



## MENTAL MODELS

# THE CHAORDIC PATH

*THE PATH BETWEEN CHAOS AND ORDER IS THE PATH OF  
INNOVATION, EMERGENCE AND NATURAL HARMONY*

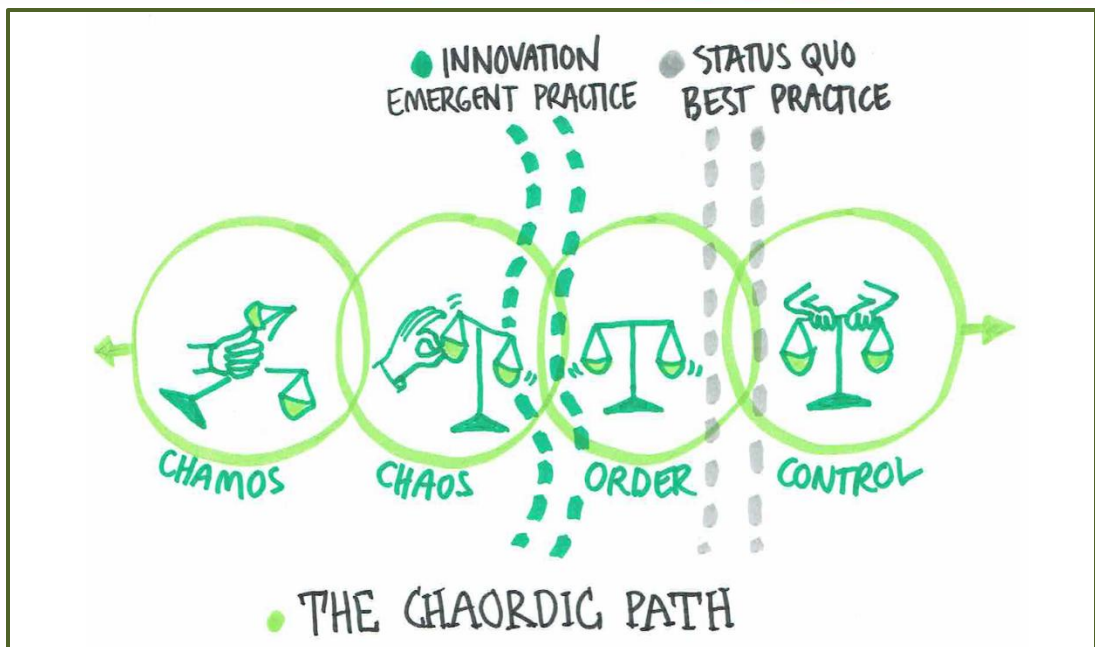
### DESCRIPTION AND CORE PRINCIPLES:

**Chaos—Order—Control** are different states of being and experiencing. We tend to feel safest in the state of order, or for some people, in control. Being out of control is scary if we are looking for predictability. If we have a mechanistic view on organisations, our tendency will be to stay within the realms of order and control, where things are predictable and stable—and where we produce status quo or “more of the same”—which in some cases is exactly what is needed.

The world and times we live in are, however, neither predictable nor stable and call for more flexibility, as “more of the same” solutions are not meeting the challenges. If we are looking for innovative, new solutions we will find them in a place between chaos and order—the chaordic path.

The chaordic path is actually the story of our natural world, as form arises out of nonlinear, complex, diverse systems. “At the edge of chaos” is where life innovates, where things are not hard-wired, but are flexible enough for new connections and solutions to occur. New levels of order become possible out of chaos.

As in nature, so in organisations the path between chaos and order leads us to the new - to collective learning and real-time innovation. Instead of seeking to controlling every detail from the top down, many leaders today see the need to access collective intelligence and collective wisdom. This can be a “messy” process at times, until we reach new insight and clarity.



The path between order and chaos is informed by the complexity insights: Order emerges out of chaos and is stabilised against it. We know that we do not know and we stay in constant learning mode.

To lead our organisation on the chaordic path we need “chaordic confidence”, to have the courage to stay in the dance of order and chaos long enough to support a generative emergence that allows the new, collective intelligence and wise action to occur.

As we tread the line between chaos and order, individually and Collectively, we move through confusion and conflict toward clarity. It is in the phase of not knowing, before we reach new clarity, that the temptation to rush for certainty or grab for control is strongest. We are all called to walk this path with open minds and some confidence if we want to reach something wholly new.

In this space of emergence, we leave our collective encounters with something that not one of us individually brought into the room. The art is to stay in the fine balance between chaos and order. Straying too far to either side is counterproductive. On the far side of chaos is chamos or destructive chaos where everything disintegrates and dies. On the far side of order is stifling control - where there is no movement which eventually means death. When we move toward either of these extremes, the result is apathy or rebellion - the very opposite of chaordic confidence. Staying on the chaordic path is where the balance is and where life thrives.