

# Degrees of relationality in public services: a working ladder for diagnosis, prioritisation, and movement

2026-03-21 Benjamin Taylor, Work in progress

## Why a ladder at all?

‘Relational public services’ is a popular rallying cry at the moment – a think-tank theme, a live strand in service design and improvement practice itself, including training offers, an academic-practice community, with recurring conferences and communities of practice, a ‘theme’ in ‘the discourse’, and an explicit part of public service reform language in national programmes. Not to mention a conscious part of practice in real services on the ground.

And, with everything that is popular and works as an ‘umbrella term’, it is at risk of being presented as all things to all people – or a compliment given to anything people like or think looks like decent public service provision. That makes it hard to make sense of, even harder to get right, and more likely to be ‘flavour of the month’.

So this is an attempt at a more practical classification. It is not ‘relational good / transactional bad’ – but because I am undeniably presenting a developmental progression, it will inevitably seem that way. What I want to offer is a way to differentiate different types of ‘relationality’, and to make trade-offs and risks explicit.

## There’s always space for humanity and relationality – though it’s getting smaller

First, please remember, as I give the categorisations, that there is always wiggle room. Lipsky’s ‘street-level bureaucrats’ are a reminder that the real service is often made (or broken) in the discretionary space between policy and practice.

‘Public service workers who interact directly with citizens ... and who have substantial discretion in the execution of their work.’

[https://assets.cambridge.org/97811088/18865/excerpt/9781108818865\\_excerpt.pdf](https://assets.cambridge.org/97811088/18865/excerpt/9781108818865_excerpt.pdf)

Second, that ‘wiggle room’ is being maximally redesigned out of the system. Not always deliberately. But through metrics, scripts, workflow, and now automation. [Bovens and Zouridis described the shift ‘from street-level to system-level bureaucracies’ as ICT reshapes discretion.](#)

Relationality is not a vibe. It is a design choice. It determines – or is determined by – governance, management, strategy, measures, data, tech, and the shape of work.

## Types of relationship

Professor Toby Lowe raised the point that this isn’t really a scale of relationality - since even domination or transactionality is, by definition, a type of relationship. I can’t disagree - yet when ‘relational public services’ is used as an umbrella term, we are contrasting ‘relational’ with something else. This paper is an attempt to support better distinctions in this space. So while accepting this point in the sense of strict accuracy, I think the use of ‘ladder’ and ‘degrees of relationality’ in the sense it is usually understood is still useful. I have written further on what we mean when we say ‘relational’ in this context: [https://www.linkedin.com/posts/antlerboy\\_what-do-we-mean-when-we-say-relational-activity-7439590693385392128-Advx/](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/antlerboy_what-do-we-mean-when-we-say-relational-activity-7439590693385392128-Advx/)

# The ladder: degrees of relationality in public services

## Ladder of degrees of relationality



Not a maturity model: Multiple levels coexist.

At the bottom end, the state acts on people.

### Level -2. Coercive

This is the state using power to make people comply. The person is treated as a risk, not a human with a life. Help is not really the point. The point is obedience, safety, or punishment. Sometimes that is necessary (for example in safeguarding, criminal justice, emergencies). But it is dangerous because it can slide from protection into domination. The only way it stays legitimate is if it is tightly bounded, reviewable, and genuinely accountable.

### Level -1. 'Take it or leave it'

The service produces something it thinks is good for you. It might even be decent. But it is built around the organisation's view of the world, not your lived purpose. People are assumed, not known. If it doesn't fit, tough. The main defence is 'we met the standard'. People get heard mainly through complaint, politics, or walking away. This can be acceptable for simple, low-stakes things. But it becomes ugly when the stakes are high or the service has to deal with real variety.

### Level 0. Scripted bureaucracy

This is the 'computer says no' world. The organisation looks responsive, but only inside its own boxes and categories. The citizen has to translate their messy life into the system's menu, quickly and under stress. Data looks neat, but reality gets worse. Staff discretion exists, but it is squeezed by scripts, handling times, and fear of blame. People learn to game the system. The big risk here is that you industrialise avoidable work: repeat contact, handoffs, complaints, and burnout.

