

Pre-Announcement for an Innovation Dialogue

How to be Strategic in the Face of Complexity

Implications for Global Development Capacities

Wageningen, The Netherlands, 30 November – 1 December, 2009

The Issue

We face turbulent times. Engaging with the challenges of global development means dealing with much that is unpredictable and surprising. Tackling poverty and inequality, climate change, environmental problems and human conflicts is not a simple business. Moving beyond the current path of development - environmentally unsustainable and condemning vast numbers to poverty - will require deep societal transformations. Yet, too often our strategies for undertaking such change are linear. They incorrectly assume simple and predictable cause and effect relations. And they hinder the very innovation and risk taking that is needed for transformation.

Is it possible to be strategic in the face of complexity? Or is this a contradiction? What does complexity thinking imply for mainstream planning and accountability, and stakeholder expectations? What is the role of scientific analysis in complex situations?

Increasingly the business sector, government, civil society organisations and research institutions are facing up to such questions. Emerging from tensions between old patterns of linear thinking and a growing acceptance of complexity are new ideas and new approaches for social and technological innovation. These include social entrepreneurship, strategic innovation, managing by simple principles, the Cynefin Framework and innovation systems. While not silver bullets, such approaches offer interesting insights for working in a highly unpredictable and rapidly changing contexts.

Such ideas revolve around networks and alliances for learning. They challenge traditional roles and responsibilities of government, business, NGOs, science and citizens. And, they seek out ways for working with - rather than against - the complexity of

human and natural systems. This implies that global development processes will be driven by a very different dynamic between the public, private and civil society sectors.

How well equipped are people and organisations to work with these new ideas and approaches? What is needed to embed such capacities in our communities, businesses, and political systems? What are the implications for leadership and management?

This Innovation Dialogue will bring together people working on sustainable business strategies, social entrepreneurship and international development. Leading thinkers and practitioners will work with participants to gain clarity about what it means to "be strategic in complex times".

Background

This event is part of a growing dialogue in the international development sector about the complexities of social, economic and political change. It builds on two previous events hosted by Wageningen International – the Innovation Dialogue on Navigating Complexity (May 2009) and the Seminar on Institutions, Theories of Change and Capacity Development (December 2008). See:

<http://portals.wi.wur.nl/navigatingcomplexity>;

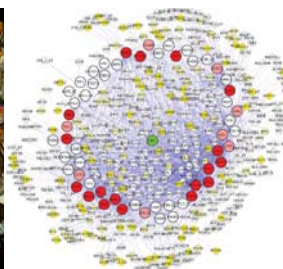
<http://portals.wi.wur.nl/successfailuredevelopment>.

It also aligns with a series of events on complexity and development being held in the UK.

The Navigating Complexity event introduced the idea of complexity and its implications. This dialogue will look closely at practical ways for intervening in complex situations.

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Capacity Development & Institutional Change (CD&IC) programme



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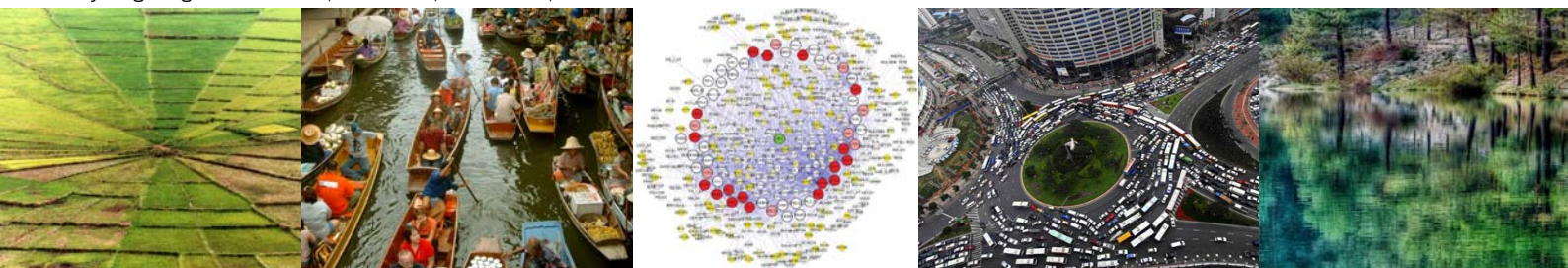
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Indicative Programme

<p>Day One: <i>The Challenge and the Options</i></p> <p>Setting the scene – Questions from practice</p> <p>Key note presentations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complexity and the implications for strategy • System innovation for sustainability • Managing via simple guiding principles <p>Interactive Workshops on approaches for being strategic in the face of complexity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic innovation • Cynefin framework • Managing via simple guiding principles • Social entrepreneurship • Innovation systems • Brokering innovation in complex contexts <p>Synthesis Session</p>	<p>Day Two: <i>Exploring New Practices and Capacities</i></p> <p>Key note presentation – Strategic innovation capacity</p> <p>Key note presentation – Implications for global development capacities</p> <p>Round Table Dialogues – Linking ideas to Arenas of Practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development policy • Social entrepreneurship • Public private partnerships • Scientific research • Sustainable supply chains • Planning and monitoring development interventions <p>Emerging Issues for Leadership and Capacity</p>
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Photos by Wageningen International, Stew Dean, Victor Nuno, and Nick Leonard.



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