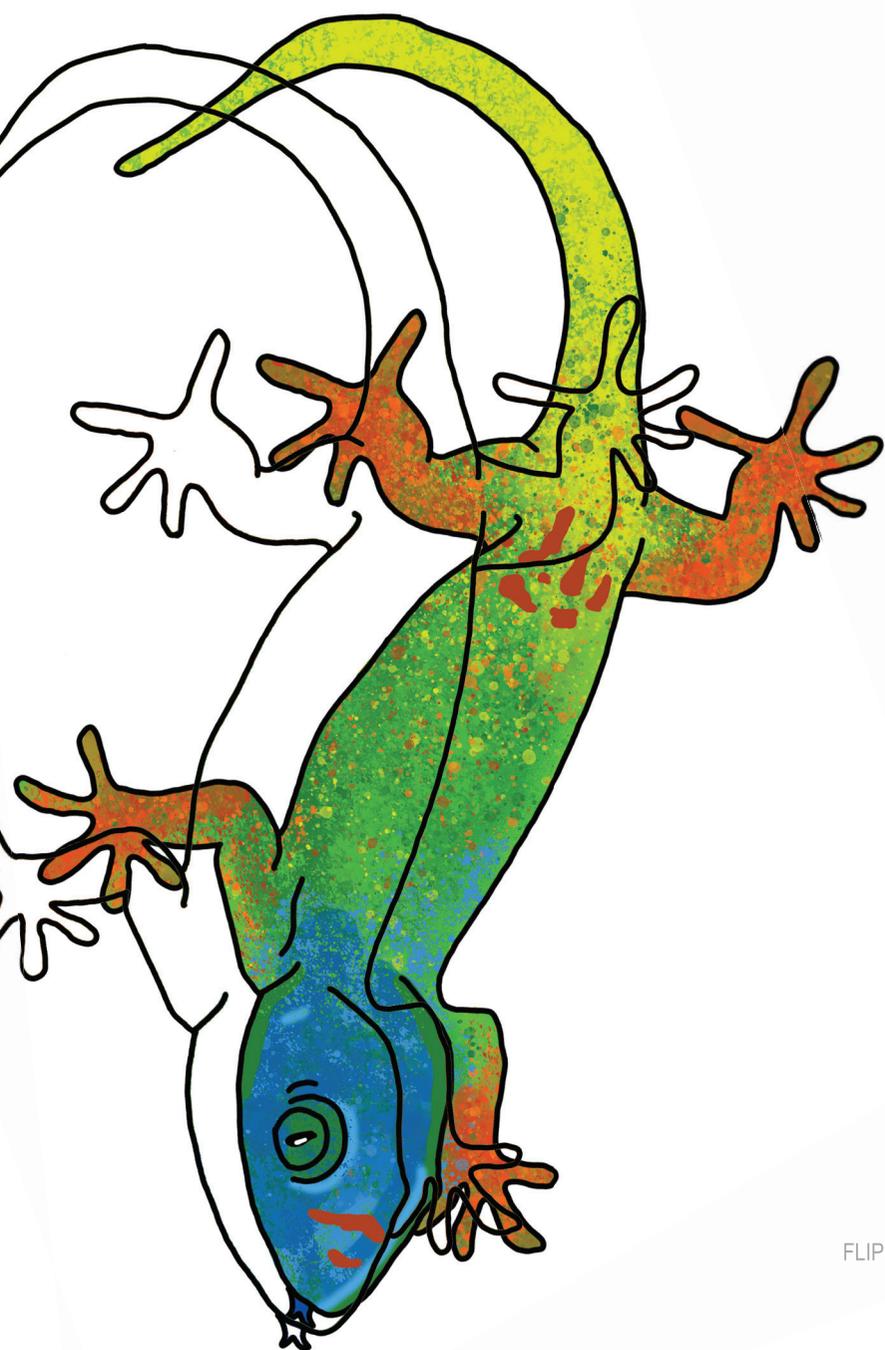
encourage collaborative working both face-to-face and on digital platforms. He also led the rebrand of three major acute hospitals during a merge across several diverse north London boroughs.