Then relationality starts to show up as a design choice, not a tone of voice.

### Level 1. Listening at the point of demand (basic relationality)

This is the first real step. You treat contacts as intelligence, not noise. You separate 'what people genuinely need' from 'the extra contact you caused'. You redesign letters, forms, handoffs, and ownership so people don't have to chase. Frontline judgement becomes legitimate work, not a workaround. The risk is that you stop here. You become a nicer transaction factory. You still treat 'service' as the answer, and people still feel 'othered' by the system, just more politely.

### Level 2. 'Good help' that builds agency

Now the interaction is designed to leave the person stronger, not more dependent. You make purpose explicit in the conversation. You work with the person to interpret what's going on and what will help. Success includes 'what the person can now do without us'. The risk is fake relationality: warm language with the same old power. Or 'therapeutic bureaucracy', where relationship is used to secure compliance.

### Level 3. Joined-up support around a situation

Here you coordinate across multiple services around one person's situation over time. There is clear ownership. Fewer handoffs. Faster escalation when needed. Plans make sense to the person, and the person holds the narrative. This is often the glue that stops fragmentation. The risk is the 'hero navigator' pattern: brilliant individuals compensating for a broken system. It can work for the person, but it doesn't change the conditions that keep creating the same situations, unless you deliberately mine cases for patterns and redesign.

### Level 4. Changing the conditions, not just the cases

Relationality stops being mainly about the encounter, and becomes about the rules of the game. You

remove the disabling hoops. You change measures, funding, eligibility, information, data sharing, and institutional behaviours that make life harder. Commissioning becomes about shaping conditions, not buying units. The risk is 'policy theatre': everyone agrees with the words, but nothing changes in money, measures, or authority, so the system snaps back.

### Level 5. Place works as one system, as standard

Now the whole place can respond in real time around people's lived context, not as a heroic exception. There is an operating rhythm, shared learning, and practical authority at the edge, backed by governance. The system can act as one when needed, without endless negotiation. The risk is partnership-as-performance: meetings, diagrams, memoranda, but no shift in incentives, no change in lived experience, and no real learning.

### Level 5+. Co-governed place

This is level 5 with teeth for citizen power. Not 'engagement', but built-in decision rights: citizen panels that can actually decide things, participatory budgeting, neighbourhood forums, citizen-defined measures of 'what good looks like here', shared control of data and learning. The risk is that it gets bolted on as decoration, or captured by the already-confident, unless you design hard for inclusion and fairness.

### Level 6. Citizen space and community power

Here the centre of gravity flips. Citizens, in association, become the primary actors. Institutions become guests and allies. The state still has duties, but it stops pretending it can 'deliver' society. Need is met through relationships, mutual aid, local assets, and some services, with the community setting priorities and holding institutions to account. The risk is romanticising 'community'. Communities are not automatically safe or fair. Power still exists. Inequality still exists. This level doesn't replace the others. It reshapes them, and it demands strong safeguards.

The lower levels are organised around the system's comfort and control; the higher levels are organised around people's lived purpose and shared power, with the state learning to be less of a machine and more of an enabling infrastructure.

## Development, caveats, and conclusions

### Caveat 1: you need multiple degrees or relationality at once

This is ‘[pace layers](#)’, applied to public service design. Fast layers adapt. Slow layers stabilise. The health is in the tension, not in choosing one layer.

‘It is in the contradictions between these layers that civilisation finds its surest health.’ Brand

So the goal is not to ‘be relational (in the sense used in this paper) everywhere’. It is to be deliberate about where you standardise, and where you must personalise. And to keep moving.

### Caveat 2: every degree must be designed to move, not freeze – or progress will be backwards

Relationality is not a fixed state. It is a direction of travel. Without learning loops, you get drift back to Degree 2, at best. This is why measures matter so much. If you measure ‘calls handled quickly’, you will get quick calls and repeat demand. If you measure ‘problems solved’ and ‘people enabled’, you get redesign and learning.

