

The Centre for Leadership, Learning and Change is sponsored by



Complexity, Conversation and Change

A Series of Evening Workshops Introducing the Latest Approaches in Organisational Change

For some time now, a small number of leaders, managers and organisational consultants have been interested in exploring the implications of applying complexity theory to organisational change. The premise behind such ideas is that we cannot control change. What we can do, however, is to work with change as it emerges in a way that promotes learning and increased adaptability. Organisational know-how is rooted in the relationships that are formed, the conversations that take place and the understandings that arise as people jointly negotiate emergent change. The challenge then is how to encourage and participate in high quality relationships and conversations in order to bring about more successful organisational change.

The Cass Centre for Leadership, Learning and Change (CLLC) is hosting a series of evening workshops, exploring ways in which complexity theory has been applied in practice to address these challenges. The workshops are being run by leading-edge OD practitioners in the UK.

This is an opportunity to experience new approaches, meet fellow professionals and up-date your knowledge and skills in the comfortable surroundings of Cass Business School in the City of London.

Workshops

No.	Date	Speaker	Topic
1	10/10/07	Chris Rodgers	Leading Change through Informal Coalitions
2	14/11/07	Prof Patricia Shaw and Dr Alison Donaldson	What is at Work in Conversation?
3	05/12/07	Prof Bill Critchley	Leadership as a Relational Practice
4	09/1/08	Dr Geoff Mead and Margaret Bishop	Narrative Leadership: How to use the Power of Story for Organisational and Personal Change
5	13/2/08	Jenny MacKewn	Systemic Organisational Constellations
6	12/3/08	Peter Binns	Organisational Transformation for a Complex World
7	09/4/08	Dr Carol Webb	Working With Complexity: Inspiration from Complexity Science
8	14/5/08	Dr John Darwin	Co-creating the Future through Whole-System Events
9	11/6/08	Julie Allan	Can a Corporation be Wise? Leaders, Relationships and Wisdom

Please find detailed information about the workshops and speakers on pages 3-6.

Benefits

The talks will appeal to anyone traditionally responsible for 'implementing and managing' change. This includes line managers as well as HR, OD L&D and strategy professionals. Benefits include:

- Seeing how other organisations have applied complexity theory to help bring about change
- Learning about complexity theory in a practical and applied way
- Meeting other people who are interested in new approaches to organisational change
- Meeting leading edge practitioners who can help you relate these ideas to your own situation.

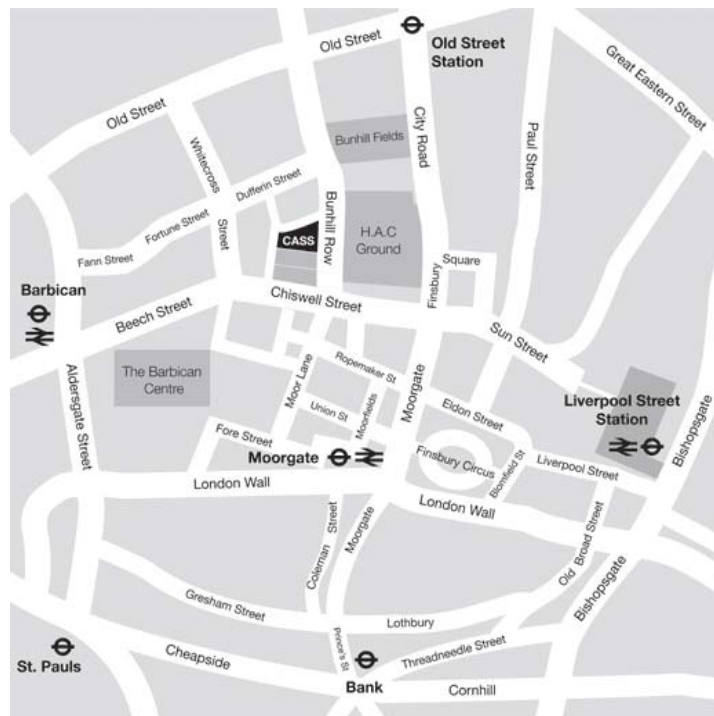
Format

One of the guiding principles of the CLLC is that theory and practice should work in partnership. The talks will work through the theoretical grounding of the subject areas covered, give examples of how the approaches covered have been applied in practice and also give you the opportunity to explore how these might be applied to your own situation.