Stephen has also led multi-disciplinary teams to integrate health messages across a complex and diverse range of audiences. Developing and delivering a series of face-to-face and digital events for a complex network of NHS anchor institutions and clinical commissioning groups, which saw an increase in the understanding of health messages across south London.



education and lifestyle is a huge part of the success of Buurtzorg. Society needs to be in a position to accept it, with rules, regulations and leaders in place to embed something that is ultimately a simplification of more complex rules and systems.

In short, this innovative approach shows the value of simplifying things rather than making them more complicated. Of making an environment where people can see and own what they are doing. Not trusting people eats up a lot of resources, so why not remove this barrier by introducing trust?



Jaco Marais, GGI Festival Director: “If something is complicated, do not complicate it further by trying to simplify it.”

Anarchy in the UK

Educate rather than regulate – Interview with Ted Baker, Chief Inspector of Hospitals, Care Quality Commission (CQC).

The UK is also starting to see a shift in its approach to regulation. ‘Educate don’t regulate’ is a term used, surprisingly perhaps, by the chief of one of the most important regulators in England: the CQC’s Ted Baker.

Baker said of regulation: “The role as regulator of health and social care is to ensure people get safe and good quality care while driving and encouraging improvement. It’s not just about enforcing regulation; it’s creating an environment in which services are safe and can improve.”

NHS staff do a remarkable job to keep patients safe. But when the CQC looked at what could be done to reduce the number of ‘never events’ (the kind of mistakes that should never happen) they found that, despite their best efforts, patient safety incidents continue to happen. In theory, these events are entirely preventable; in practice, too many patients suffer harm. Buurtzorg targets its district nurses to spend 60% of their time in face-to-face patient care, prioritising ‘humanity over bureaucracy’. If the NHS had similar targets, we may see further shifts in reducing incidents and potential harm.

Baker said: “Regulation is necessary, but it isn’t sufficient to drive the changes we want. The CQC wants to help NHS organisations find the

Continue on page. 108



solutions to the challenges they all face from each other, so we have published reports of best practice that are widely taken up and have had a good impact.

“We know there is a strong commitment to patient safety within our NHS and we must support staff to give safety the priority it deserves. NHS Improvement’s new patient safety strategy is a welcome development in achieving this aim.

“Everyone – including patients – can play a part in making patient safety a top priority. But there is a wider challenge for us all to effect the cultural change that we need: to have the humility to accept that we all can make errors, so we must plan everything we do with this in mind.

“This change in approach is essential if we are to create a just culture where learning is shared, and where solutions are created proactively to manage risk. Only then will we be able to reduce the toll of never events and the much greater number of other safety incidents.

“Staff know that what they do carries risk, but the culture in which they work is one that views itself as essentially safe, where errors are considered exceptional, and where rigid hierarchical structures make it hard for staff to speak up about potential safety issues or to raise concerns.

“Seeing good practice within the sector has been an opportunity for learning by the CQC, but when we looked at how to improve safety in health and social care, we also worked with other safety critical industries and saw a very different approach. We learnt to look at safety

very differently. Now our focus is not on safety processes alone, these will not deliver truly safe care without the right safety culture.”

He added: “Leaders can’t themselves deliver improvement; they need to create an environment where improvement can be driven by staff. Many individual organisations are already doing this, but they are aware that the systems in which they operate are critical for people’s care to be excellent. With this in mind, improvement should focus on the system as well as individual providers. One example is that each area needs to recruit as a system, with a workforce model across the whole system where everyone is making sure the best staff are where they are needed and fulfilling their most effective role.

“Good governance combined with the right culture, both within organisations and within systems, is what creates the environment needed to drive safety and continuous improvement. Are people following the right policies for the right reasons? As a regulator, we need to be confident that culture, leadership and governance are working together to drive high standards of safety.”

So, putting learning at the centre of everything we do could completely transform the way organisations such as the NHS operate – and indeed the outcomes for patients and staff alike.

Professor Andrew Corbett-Nolan, CEO of GGI said: “Boards often forget they have agency. Board members don’t work for regulators – the regulator is part of a context to be navigated. It’s very true to say that compliance buys freedom. Organisations that manage their relationships well with regulators are at liberty to operate

with more significant risk appetites and thus innovate, be ambitious and achieve more.”

Managing chaos

Chaos is seen as one of the defining characteristics of anarchy. The Sex Pistols’ Sid Vicious said: “Undermine their pompous authority, reject their moral standards, make anarchy and disorder your trademarks. Cause as much chaos and disruption as possible but don’t let them take you alive.”

