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Complex sytems and evolutionary perspectives on organizations the application of complexity theory to organisations

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Abstrak

Complexity is a relatively new discipline with immense power to change our way of thinking and seeing the world. This, in turn, can change the way we ?manage?, design and structure organisations and create new ways of working and relating. The book has brought together a set of selected papers by European and American academics from a variety of disciplines, that look at both the development of a new theory of complex social systems and its possible application to organisations. The specific authors were invited to contribute, because their work makes a significant contribution to the unfolding and understanding of these new and exciting concepts. They do not all agree with each other, but since diversity and variety is at the heart of complexity they each provide a strand of an intertwined whole, which will enrich and deepen our understanding. In an environment of increasing uncertainty and ambiguity it is necessary to learn how to hold, in tension, disparate or even contradictory views, without undue stress. The world is not a simple dyadic black or white entity, but a rich multi-coloured and many-hued ensemble, each strand or perspective contributing to an intricate and inter-related n-dimensional whole. This therefore is not a ?text book? on complexity with a uniform perspective. The authors offer different perspectives and views on complexity. For example Mitleton- Kelly (Chapter 2) concentrates on ?objective? complexity while Boisot (Chapter 9) focuses on subjectively experienced complexity and Espejo (Chapter 3) introduces the notion of individual complexity. Some authors (Mitleton-Kelly Chapter 2, Introna Chapter 10, and McKelvey Chapter 5) make a strong point about not using complexity exclusively as a metaphor while others are happy to do so. These different approaches explore different ontological and epistemological domains ? ways of being and knowing ? and consequently use different domains of discourse. Clarkson and Nicolopoulou (Chapter 11) provide one possible framework for the different perspectives by distinguishing seven domains of discourse based on epistemological preferences. What the chapters have in common, however, is that they are the result of long-standing research using the principles of complexity. They are the result of passion and commitment to the development of new ideas and to the exploration of the space of possibilities.