All talks will be followed by a buffet reception, where you will have the opportunity to meet the speakers, as well as share experiences and network with fellow delegates.

Location

All talks will take place at Cass Business School, 106 Bunhill Row, London, EC1Y 8TZ.



Timetable

18:00	Light refreshments
18:30	Workshop
20:15	Networking and refreshments

Cost

Each session will cost £30 with concessions for students, academics and those from the not-for-profit sectors.

Booking Information

Contact the Centre for Leadership, Learning and Change, Cass Business School, 106 Bunhill Row, London EC1 8TZ. Tel: +44 (0) 20 7040 8600 or email to: Lopa.Murgai.1@city.ac.uk

The Workshops and Speaker Biographies

Session 1 - Leading Change through Informal Coalitions

Research shows that around two-thirds of all change efforts fail to deliver the desired results. According to conventional wisdom, change is brought about through formal, rational analysis of 'the facts' and step-by-step decision-making by people whose agendas are fully aligned. The dynamics of informal coalitions exposes this as a fiction. It shows that, by ignoring the hidden, messy and informal aspects of real-life organisations, formal change programmes inevitably contain the seeds of their own downfall. The central proposition of informal coalitions is that a manager's *primary action tool* is 'talk' – in the broadest sense of the word. This is the case whether they are using talk to interact with others, or as part of the inner dialogue that informs their own managerial judgement. This workshop will look at how managers and other practitioners can use 'talk' more insightfully and effectively, to influence the content, dynamics and outcome of change within their organisations.

Chris Rodgers

Chris works as an independent consultant and coach. He was previously a senior manager in the UK power industry with National Power, during the period of its groundbreaking privatisation and commercial transformation. As a consultant, he works with a range of organisations in the private and public sectors, both independently and in association with performance development consultancy Lane4. Chris also has a master's degree in managing change, is a member of the Complexity Society and organises the OD Innovation Network. His book on the dynamics of organisational change, *Informal Coalitions*, was published in 2007.

Session 2 - What is at Work in Conversation?

In the context of this series of sessions, we will boldly assume that the case for conversation is already made. We will take for granted the idea that this ordinary everyday activity is central to any consideration of how anything actually happens in organisations. What we want to focus on is "Then what?". The questions we are asking ourselves are these:

- What can we notice and draw attention to in human conversing?
- Can we discipline ourselves to see, hear, sense all the detail that is actually at work in our communication – spoken, written, physically expressed?
- Can we appreciate the complex connections between this practical art of conversation and the patterns that emerge as organisational strategies, projects, agendas, protocols, structures, which take on a seemingly objective life of their own?
- Is there in fact a neglected discipline here, a form of practice so under our very noses that we fail to give it its due?

Prof Patricia Shaw and Dr Alison Donaldson

Patricia and Alison have both been involved with the work of the Complexity and Management Centre at the University of Hertfordshire Business School.

Alison helps people in organisations develop their thinking (singly and jointly) through the processes of writing and speaking. She is always asking how organisational documents do or do not gain a 'social life'. Patricia joins the conversational life of organisations to facilitate the processes of gathering, speaking and dispersing. Her question is more about how people sustain or lose spontaneity amidst the everyday conflicts and politics of organisational life. Both have contributed to the *Complexity* series of books, originating from the Complexity and Management Centre. Patricia's latest book, co-edited with Ralph Stacey and published in 2006, is *Experiencing risk, spontaneity and improvisation in organizational change*.

In addition, Alison's most recent paper, *Reflexive writing and the social life of documents*, was accepted for the 23rd EGOS Colloquium, Vienna University in July 2007.

