



COMPLEXiTY
research seminar

***Aid on the Edge of Chaos:
Exploring complexity sciences
in international development
and humanitarian work***

Ben Ramalingam

Thursday 22 April 2010

14:00-16:30 at the LSE

The complexity and unpredictability of the real world pose serious challenges to researchers, practitioners and policy makers in practically every field of human endeavour. Serious mistakes in public and political life are increasingly being attributed to a bias of seeing interconnected, messy problems as simple and straightforward, and the ill-advised actions that are taken as a result of such biases. The complexity sciences are widely seen as a useful explanatory framework which can be used to help overcome such biases.

This seminar, which draws on research undertaken for a forthcoming book to be published by Oxford University Press, is focused on the implications of complexity sciences for organisations involved in international development and humanitarian action. Aid agencies have been described as dealing with 'some of the most complex, ill-defined questions facing humanity'. The presentation will explore how current aid ideas and practices take account of the real-world, complex nature of social, economic and political change, drawing on relevant reports, evaluations and practices as well as key informant interviews with those working within and outside the international development and humanitarian sectors. The seminar will also present the implications of complexity sciences for international work, for discussion and debate.

Ben Ramalingam is the Head of Research and Development at the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP), a unique sector-wide network which works to improve international humanitarian performance through learning and accountability. Ben has worked at the leading UK think-tank, the Overseas Development Institute, where he led research and advisory work on organisational learning, strategic thinking, and knowledge management in the aid sector.

Prior to working for ODI, Ben worked in the private sector, focusing on strategy consulting, investment banking and IT. Highlights from his previous work includes a review of organisational change in the humanitarian sector, work on the global food price crisis, on urban crises and complex emergencies. Ongoing work includes leading an initiative on humanitarian innovations and a cross-Atlantic research programme on leadership in aid organisations. Ben has also published on complexity and aid issues.

Please contact Rahoul Masrani at complexitygroup@lse.ac.uk if you wish to attend.

The seminar is free but places are limited.

Details of this event and the others in the Series are available on our website, www.lse.ac.uk/complexity