



Learning, Organizing and Complexity



Cross-disciplinary Conference Stream

CALL FOR PAPERS

Introduction

As part of the international interdisciplinary conference – Complexity, Science and Society, to be held in Liverpool, 11-14 September 2005 (http://www.liv.ac.uk/ccr/2005_conf/index.htm) this stream provides space for a truly cross-disciplinary dialogue. It focuses on the theme of Learning, Organizing and Complexity, which are key dimensions in advancing science and society.

Organizers

This conference stream is organized under the aegis of GNOSIS and the Advanced Institute of Management Research (AIM). The organizers of this stream are:

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Mr Paul Oliver, Conduco Consulting, UK.
Professor Silvia Gherardi, University of Trento, Italy.
Professor Benjamin B. Lichtenstein, Syracuse University, USA.
Professor Ingunn Sandaker, Akershus University College, Norway.
Professor Georg Schreyögg, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany.
Professor Robin Wensley, Director AIM, UK.
Professor Maurizio Zollo, INSEAD, France.





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Aims

This cross-disciplinary stream aims to bring together those interested in organisational studies who wish to explore ways that complexity science can inform our understandings of organising and learning processes, in contexts ranging from health care to entrepreneurship. We seek to promote dialogue among a variety of perspectives representing different sectors (health care, business/management, public administration, social work, community-based organisations, education, social movements) and different personal locations (researchers, policy-makers, practitioners). We trust that the interconnections of these perspectives will expand our collective understandings of learning in organisations.

Rationale

For many years scholars across a range of disciplinary backgrounds have explored learning. The main fields engaging learning debates today include education and adult/continuing professional education, social movement studies, and management and organization studies drawing predominantly on traditions of psychology, sociology, philosophy and anthropology. Clearly we have much to learn from other disciplines such as science and technology studies, cultural geography, and biological/evolutionary sciences, and not least the science of complexity. At the same time, we require caution to avoid diffusing the concept and practices of learning to the point of meaninglessness on the one hand, or reductionism to one theoretical rendering on the other.

The field of organisational studies has turned to studies of learning to understand issues of knowledge circulation, innovation, changing capacities, power relations and culture. Most recently these studies of organising and learning processes are drawing upon new theories of practice-based thinking, science and technology studies, cultural geography, and the science of complexity. Much popular literature is available using concepts of complexity to describe organisations and to fuse notions of learning communities, culture, business and complex adaptive systems. We believe a dialogue will be useful to share actual organisational research and leadership practices using complexity approaches, and to explore possibilities and limitations of complexity science in studies of organisations and their learning.





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Complexity science views learning in terms of *emergence and co-evolution* of collective embodied action, cognition, objects and subjects, and a history of 'structural couplings' (Holland, 1998) in complex adaptive systems. Cognition itself is explained as 'joint participation, a choreography': continuous unpredictable invention and exploration at micro-levels, as well as disturbances amplified through feedback loops. Davis et al. (2000) use complexity science to explain learning as expansion of the spaces of the possible, processes of becoming 'capable of more sophisticated, more flexible, more creative action'. The focus for study of learning is on the relations between elements, not the elements themselves, in collectivities integrating biological, cultural, and technological flows. These collectivities, as complex adaptive systems, demonstrate internal diversity, interconnection and interaction, self-similarity and self-organisation (Johnson, 2001).

Areas of Interest

The focus of this cross-disciplinary stream is on the interrelations of organizing and learning processes, examined in different contexts drawing on principles of complexity science. Papers, round tables or symposia are encouraged to focus on topics such as:

- 1. Reports of empirical studies e.g., of learning or knowledge production processes in specific organisations that function as complex adaptive systems.**
- 2. Theoretical explorations of interrelations of learning and organising**
 - How is knowledge produced and circulated in organisations?
 - What are some observable relations between learning and organising?
 - How do different learning relations emerge among consciousness, identity, action and interaction, objects and structural dynamics of complex systems?
 - What patterns of micro-interactions among objects and subjects generate different processes of learning in particular complex adaptive systems (e.g. adaptive, innovative, expansive, transformative)?
- 3. Spatio-temporal dimensions of organising/learning processes through a complexity lens.**
 - How might different spatialities (Euclidean/Cartesian, network, fluid) and/or different modes of time affect and facilitate emergence and learning?