Session 3 - Leadership as a Relational Practice

This session will offer the proposition that organisations are social processes, or processes of communicative interaction. This process view challenges conventional ways of thinking about organisations as 'things', having some kind of essence. Complexity theory offers us some insights about this social process, in particular its self-organising and unpredictable nature. As such, leaders are 'in charge, but not in control'. This session will focus on the implications for leaders of this way of thinking about organisations, in particular the implication that leadership is a relational process. It will look at what this means for the 'practice' of leadership; and delegates will have an opportunity to explore how this perspective resonates with their experience, and the challenge it presents for today's organisations.

Prof Bill Critchley

Bill is a Business Director of Ashridge Consulting and a member of the Leadership Team. He runs the Ashridge Masters and Doctorate in Organisation Consulting, the Ashridge programme in Coaching for Consultants and is a visiting Professor at Middlesex University. He also maintains a full consulting workload and now sees himself as a "practitioner/academic". His approach to change is informed by his practical business and organisation development experience and his background in psychotherapy. This has been enriched by recent work and research into the relevance of complexity perspectives to working with organisations. Bill works with large systems, small groups and individuals to clarify their purpose, to stimulate creative and constructive dialogue about current issues and to facilitate the process of change.

Session 4 - Narrative Leadership: How to use the Power of Story for Organisational and Personal Change

Organisational culture is reflected in and shaped by its stories. As novelist Ben Okri puts it: *Stories are the secret reservoir of values: change the stories [that] individuals or nations live by and you change the individuals and nations themselves.* In the complexity of organisational life, the stories that surround us are often conflicting and confusing. If, as leaders, we want to get our point of view across effectively, engage people's energy and commitment, inspire them with a sense of purpose, and open their minds to new possibilities, we must learn how to swim confidently in this sea of stories.

Dr Geoff Mead and Margaret Bishop

Geoff is a visiting research fellow at Bath University, as well as a consultant and storyteller. Margaret is a visiting fellow at Cass Business School, a consultant and a coach. Geoff was awarded his PhD and works extensively with organisations in the field of storytelling and narrative leadership. Margaret works with - and is researching into - storytelling and narrative in her organisational consulting practice. Geoff is working with Margaret and leading players in the field, to develop the praxis of narrative leadership through the Centre for Narrative Leadership.

Session 5 - Systemic Organisational Constellations

Organisational Constellations work attends to the whole system and culture of the organisation, while providing practical solutions, pragmatic insights and inspiring new directions. The seminar will provide:

- a brief introduction to systemic thinking and systemic organisational constellations;
- a live method for representing both the overt and the hidden dynamics and patterns of the system (those dynamics which often undermine rational attempts to make changes);
- an exciting experiential approach to experimenting with different possible ways of re-constellating the organisational system, so that old patterns are revealed and released and new possibilities can emerge before our eyes.

Jenny MacKewn

Jenny Mackewn is an international consultant, executive facilitator and mentor. She uses systemic organisational constellations to explore organisational patterns and dilemmas within both the private and the public sectors. This has included work with large international companies such as Syngenta and UK based organisations such as the Leadership Centre. She has also integrated the approach into masters' programmes at the Institute for the Arts and the Centre for Action Research in Professional Practice at the University of Bath, where she is a visiting fellow. Jenny has written two books and several articles in the field of human development, and group and organisational facilitation.

Session 6 - Organisational Transformation for a Complex World

It is now a commonplace that traditional, planned ways of bringing about strategic change tend not to work when the context is contested, complex or rapidly evolving, or when there are multiple centres of power. How then can one bring about change which has coherence and directionality but which works in alignment with the complexity rather than against it? In this session we will (i) explore some models which I and other colleagues have found helpful in navigating this terrain; (ii) share examples of approaches and techniques that we have used in UK, continental Europe and South Africa.