Some rigidity in the public sector is needed. Rules and regulations are necessary to keep people safe from harm – both those being looked after and the people doing the work. However, generalisations made by regulation and national approach can be difficult to translate to local areas. Differences in demographics and needs means leaders need to think flexibly to incorporate elements of chaos management in their leadership styles.

Anarchy is missing from much public sector leadership. Yes, authentic leadership is common, but it’s rare to see CEOs step back from the trusted system they are part of to challenge regulations. That said, people expect public sector leaders to be well behaved and work within the rules, so excessive challenge and disruption isn’t appropriate. There is a need to strike a balance between what they do and how they’re seen. They should be seen as challenging and stimulating, but also accountable, not anarchic.

The role should be both disruptive and collaborative. The anarchic CEO should challenge the structures that have been set up to allow some flexibility for local need and always

be 30 seconds ahead of the organisation.

We need more anarchist leaders. It’s not just about disruption but also about their focus on outcomes. CEOs should constantly look at outcomes and how they’re reached. The best results won’t always be achieved through a set of frameworks, regulatory controls, established systems, processes or a continuation of business as usual, but instead by looking at the bigger picture and finding new ways to improve.

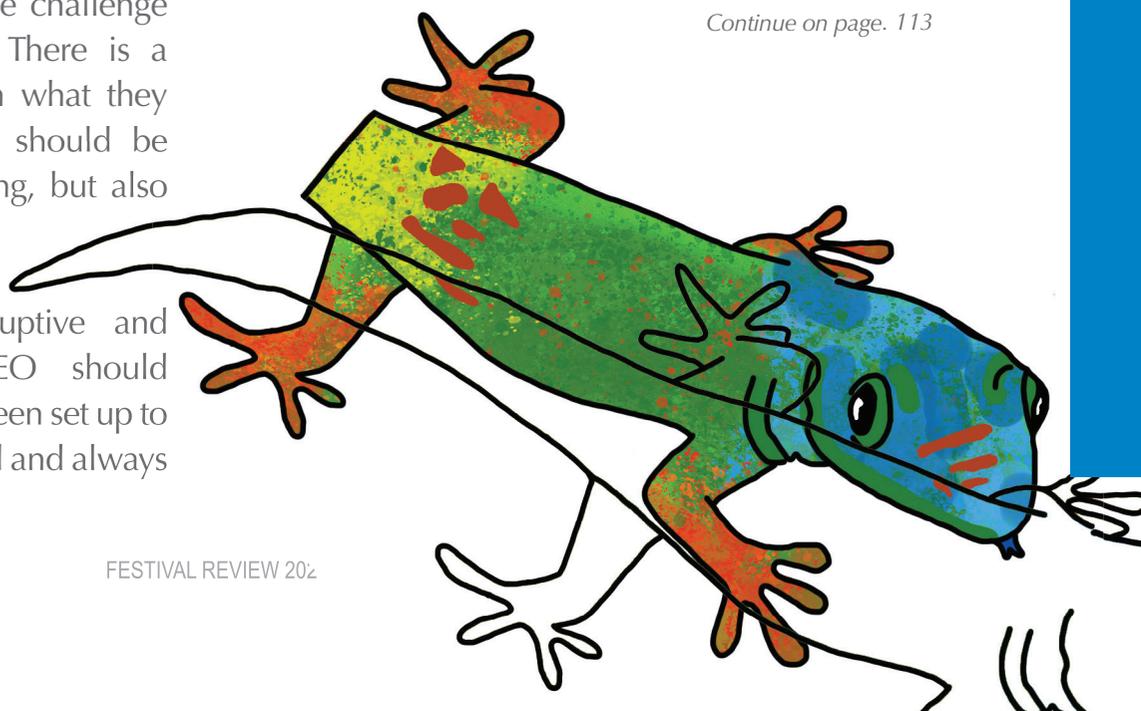
Flipping the script on the powers that be