## How to use the ladder: diagnosis and prioritisation

### Step 1: map what you already do

Do not map ‘the service’. Map the demand segments (predictable/unpredictable; value/failure) and the dominant operating mode for each. You will discover you already run all degrees at once. Most places do. It is just implicit and unmanaged – and the higher degrees are unfunded, unfocused, and primarily ‘add-ons’ as attention gets drawn to the immediacy of the lower degrees.

### Step 2: name the ‘hole in the middle’

Managers often ask: ‘If I can’t scale it or target it, what can I do with it?’

Answer: you treat it as a spectrum problem, not a project problem.

Boxer’s language is useful. The cost is the volume under the curve – minimal cost is when you perfectly match the complexity of the service to needs. But our systems are built to standardise service, costing more for low-needs, and allowing truly complex needs to spill out unmanaged and uncontrolled. Our organisational systems are built for the left-hand side, the lower degrees. The right-hand side needs different cohesion costs, and different infrastructures.

So you do three things at once:

1. standardise the standard value demand (free capacity)
2. create protected relational capacity for the complex tail (stop burning people out)
3. sample the tail to learn patterns, so some of it (never all) becomes ‘green’ over time

### Step 3: set up ‘edge authority’ and stop punishing discretion

If you want Degree 3 and above, you have to treat frontline discretion as essential, not deviant. Lipsky tells you it will happen anyway. The question is whether it is supported, learned from, and governed. Boxer gives a practical metaphor: first senior officer on site takes command, decides what’s needed, asks for it, and the wider system supports that without constantly taking over.

### Step 4: use the ‘five key questions’ to force movement

This is where your learning ladder is a practical commissioning and transformation aid.

- What system are we investigating?

- What is its underlying purpose?
- What activity actually achieves that purpose?
- What are the delivery options?
- What organisation and governance would enable it?

That sequence stops people jumping straight to structure charts and tech.

### Step 5: treat automation as a relational design choice, not a cost choice

Automation can support good help. It can also harden Degree 2 into a wall. If you digitise a bad process, you scale failure demand. If you automate eligibility without human judgement, you relocate discretion upwards into software design and data models. So the design question is: where do you want discretion to live, and how will you make it visible, contestable, and learnable?

### A note on ‘relational’ in the literature

Relational public services do not have a single origin story. They never got a canon. There is a weave of many lineages. See [A Hundred Origin Stories – an Unfinished History of Relational Public Services – Parker, Dove, and Taylor \(2025\)](#)<sup>v</sup>

Beyond public management, service design has also been wrestling with relationality for years. Cipolla and Manzini made a strong claim: relational services can only be ‘enabled’, not manufactured. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12130-009-9066-z>. And more recent service design work has tried to name the tension between scripting for scale and enabling adaptation. <https://www.ijdesign.org/index.php/IJDesign/article/view/5772/1082>.

Those threads matter because they stop us pretending this is just a ‘training’ issue. It is a system design issue.

### Conclusion

This ladder is not a virtue chart. It is a visibility tool. You will always have coercion somewhere. You will always need standardisation somewhere. You will always need relational work somewhere. And the relational work depends on mass-produced standardisation to some degree (and even on coercion). The question is whether you are doing it deliberately, and whether you are setting the system up to move in a better direction.

If you want a single practical test, it is this: where is the system getting its ‘requisite variety’ from? From frontline judgement and citizen capability, or from bureaucracy and rework?

### To be added

For further reading, history, organisations and communities of practice, see the annex to this document.

## Developing the model – lenses to keep us honest

In developing the model, I layered three ladders together and added some core concepts. Think of these sources as ‘reads’ of the same underlying patterns – a useful reminder that this is all conceptual, and it’s all down to interpretation.

