Event: Navigating Complexity â?? An innovation dialogue

Description

Tweet

Date: May 26-27, 2008
Venue: Wageningen International, Netherlands.

[Ten presentations given at this event are now available online]

What does complexity thinking mean for development interventions? This innovation dialogue offers a unique opportunity for exploring how emerging insights from the complexity sciences and systems thinking, combined with field practice, could reshape assumptions about the design, monitoring and evaluation of development work. What does it mean to shift from compliance with external standards to investing in capacities for navigating complexity?

Learning from the Titanic

Navigation involves the art and science of knowing when to adjust a process within a dynamic environment. The Titanic famously sank due to wrong assumptions, inadequate reading of signals and inappropriate adapting of actions. The upcoming innovation dialogue will focus on the question of how those managing development efforts can position interventions appropriately and effectively to avoid Titanic-like consequences, thereby manoeuvring to the aspired/desired future. Management processes are needed that enable up-to-date contextual insights in the face of complexity. What ideas and approaches currently exist to navigate complexity? And can this be undertaken systemically rather than through a patchwork approach?

The development sector is guided by protocols that are essentially based on a linear approach to meeting objectives and on processes that are assessed in comparative isolation of the dynamic context. Many efforts work with limited and out-of-date insights on their operational contexts. The consequence for those managing development efforts is a reduced capability to guide strategic engagement, which affects effectiveness. Any planning process is based on many assumptions. Some of these assumptions will be quite predictable, while others may be but wishful thinking. If assumptions are based on invalid theories of change (incl. the nature of cause-effect relationships) and on inappropriate tools and procedures derived from that, we jeopardise the impact that we are seeking to see realised.

A Programme with a Difference

As we are dealing with questions to which there are no clear-cut answers and which require debate and exploration, this event is neither a workshop nor a seminar. We will be aiming for a process that allows for interactive exploration of innovations leading to shared recommendations that participants can take back home and that can be shared with a broader audience in the development sector. We have invited experts to share key ideas that can have far-reaching consequences for mainstream planning, monitoring and evaluation thinking and practice. With these ideas in mind, groups will then identify practical implications and options. After a round of sharing that focuses on promising approaches and

methodologies, new groups will tackle the implications for specific themes in management of development efforts to integrate the diverse ideas and approaches that have been heard and shared.

Category

1. Types of Events
2. Workshops

Tags

1. complexity

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