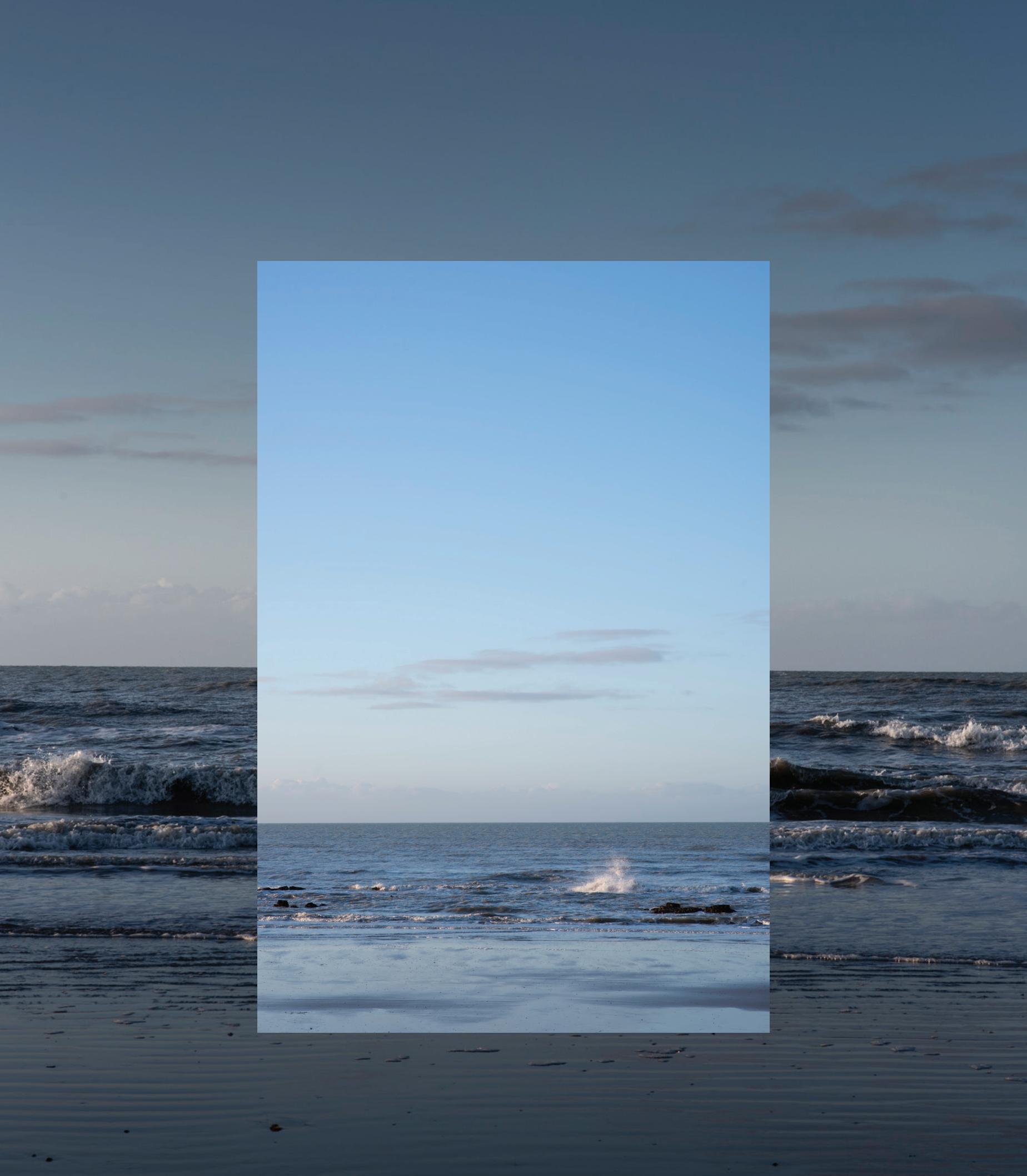
The definition of flipping the script is: ‘Reverse the usual or existing positions in a situation; do something unexpected or revolutionary.’ (Oxford Dictionaries)

Professor Jaideep Prabhu, professor of business and enterprise at the Judge Business School at the University of Cambridge, author, editor, consultant and keynote speaker at GGI’s Annual Lecture 2021, has spent much of his career studying innovation in the private sector.

A question he has been asked many times is whether the same principles can be applied to both private and public sectors. His conclusion?

Continue on page. 113









Yes, they can.

Prabhu's third book, *How Should a Government Be? The New Levers of State Power*, explores what it means to be innovative with governance and how governments could culture this learning and development style in the economy. Prabhu says the key lies in the public sector looking for trade-offs between effectiveness, efficiency and public freedoms.

