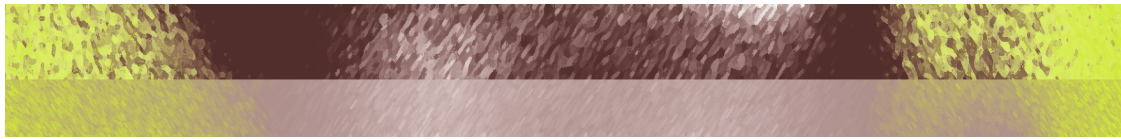


Constructed Complexities

A Network of Scholars and Workshop Series



First Workshop of the Series:

Institutions as social constructs and social construction through institutions

21st June, 2013

University of Surrey, Guildford, UK
Oak Suite

Call for Attendance

The Constructed Complexities Network invites applications to a one-day workshop exploring the relationships between social constructionism and institutionalisms. The workshop is a part of a series of events aiming to bridge social constructionism and complexity theory.

The workshop welcomes **Professor George Thomas** from Arizona State University, expert in the diffusion of institutions and world culture, to give the opening lecture. The workshop will also include seminar presentations and group work sessions tackling questions such as:

- 1) Are all institutions social constructs?
- 2) Are all social constructs institutions?
- 3) Are institutions rational or rationalised?
- 4) How do institutions relate to social structures and how do they relate to social change?

Attendance: Attendance to the workshop is **free of charge** but registration is **strictly required**. For registration, please send your short bio (200-300 words) to o.dilaverkalkan@surrey.ac.uk and clarify which two questions (from those given above) you are most interested in. The deadline for registration is 15th June 2013. Please note that limited places are available and are allocated on a first-come-first-served basis.

If you are unable to attend the workshop, but would like to participate in the debate, you can contribute to the project blog at <http://constructedcomplexities.wordpress.com>.

Background: Complexity theory and social constructionism are important meta-theories that have evolved from very different worldviews and knowledge bases. Yet, there are some important similarities between the core arguments of the two meta-theories which are frequently neglected in methodological debates. Both meta-theories reject reductionist, time, space and relationship-free analyses of positivist or Newtonian social science. While social constructionism reveals the existence of multiple realities and viewpoints, history and context dependence of reality and the role of social embeddedness; complexity theory studies heterogeneous populations and the role of stochasticity, path-dependence of processes, the role of interactions and interdependencies and properties of social networks. Exploring the interesting similarities between the two meta-theories provides an opportunity for the development of interdisciplinary or intermeta-theory social research. At the same time, complexity theorists and social constructionists approach these issues with different interpretations and research objectives. There are important differences between the ontological and epistemological assumptions underlying the two meta-theories.

Project: Constructed Complexities, an ESRC-funded project, aims to initiate an international network of scholars working together to review and clarify the core ontological and epistemological arguments, discuss strengths and limitations of state-of-art interdisciplinary mixed method research, and develop research approaches and tools specifically designed for studying complexity of social construction. In the first year, there will be 3 workshops and a final conference focusing on linking social constructionism and complexity theory via institutionalist perspectives.

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Workshop Program

9.30-9.45	Arrival, registration, tea and coffee
9.45-10.45	Opening Lecture George Thomas – Arizona State University
10.45-11.00	Questions and Answers
11.00-12.30	Seminar Presentations Bruce Edmonds – Manchester Metropolitan University Didem Buhari-Gülmez – University of London Özge Dilaver Kalkan – British Institute at Ankara Visiting Fellow at Surrey University
12.30-13.30	Lunch break
13.30-14.30	Group work session I
14.30-14.45	Coffee break
14.45-15.45	Group work session II
15.45-17.00	Panel discussion

Discussion questions for the group work sessions:

Q1: Are all institutions social constructs?

Q2: Are all social constructs institutions?

Q3: Are institutions rational or rationalised?

Q4: How do institutions relate to social structures and social change?