### Lens 1: power and agency (Cormac Russell, developing Asset-Based Community Development)

The [distinction between services that are ‘done to / done for / done with / done by’](#) is still one of the cleanest ways to talk about how power behaves in helping relationships. This opens the way, as we shall see, to seeing all four ‘worlds of service’ as situated within relationality:

- work done ‘to’ people should be by free, prior, and informed consent, a small sub-section of
- work done ‘for’ people but decided by them, a small subsection of
- work done ‘by’ people but with help, a subsection of
- work done by the people in their communities

### Lens 2: what kind of value proposition is the system making (Philip Boxer)

[Boxer’s ‘Value Stairs’](#) offers four types of ‘market propositions’:

- r-type: reproduce a specification (context-independent) – ‘mass production’
- c-type: customise a capability
- K-type: orchestrate know-how across capabilities to fit the situation
- P-type: organise an effects ladder to respond to the demand situation as a whole

This matters because ‘relational’ often really means ‘we’ve hit the limits of r-type delivery’.

From Boxer’s work, a great deal came clearly into focus for me about psychological and capability barriers to change, and about way to present clearly the need for the ‘earlier stages’ (circles in his model, reliably producing appropriate volumes of resource, capability, and know-how) to be drawn from and shaped around the context of the citizen by ‘later stage’ services (wedges, pulling and organising from the boundary of the organisation).

### Lens 3: RedQuadrant frames – demand, need, purpose, standardise when you can, and transduction between five worlds

#### Demand – need – purpose

First, a citizen ‘contact’ is demand (what people ask for, in their words). Need is what would actually help them – the deficit into which they have fallen which is preventing them from achieving some purpose. Purpose is what matters and why we exist – the stuff we are going about doing in our lives. That triad sits behind our demand analysis and contact-led redesign approach, and it is exactly the seam where relational work either becomes real, or becomes theatre. See [chosen-path.org/2021/10/27/are-we-here-to-fight-alligators-or-drain-the-swamp/](#) and [chosen-path.org/2022/06/01/control-demand-need-or-customer-purpose/](#)

## ‘Standardise when you can, personalise when you must’

See [chosen-path.org/2021/01/29/what-would-you-say-if-i-told-you-customer-intimacy-was-dangerous/](https://chosen-path.org/2021/01/29/what-would-you-say-if-i-told-you-customer-intimacy-was-dangerous/). That is not a slogan. It is a design rule. And it hints at how to combine and progress these ‘degrees of relationality’. It starts from segmenting demand, both in terms of predictability and variability.

## The five worlds

See [chosen-path.org/2022/02/23/what-does-seeing-the-different-worlds-that-make-up-an-organisation-show-you/](https://chosen-path.org/2022/02/23/what-does-seeing-the-different-worlds-that-make-up-an-organisation-show-you/) and [chosen-path.org/2021/05/24/which-world-do-you-live-in/](https://chosen-path.org/2021/05/24/which-world-do-you-live-in/)

Even the simplest classification of organisation: citizens/customers living their lives, people on the frontline or boundary serving them, management, leadership, and learning and change (following the the work of Stafford Beer and Barry Oshry) shows us that organisations will tend to be made up of ‘different worlds’ where different perspectives, pressures, incentives, and sensemaking form positive feedback loops pushing us out of simple ‘partnership’.

## The ladder in more detail

Degree of 'relationality'	Demand / need / purpose Boxer typology Discretion at the boundary	Psychological orientation, risks, and observations
<p><b>-2: coercive / totalising ('the boot', 'done to')</b> This is the state acting on people. Compliance is the point. The citizen is an object of policy, a risk to be managed. Delivery is through compliance and enforcement. Management: accountability upward, legitimation downward (often via law). Citizens push back via rights, advocacy, judicial review.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Demand is treated as risk or nuisance. Need is interpreted through enforcement. Purpose is framed as control.</li> <li>● r-type (rules and specs), sometimes with c-type exceptions.</li> <li>● Can exist (and sometimes saves lives), but is heavily policed and threatened.</li> </ul>	<p>Psychological orientation: Thanatosian drive to control and death. 'Lawful harm'. The system becomes blind to context. The boundary between protection and domination collapses. (NB this could be considered legitimate in e.g. safeguarding, criminal justice, emergency powers. But it must be bounded, reviewable, and accountable – and works better when it comes as an exception from within the paradigm of relationality ('policing by the consent of the community'))</p>
<p><b>-1: indifferent provision ('like it or lump it', 'done for')</b> The service produces something it believes is of value. It might even be good. But it is built around internal logic, not lived purpose. This is where 'school dinners' works as a joke and a truth. Many high-volume services must operate here some of the time. Citizens are assumed, not known. Delivery is 'take it or leave it'. Management is 'well, we met the spec'. Citizens get voice mainly through complaint, exit, or politics.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Purpose is assumed. Demand is an input to be processed.</li> <li>● r-type dominates.</li> <li>● Present, but informal.</li> </ul>	<p>Orientation: grandiose or uncaring paternalism. Risk: 'we met the spec' becomes the only defence. Citizens experience the service as an 'Other'. Arguably, this is legitimate where purpose must be assumed, for extremely transactional things (of low importance), or where specification must happen well in advanced. But this is where from a later paradigm, citizen engagement in delivery and management play a role.</p>