The book outlines five ways in which a culture can manage chaos and be truly innovative in approach: responsive, inclusive, experimental, entrepreneurial and innovative.

The responsive state is all about putting the citizen at the centre. This is key to managing chaos and anarchy – as long as the citizen is happy, and the rules and regulations flex enough then society should be happy and felt responded to. Design solutions should be built from the outside in, with citizen involvement throughout. And this isn't just at the top of government policy making, but throughout any public sector development – which is especially relevant now, with the development of place in the new health and social care system.

The inclusive state means taking that responsive approach and recognising that different groups of citizens have different needs, and finding harmony between these. An example of success in the bringing together of responsive and inclusive state is the introduction of universal basic income in Denmark. By engaging with both employers and job seekers, listening to their needs and approaches, the Danes developed system that means it's affordable for all to live without destroying company profit margins. Harmony.

The third state, experimental, is in many ways total anarchy in a very controlled environment. To manage the chaos Prabhu says new solutions should be trialled to reduce the risk of failure and then to evaluate at scale. Data and behavioural insights are really important – to build an understanding of what works and what doesn't. This state is the most like putting flex into a skyscraper to protect it from the wind. It allows for movement and then for returning to the original structure if that movement doesn't work out.

The entrepreneurial state is about being proactive and engaging with stakeholders in various technologies. We'll come onto this in more detail in a second, looking at digital governance in the public sector and how it can manage chaos.

Finally, Prabhu says a state must be innovative. Ultimately, without innovation anarchy will always rise up. The world is changing at an incredible pace and without innovative approaches and new ways of thinking governments and public sector bodies won't keep up.

So, how can a public sector leader of a complex organisation such as an NHS hospital trust manage both the formal structure and rules imposed by regulation alongside the local needs of their population?

According to digital governance expert Lisa Welchman, author of *Managing Chaos: Digital Governance by Design*, they need innovative digital solutions. She says: "Few organisations



realise a return on their digital investment. They're distracted by political infighting and technology-first solutions. To reach the next level organisations must realign their assets – people, content, and technology – by practising the discipline of digital governance.”

Digital governance focuses on establishing clear accountability for digital strategy, policy and standards. Ultimately, an effectively designed and implemented digital governance framework can help to streamline an organisation. Welchman says digital governance can help a leadership team in its “agility by clarifying roles and responsibilities and connections for a collaborative team. If you think about it, agile software methodology itself is highly structured with well-defined roles and responsibilities. A digital governance framework, when properly designed, can enable and not hinder agile development.”

And this approach, if adapted well, becomes the way a leader can manage chaos with the support of digital technology. “A lot of organisations are in digital chaos, but the path they took to get to that chaos is unique. Therefore, the solution for normalising and maturing digital governance and operations will also be unique.” In other words, even setting up a digital governance solution requires a bit of anarchy.

By taking the brave first step into the complex world of digital governance, public sector leadership teams can flip the script and find ways to play off the complexities of regulation against the needs of local people. Data-driven digital solutions can give leaders the oversight they need to make excellent decisions, while the automation of said solutions means that change and innovation in an organisation can

be implemented in a matter of seconds. The anarchy within, truly working with the bigger system while supporting those who need it locally.

Breaking all the rules

Rule breakers can take many forms and fight for many causes. Sometimes they need to fight against the whole system, other times it's about a specific flaw within one system. Peter Tatchell has campaigned for human and LGBTQ+ rights throughout the world. He found himself in a system that didn't provide the same rights or even respect for LGBTQ+ people afforded to others, so, in his words: “When people in power don't show compassion, sometimes you have to up the ante.”

He added: “Just like other movements, we have to get angry and confrontational. We've tried to play by the rules; it hasn't worked. Now it's time to break the rules.” This is the prime example of the first face of anarchy: needing to break rules not just for the sake of it, but to make a point and drive change.

Tatchell took inspiration from other places. He says: “The Vietnam Moratorium protests [mass anti-war demonstrations and teach-ins across the US in 1969] were the turning point of public opinion against the war. It taught me how you can mobilise people and get media coverage, putting people in power under pressure and changing public opinion.” And this is key – acts of rebellion to be seen by the masses to shift opinion which, in turn, can lead to powers introducing flex into their rules and systems.

