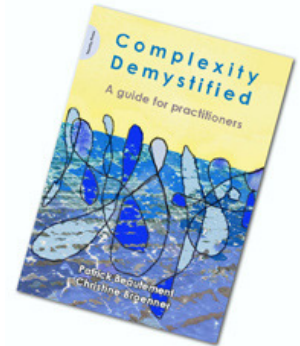


Press Release 2011

New book - 'Complexity Demystified - a Guide for Practitioners'

Patrick Beutement and Christine Broenner have recently published a book called '*Complexity Demystified - a Guide for Practitioners*'. In the book the authors explain why some of the ways-of-working we experience in our everyday lives are not always appropriate for complex business, social and community endeavours and indicate what needs to be done differently.



The authors use a new Approach* to reveal why, instead of fixed, bureaucratic processes and 'call-centre thinking', flexible, common sense human-centred practice and actions are required. Not only does the book point out how and why certain ways-of-working can go wrong, it also provides pragmatic, hands-on solutions for dealing appropriately and effectively with such open-ended and often unpredictable situations in practice.

The authors draw on their experiences of these different ways of working in everyday professional life and have written the book for practitioners - such as frontline workers and policy makers in health care, the police, community and conservation work who might find the book useful, as might people dealing with organisational management. The book examines six case studies**, each of which shows the benefits of using the Approach and its techniques in order to influence the context's underlying complexities to 'put them to work'.

Complexity Demystified - A guide for practitioners. Triarchy Press. £25.
ISBN: 978-1-908009-24-1. Authors: Patrick Beutement, Christine Broenner.

* The Approach: Real practice is about appreciating the nature of the dynamic flow in the context; and how the underlying complexity generates the features and phenomena that practitioners work with. These are part of the Approach. Understanding how to engage with the realities to influence and shape them is another part. Identifying mis-matches, tensions and trade-offs is a third. Having the 'complexity-worthy' capabilities to do all that is also necessary. And being able to do it all iteratively together, with those best placed to bring about change, gives the overall holistic Approach explained in the book.

** The Case Studies:

- * the fuel crisis protests in the UK (2000);
- * upgrading of slum housing in Cameroon;
- * social housing in Ludlow in the UK;
- * peace journalism in Lebanon;
- * the Deep Water Horizon / Macondo Well Oil Rig disaster; and
- * the Lost Town art /architecture project (East of England Development Agency).

Recommendation by: Professor Brian Collins, Chief Scientific Advisor, Department for Transport(DfT) and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)
Practitioners who are engaged in dealing with complex issues across diverse domains and contexts will find this book illuminating, thought provoking and most of all useful - in guiding them to ways of moving forwards in their endeavours to understand and then exploit that understanding for greater purpose... It should be on the bookshelf of anyone seriously engaged with any complex issue.

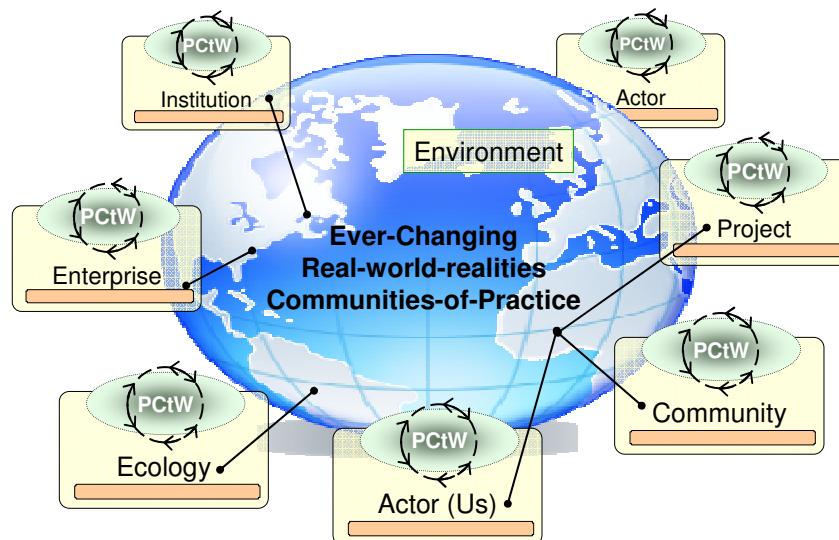
More about Our Approach: in a nutshell, it exploits complexity to gain practical and effective advantage. This is novel because 'complexity' is usually seen as chaotic, unpredictable, random and threatening but we show that it offers opportunity and the book provides a systematic way of changing real-world phenomena in a purposeful and sustainable manner.

Please note that this is not a complexity science book as such. Nor is it just a book about organisational change, it is a book about 'doing things differently' and working with the possibilities and opportunities of existing and future dynamic contexts in appropriate ways - even in the face of uncertainty and ambiguity.

The book has serious scientific underpinnings, but appreciates that the science has been explained very well elsewhere, viz in the work of the Santa Fe Institute and in Erdi's book 'Complexity Explained'. So, our Complexity Demystified book provides a well thought out and systematic Approach based on relevant science and technology and on the experiences of the practitioners that have been interviewed. In short, it takes insights from complexity science and applies them to real-world practice as characterised by the practitioners themselves.

So, the book is about 'putting complexity to work', which involves all the following:

- Practice itself - the **Doing** - working with other actors (the 'communities-of-practice') in the context and iteratively engaging with, contributing to and influencing change; and



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- Adjusting Conditions for Practice - the **Shaping** - affecting the underlying drivers of practice, through the use of a 'landscape of change', based on exploiting the degrees-of-freedom / wiggle-room that can be made available in the context; and
- Reflecting on Realities / Practice - the **Being** - 'symptom sorting' and trading off the factors contributing to the conditions within and between communities-of-practice; and
- Preparing for Practice / adapting - what we call 'complexity-worthiness' - the **Having** - setting up, across the context, to do all of the above iteratively as circumstances change - ie, accessing the necessary ways-of-working, capabilities, competencies and so on.

We feel the book supports the work of many practitioners by showing how **complexity-inspired approaches can be used successfully in pragmatic, defensible and accountable ways** - within the constraints set by the realities of particular contexts.

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