Degree of 'relationality'	Demand / need / purpose Boxer typology Discretion at the boundary	Psychological orientation, risks, and observations
<p><b>0 scripted bureaucracy</b> (<b>'IVR palisade', 'computer says no', 'done for'</b>)</p> <p>The organisation claims to be responsive. But it is responsive to its own categories, not people.</p> <p>The symbol here is the IVR menu: 'press 1 for... press 2 for...'. The caller must translate their life into the system's ontology, at speed, while stressed. IVR is widely unpopular precisely because the remaining calls are usually the complex ones, least suited to automation.</p> <p><a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interactive_voice_response">en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interactive_voice_response</a></p> <p>Citizens are categories, not people.</p> <p>Delivery happens when citizens translate their lives into the system's ontology.</p> <p>Management: the data looks tidy, reality gets messier.</p> <p>Citizens learn gaming strategies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Demand is filtered into predefined buckets. Need is whatever fits policy. Purpose becomes 'throughput'.</li> <li>● r-type with superficial c-type 'options'.</li> <li>● Still present, but squeezed by scripts and average handling time.</li> </ul>	<p>Orientation: efficiency is the defence, avoidance of anxiety and accountability is the driver.</p> <p>Risk: you scale failure demand. You create 'pinball journeys'. You breed complaints. You burn out staff.</p> <p>This level <i>can</i> work for low-value, transactional services that you design well once and do not change, but without progressive/adaptive pressure, it becomes toxic and self-serving.</p>
<p><b>1: basic relationality</b> (<b>'listen at the point of demand', 'design against demand', 'done with'</b>)</p> <p>This is the 'first level' of relationality. And it is both under-rated and hard.</p> <p>Frontline work becomes 'the point of power'.</p> <p>You treat contacts as intelligence. You separate value demand from failure demand. You redesign letters, forms, handoffs, and ownership so people do not have to chase.</p> <p>Citizens become the source of intelligence (their words, their purposes).</p> <p>Frontline judgement becomes legitimate work in delivery, not workaround.</p> <p>Citizens influence management and redesign through real demand patterns, not consultation theatre.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Demand is captured in the person's words. Need starts to become visible. Purpose is used as a practical test ('does this create value?').</li> <li>● Still mostly r-type, but now deliberately, and with feedback loops that keep it alive.</li> <li>● Legitimised. Not 'workarounds', judgement.</li> </ul>	<p>Orientation: listening professional (risk of co-dependency).</p> <p>Risk: stopping here. You become a nicer transaction factory. Still deficit-based. Still Othering 'citizen' and assuming 'service' is the (expensive) solution. 'Professionals ... are the fundamental source of agency.'</p> <p><a href="https://ippr-org.files.svdcn.com/production/Downloads/relational-state_Nov2012_9888.pdf">https://ippr-org.files.svdcn.com/production/Downloads/relational-state_Nov2012_9888.pdf</a></p>