These forms of rebellion are not easy. The American historian and social critic Noam

Chomsky, who has written about a plethora of anarchistic approaches, including the Occupy movement, says: “It’s not going to be easy to proceed. There are going to be barriers, difficulties, hardships, failures – it’s inevitable. But unless the process that is taking place here and elsewhere in the country and around the world, unless that continues to grow and becomes a major force in the social and political world, the chances for a decent future are not very high.”

The Occupy movement was a progressive social movement opposed to inequality and the lack of democracy across the globe and looking to introduce and improve justice for ‘the people.’ Unlike Tatchell’s focused lens, Occupy had a huge breadth of scope, but took a particular interest in how a few wealthy individuals and companies control the many across the world. Chomsky commented: “Concentration of wealth yields concentration of political power. And concentration of political power gives rise to legislation that increases and accelerates the cycle.”

Did the Occupy movement achieve anything? It’s less vocal and visible than it used to be, but as Tatchell’s story demonstrates, a movement can take a long time to achieve results. What Occupy did was to get people talking about inequality, financial responsibilities and collusion between the government and banks. People are thinking differently. Chomsky says: “The population is angry, frustrated, bitter—and for good reasons. For the past generation, policies have been initiated that have led to an extremely sharp concentration of wealth in a tiny sector of the population. In fact, the wealth distribution is very heavily weighted by, literally, the top tenth of one percent of the

population, a fraction so small that they’re not even picked up on the census. You have to do statistical analysis just to detect them. And they have benefited enormously. This is mostly from the financial sector—hedge fund managers, CEOs of financial corporations and so on.”

So how does this translate into the public sector? And are there approaches in place to support colleagues when they need a ‘movement’ behind them?

Whistleblowing is one constructed but anarchic approach to this.

In its employment guidance, the UK government says: “You’re a whistle blower if you’re a worker and you report certain types of wrongdoing. This will usually be something you’ve seen at work – though not always. The wrongdoing you disclose must be in the public interest. This means it must affect others, for example the general public. As a whistle blower you’re protected by law – you should not be treated unfairly or lose your job because you ‘blow the whistle’.”

Ultimately, whistleblowing is good as it enables people to speak up, but it is often handled in a bureaucratic way. People who sit within organisations are often at the centre of the process without knowing what the outcome will be. We have seen cases of a member of an executive team whistleblowing, then having to continue to work with those they have reported, unable to change behaviour or even report things properly in case those ‘in the wrong’ are found to be innocent. Ultimately, neither side trusts the process – the whistle blower knows they’ll be identified and those who have had the whistle blown on them have an uncertain future.

Continue on page. 118







The most prominent recent case of whistleblowing in the UK public sector has been that of Dominic Cummings, whose own behaviour, ironically, was the subject of a whistle blower in early 2019.

Cummings was a government aide and close advisor to the prime minister before and during the COVID-19 crisis. He saw the inner workings of everything and, from what we can see, was a key part of these workings.

When he swiftly departed, reportedly with a firm push from the top, he took it upon himself to reveal truths. He claimed to have evidence of disrespect between senior government leaders and the prime minister and shared these with the world. He also gave a detailed account during a government investigation.

Cummings ultimately left government before he blew the whistle, leaving him safer from harm as nothing could be done about his job – he no longer had one. He took quite an anarchistic and rule-breaking approach, which, as we've already established, isn't appropriate for leaders in the public sector.

So, how could we flip the script on whistleblowing? Perhaps by adding a mediator to the process. So that when the anarchist rightly blows the whistle there is a process in place for openness and transparency.

Whistleblowing allows a venting of emotion and a relief from saying stuff alongside the anxiety you'll be picked off because of it.

Developing a new system to support the public sector when it is most in need would transform the way we are able to sort out issues.

Accidental birth of an anarchist

So where have I landed? I think you could now call me the 'comfortable anarchist'. Or even 'friend of the anarchist'. Now that I've seen the development of the word and what it can mean for our society and public sector, I'm really sold on anarchy as an approach to make the world a better place.

Ultimately, the anarchist comes into play sometimes because the systems and structures set up to protect them aren't right – they're too rigid or inaccessible. When this happens, cracks begin to appear, and the structure needs to be fixed.