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4. ***Learning and networked or virtual organisations.***
5. ***Ethical/political dimensions of examining learning in organisations.***
 - How can questions about desirable/non-desirable forms of organisational learning be understood using complexity science?
 - How might power relations in organisations be explored using complexity theory?
6. ***Interventions that enhance/constrain learning in different organisational contexts (training, management and leadership development programmes, traditional management education offerings).***
 - How is learning affected through different intentional interventions in organisations?
 - How can emergence and co-evolution be induced in different organisations?
 - How can diversity be amplified while building sufficient redundancy for interaction, how is improvisation encouraged without subjugation?
 - What causes complex adaptive systems (learning systems) to form, expand, and sustain themselves (e.g., what seeds self-organizing processes, what different identities and knowledge co-evolve in collective processes, how do groups expand capacity and shift over time).
 - How can complexity help integrate levels of analysis (micro-meso-macro) and the competing interests of multiple stakeholders?
7. ***Comparisons of complexity-informed theories and other theories of organising and learning.***
 - practice-based, poststructuralist, science and technology studies.
8. ***Researching learning using complexity science***
 - What are some issues, approaches, challenges (methodological, ethical) in researching learning and organisations using complexity science?
 - What are the limits of complexity science for informing explorations of organising/learning processes and issues?





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Contributions and Participation

Because we want to encourage dialogue among sectors and orientations, contributions are invited from academics, practitioners and policy-makers working within or across disciplines such as geography, philosophy, health care, social work, science/technology studies, cultural studies, education/adult education, and business/management studies. In particular, we encourage contributions presenting theoretical developments, empirical research (complete or in progress), or narratives of experience in the following three formats:

1. fully developed paper (presenting completed research, theoretical explorations or experience based ideas)
2. symposium (presenting a range of perspectives focusing on a single topic or theme, not just a group of papers)
3. round table (narratives of experience, or research/theory work in progress).

Submissions

Authors should submit a 500 word abstract as a word document plus a completed submission form via email at **submit.learning.abs@gnosisresearch.org** (*Please do not add any text to the email. The attachments are processed automatically*).

The deadline for submitting abstracts is **1 June 2005**.

All abstracts must be submitted as Word documents (without author identification) and must be accompanied by a completed submission form providing an indication of the type of submission and full details of the title, authors names, postal addresses, telephone numbers, e-mail addresses.

Abstracts must also make clear the key issues on which the analysis will be focusing on and their relationship to current debates in the literature, methods used, where appropriate, conclusions and implications for practice, policy and future research in learning and organizing.

Abstracts will be blindly reviewed by members of the stream International Advisory Committee. Notification of acceptance will be sent by **15 June 2005**. Papers must be submitted by **15 August 2005** in order to be included in the conference proceedings. There is a limit of 100 participants.





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A series of special issues on the theme are scheduled in leading International Journals, as well as an edited collection. Participants interested in having their papers considered for the special issues and the edited collection please indicate this on your submission form.

Dates

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1 June 2005 | Submission of 500 word abstracts |
| 15 June 2005 | Communication of decision of acceptance. |
| 15 August 2005 | Full papers submitted |

Estimated Cost

To enable potential participants to budget for the conference, it is estimated that the total cost for taking part in the conference will be in the region of £500, inclusive of: the conference fee, a three-night accommodation in the conference hotel, breakfast, all conference-related meals, and the conference proceedings. Please note that this is only an estimate, not the final figure. Potential participants are advised to book flights as early as possible.

For the latest information on the conference and the cross-disciplinary stream, please visit www.gnosisresearch.org

References

- Cilliers, P. (1998). *Complexity and Postmodernism*. London: Routledge.
- Davis, B, Sumara, D J, & Luce-Kapler, R (2000). *Engaging Minds: Learning and Teaching in a Complex World*, Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Holland J. H. 1998. *Emergence: From Chaos to Order*, Addison-Wesley, Reading, MA.
- Johnson, S (2001). *Emergence: The Connected Lives of Ants, Brains, Cities and Software*, New York: Scribner.



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Submission Form

1. Type of submission

Tick one option to indicate the type of submission:

- Full papers (Academic and Experience-based papers will be presented by authors)
- Panel Presentation (several speakers contribute to a theme)
- Round Table discussions (informal thematic based discussions)

2. Title of submission

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3. Author(s)/Panel members

Name and Affiliation	Postal address	Telephone number	Email address

4. Original Contributions

Academic, Experienced based papers and Interactive papers which are based on original (not previously published) work will be considered for publication in a Special Issue or the Edited collection.

Authors interested in having their submissions considered please indicate below:

- I confirm that this is an original contribution and I wish to have this submission considered for publication



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5. Abstract (500 words)

6. References

References should conform to the APA Publication Manual, 5th edition.



**THE UNIVERSITY
of LIVERPOOL**

**Complexity, Science and Society Conference
11-14 September 2005, Liverpool**



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Engineering and Physical Sciences
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