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<p><b>2 Good Help</b> <b>(‘build agency, not dependency’, ‘done with’)</b> This is the shift from ‘fixing’ to ‘enabling’. You design the interaction so it increases the person’s capacity to act. Moving ‘upstream’ from demand to need can either be good help, or it can be ‘bad help’ that creates compliance and dependence. Nesta’s Good Help work is crisp on this: ‘Good Help supports people to feel hopeful, identify their own purpose and confidently take action.’ Links: <a href="http://goodhelp.org.uk/what-is-good-help/">goodhelp.org.uk/what-is-good-help/</a> <a href="http://www.nesta.org.uk/report/good-and-bad-help-how-purpose-and-confidence-transform-lives/">www.nesta.org.uk/report/good-and-bad-help-how-purpose-and-confidence-transform-lives/</a> Citizens are agents with goals, not deficits with needs. Interaction is designed to increase capability, confidence, connection, control. Success includes ‘what the citizen can now do without us’</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Demand is treated as signal. Need is co-interpreted. Purpose is made explicit in the interaction (‘what matters to you right now?’).</li> <li>● c-type and K-type start to matter, because ‘what works’ depends on situation.</li> <li>● Becomes professional craft, not exception handling.</li> </ul>	<p>Orientation: partnership and shared accountability with citizen. Risk: pseudo-relationality. Warm tone, same power. Or ‘therapeutic bureaucracy’, where relationship is used to enforce compliance.</p>
<p><b>3: coordinated provision</b> <b>(‘case orchestration across providers’, ‘done with’)</b> Here, you are not yet shaping the whole ecosystem. But you are orchestrating across an ecosystem of providers around a person’s situation. This is episodic depending on the person’s needs and their context-of-use. The system is still the dominant actor. This is K-type territory: synchronising capabilities to fit the lived context. It looks like: clear ownership, fewer handoffs, rapid escalation pathways, and joining up around outcomes not functions. Citizens are co-authors of their plan (and the keeper of the narrative). Citizens, family, peers, practitioners form a team around a situation over time. Citizens can sit in governance of pathways, but the default is still institution-led coordination.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Demand is no longer ‘contact’, it’s a situation over time. Need becomes multi-dimensional.</li> <li>● K-type is the centre.</li> <li>● Still vital. It is the ‘glue’ that stops the system fragmenting.</li> </ul>	<p>Orientation: partnership and shared accountability with citizen and others. Risk: Heroic navigators compensating for a broken system. It ‘works’, but it does not change the conditions that create the demand. This only starts to shape the system if you deliberately mine cases for patterns.</p>

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<p><b>4: tending the garden</b> (<b>'stop disabling', 'commission for conditions', 'done with'</b>)</p> <p>This is where relationality stops being about the service encounter, and becomes about the context that drives need. This is slow, structural gardening changing conditions to reduce spikiness. Still likely to be system-led ('we are redesigning commissioning/policy') unless citizens are part of governance. You redesign the rules, measures, funding, data, eligibility, and institutional behaviours that are making people's lives harder. This is the 'social model of disability' move: not 'fix the person', but 'stop the environment disabling them'. It is also where commissioning becomes more than procurement. Boxer language helps here: when demand tempo exceeds readiness tempo, maladaptation becomes toxic. So the work is to change the enabling conditions, not just to push harder. Citizens shape rules and conditions (commissioning, eligibility, information, measures). Delivery has fewer disabling hoops; fewer 'pinball journeys'. Citizens have management power through co-governance and through defining what 'harm' and 'value' look like locally.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Purpose shifts from 'deliver services' to 'create conditions for capability, connection, and reduced harm'.</li> <li>● The bridge from K-type to P-type. You are starting to work the 'effects ladder' (drivers, accumulations, side-effects) not just individual cases.</li> <li>● Protected by design, not left to luck.</li> </ul>	<p>Orientation: systems shaping (or in the worst case, grandiosity). Risk: 'policy theatre'. Everyone agrees with the words. Nothing changes in measures, money, or authority. Then the system snaps back. You need real commitment to the social model if you are to continually reduce the harm the system does to the people and itself.</p>
<p><b>5: place-based ecosystem coordination</b> (<b>'place operating system', 'Total Place done properly', 'done with'</b>)</p> <p>Now you are coordinating across a place-based ecosystem to produce value in real time in the citizen's context-of-use – as the whole system standard not (as in 3 above) as the exception. This is continuous work, an operating rhythm, responding in real time because the system has the habit and infrastructure. This is the natural habitat of 'place-based' thinking, if done well. Human Learning Systems and related work have made a strong case for relational practice, learning, and infrastructure. <a href="http://www.humanlearning.systems/uploads/RelationalPublicService.pdf">www.humanlearning.systems/uploads/RelationalPublicService.pdf</a> and <a href="http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/09540962.2024.2344902">www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/09540962.2024.2344902</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Demand is understood as boundary-spanning, often co-created by the system itself. Need is dynamic. Purpose is whole-system.</li> <li>● P-type. You are responding to a demand situation as a whole, not optimising one organisation.</li> <li>● 'Edge authority', backed by governance.</li> </ul>	<p>Orientation: systems convening (with the shadow side of status conflict always a possibility) Risk: partnership-as-performance. Meetings, MOUs, glossy diagrams. No change in lived experience. No change in incentives. And no actual learning. You need to make context-of-use the organising principle for the whole place – as standard, not heroic exception – if this is to progress.</p>