Peter Binns

For 8 years up until 2005 Peter Binns was a Director of Bath Consultancy Group. Prior to that, he was a senior research fellow at Warwick Business School. He previously taught Philosophy at Warwick, Sydney and Oxford Universities. His work is informed by an understanding of organisations as complex adaptive systems, and it often focuses on creating flourishing, sustainable organisations for a sustainable world. He has extensive experience of supporting organisational and cultural change, with a wide range of private and public sector organisations in UK and abroad.

Session 7 - Working With Complexity: Inspiration from Complexity Science

Operating in turbulent, uncertain environments requires approaches, methods and tools fit for the job. In this session we will consider first of all what is wrong with the world, and then how complexity science provides both perspective and pragmatism for description and prescription in it. We will also speculate on some radical ideas for change.

Dr Carol Webb

Carol's doctoral thesis at Cranfield University centred on a diary-based study, which explored sense-making and learning from a complexity science perspective. From this she developed a complexity science learning model, focused on individual learning in the context of working life. Carol also worked on the EU co-sponsored RODEO project, where she took a pivotal role in the development of the RODEO Starter Kit Calendar and Experience Game. From this she jointly published "The Secrets of the Six Principles: A Guide to Robust Organizational Development." Carol has since worked on a project to develop a taught course for research students on complexity science, and an EU project developing training material for adaptive management in a global context. In September 2007 she moved to Sheffield Hallam University, to develop a new research programme.

Session 8 - Co-creating the Future through Whole-System Events

Over the past two decades novel approaches to organisation development have emerged, including whole systems interventions, open space, storytelling and appreciative inquiry. While different in their detailed methodologies, they share a focus on the future, and on the belief that the members of an organisation can co-create their future. They share these aspects with strategic approaches that have a longer history, such as scenario planning and action research, but they have brought new insights, particularly in the area of co-creation. The discussion will look at these developments and relate them to the emphasis on the future which has been emerging in more general analyses of the changing nature of industry, as in the advocacy of blue ocean strategies, the experience economy, or co-creation with customers.

Dr John Darwin

John is Principal Lecturer in Strategy and Change at Sheffield Hallam University, where he has worked since 1992. He teaches and researches primarily in the fields of strategy, organisation development, the management of change and the philosophy of knowledge. Prior to this, he worked for Sheffield City Council, latterly as Director of Employment and Economic Development. Before that he worked for Newcastle upon Tyne City Council, Trade Union Studies Information Unit, the Universities of Durham and Newcastle, and Swansea Council of Social Services. His consultancy work has been primarily in local government and the health service; while publications have covered housing, economic development, local government, strategic alliances and complexity theory.

Session 9 - Can a Corporation be Wise? Leaders, Relationships and Wisdom

“Counsel woven into the fabric of real life is wisdom,” writes author Walter Benjamin, reflecting on storytelling in *Illuminations* (1970). And, “. . . counsel is less an answer to a question than a proposal concerning the continuation of a story which is just unfolding.” Those with an inclined ear will hear the complexity, conversation and change relationships in the implicate realm of these words.

This session will briefly review aspects of complexity and narration as they relate to organisational life and consider wisdom in such contexts. Psychological perspectives and research into wisdom will be overviewed, particularly as they might concern the challenges of organisational leadership in our times.

What exactly might be done to raise our Wisdom Quotient lacks unequivocal answer, but work in progress will be discussed and your time spent on this session may help evolve the field. Do please come.

Julie Allan

Julie Allan is a chartered occupational psychologist who specialises in leadership development, change management and senior team development. She is a coach and offers supervision for coaches and consultants. Julie previously worked in journalism and publishing with the BBC, and was for some years involved in the complexity programme of the London School of Economics. There she met one of her co-authors of *The Power of the Tale: Using Narratives for Organizational Success* (2002). She is also author, with Alison Whybrow, of the Gestalt Coaching chapter in *The Handbook of Coaching* (December 2007). Her current and developing personal interest lies in the creation or emergence of wisdom between individuals, particularly in organizational contexts.