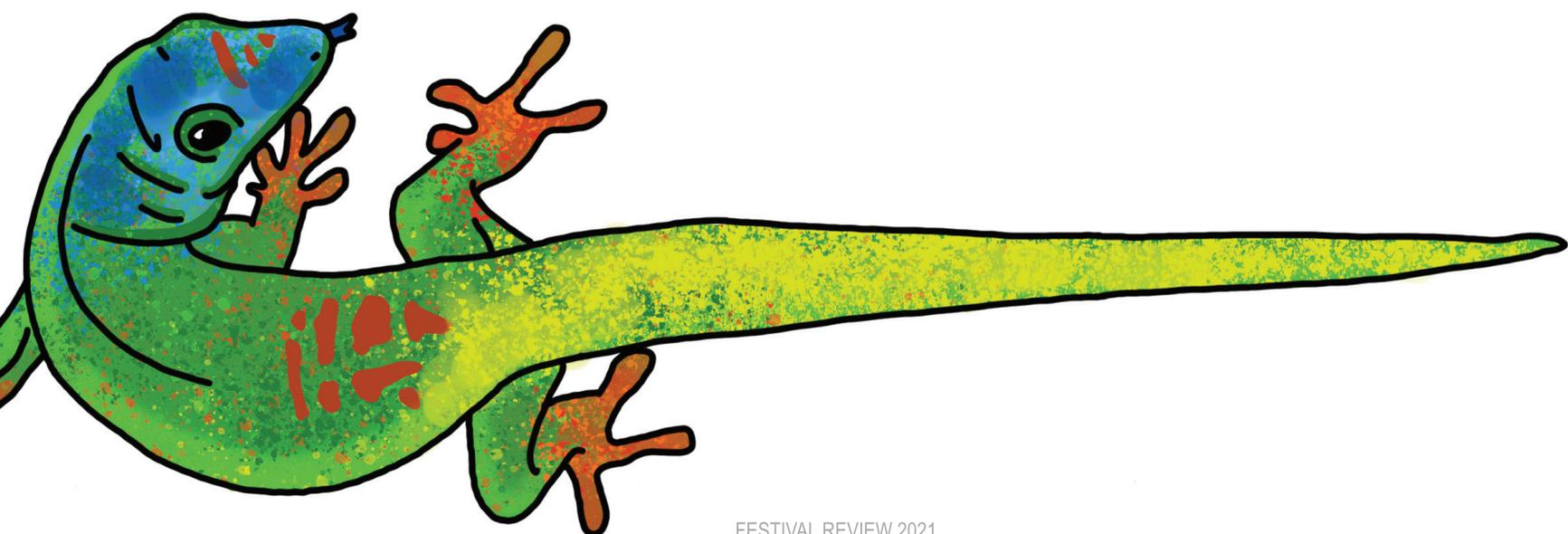
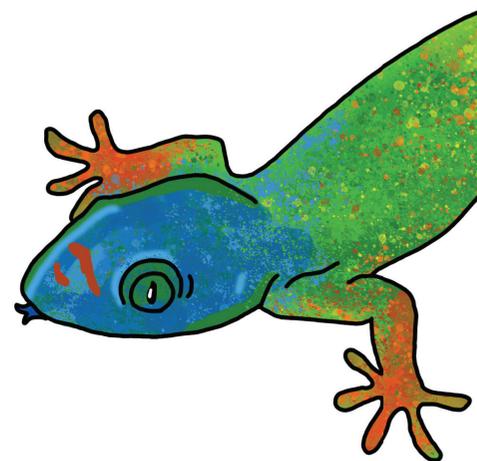
Systems are complex and chaotic; anarchy can help us to navigate that chaos. Just like the human body – made up of millions of particles, filled with blood and organs – the system that looks after it, the NHS, is enormously complex. NHS leaders finding a way to manage the complexity and chaos with a bit of anarchy, through both thoughtful behaviours and digital systems, can make a hugely positive contribution.

Then there is the system that works autonomously, with little push or shove. This system is anarchistic itself, going against normal rules and regulations to build harmony, but do you know what? It works.

We've flipped the script a few times here. We've turned anarchy on its head and seen it as a force for good. We've seen leaders play against a (necessary) system to create the right services for the citizens they serve. We've flipped rules and regulations upside down and have seen that loosening them can be massively beneficial.



Yours, truly now, also an anarchist.