<b>Degree of 'relationality'</b>	<b>Demand / need / purpose Boxer typology Discretion at the boundary</b>	<b>Psychological orientation, risks, and observations</b>
<p><b>5+: co-governed place</b></p> <p>In (5), the assumption is still that institutions are the core engine , but co-governance becomes more of an obvious choice. If citizen power is built into governance, not bolted on, you have a bridge to the paradigm shift of (6). That means citizen panels with teeth, participatory budgeting built in, neighbourhood decision forums, citizen-led measurement ('what good looks like here'). Co-ownership of data and learning. This is where 'done with' starts to swallow 'done for'.</p> <p>Here, citizens co-design the operating model of the place (how services and community fit together). And citizens are not just 'served'; they are part of the live network (peer support, mutual aid, connectors, neighbourhood hubs). They are co-governors of the system and co-owners of learning. Measures include trust, repeat demand, and stability, not just throughput.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Here we start to put citizen and community purpose heart.</li> <li>● The shift begins from P-type to 'dynamic cohesion' – not 'one coordinator' but 'mutual co-coordination'</li> <li>● Professionals are seen as citizens too, but with special strengths.</li> </ul>	<p>Orientation: partnership in the truest sense, with (risk) all the complications that brings.</p>

Degree of 'relationality'	Demand / need / purpose Boxer typology Discretion at the boundary	Psychological orientation, risks, and observations
<p><b>6: citizen space and community power</b> <b>(‘done by’, with ‘with’ and ‘for’ and ‘to’ held inside citizen and community power)</b></p> <p>Here, the centre of gravity moves again. The primary actors are citizens in association, not services; a flip of the script where institutions are guest and allies. This is where Arnstein’s ladder is still a useful irritant. It is not ‘engagement’. It is power: ‘Citizen participation is citizen power.’ <a href="http://www.lithgow-schmidt.dk/sherry-arnstein/ladder-of-citizen-participation_en.pdf">www.lithgow-schmidt.dk/sherry-arnstein/ladder-of-citizen-participation_en.pdf</a> And it is where ‘citizen space’ thinking matters: citizen as birthright, dignity, and responsibility, not as service user.</p> <p>Citizens design and run a lot of the ‘system’ through association. Institutions design enabling infrastructure. Support is hosted in community as well as provided by services. Citizens set priorities, steward resources, and hold institutions to account. Institutions stop pretending they can ‘deliver’ society.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Demand shifts from ‘asks of services’ to ‘collective action in place’. Need is met through relationships, assets, and mutual aid as well as institutions. Purpose becomes common good.</li> <li>● Beyond P-type into ‘dynamic cohesion’ and multi-sided demand, where infrastructures must cope with the full spectrum, not just the left-hand end.</li> <li>● Reframed. Professionals become guests and allies, not owners.</li> </ul>	<p>Orientation: mutually cocreating power.</p> <p>Risk: romanticism. Communities are not automatically safe or fair. Inequality still exists. The state still has duties. This degree does not replace the others. It reshapes them.</p>