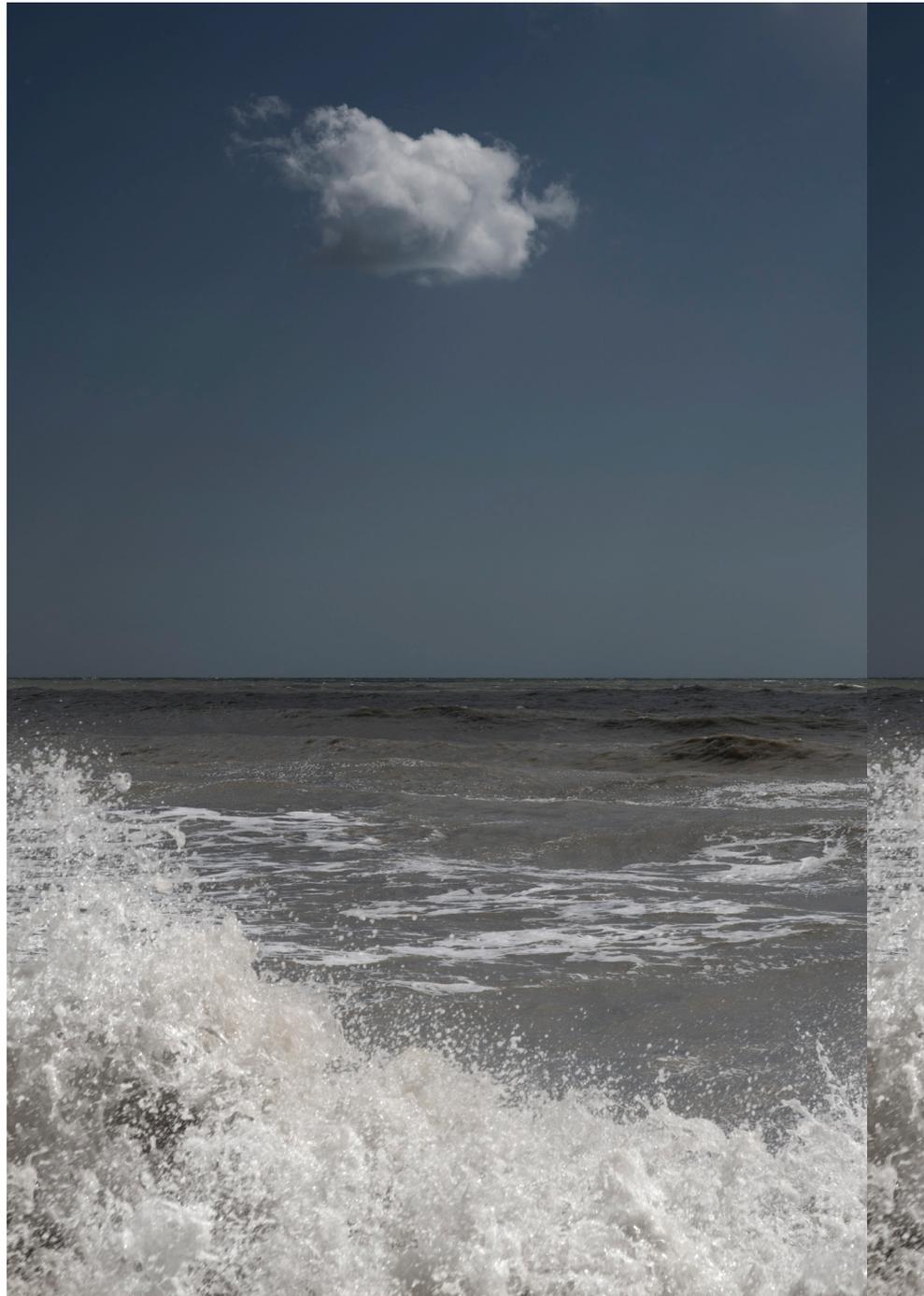


**Gareth Stevens,
Friend**

Although Tim Nathan is a seasoned and successful director, music video maker, photographer and designer his cornerstone passions are his twofold love of horses and drawing.

Whether working with a medical company on designing parts for centrifuges to separate stem cells from blood samples or directing a team of musicians and technicians to produce a music video, his ground state is that of draughtsman and sculptor.

In the midst of working on a wide range of disparate and often peculiar projects, he is always true to his core purpose.











**Festival of
Governance** 2021

FESTIVALOFGOVERNANCE.ORG