

SYSTEMS GAMES for Organisations

Robin de Carteret



I run bespoke workshops using experiential activities to explore ideas from Complexity Science and Sustainability. I am interested in helping staff teams to integrate our often mechanistic, reductionist, linear worldview with a more holistic, interrelated, living systems view of the world.

The workshops I deliver use games and activities to explore ideas of interdependence and the world as a living interrelated system. I use inspiring images and videos from the natural world to describe emergence, feedback cycles, tipping points, resilience, and 'living at the edge of chaos'. Participants take part in live models of complex systems and discuss what it means in their context and what they can learn about new ways of relating and working. Activities can include: models of complexity in communication and collaboration, those that encourage innovation and creative thinking or explore the balance between redundancy and efficiency and its impact on resilience.



Coming from a scientific, analytical background and doing a physics degree I understand the world from a logical perspective. But the more I studied and learnt about the world the more I realised that the simplified models that science uses to break the world down into comprehensible pieces have their limitations. A reductionist approach is often unreliable, and can be damaging, when working with highly interrelated systems like organisms, ecosystems, economies and organisations. I found complexity science offers an alternative way of understanding systems by working with recognising patterns in wholes rather than in detached parts. But trying to understand complexity just by reading and thinking about it is challenging and seems to contradict the lessons it's trying to teach us about how to operate in a more integrated way. So I have developed a set of experiential activities that model complex systems and allow participants to explore systems thinking concepts as they arise in the exercises.

I run sessions as part of conferences, events or team away days as well as bespoke half-day and full day workshops. Many participants have said to me afterwards that the experiential activities made real for them concepts that they had been dealing with for years but had never fully understood.

Feedback from previous workshops:

"One of those days where you don't even once look at your watch. Hugely engaging, interesting and powerful. A touching way to get a glimpse of our own place in the world." - Janice Armore, Participant

"I found Robin's system games an amazingly simple and powerful way to help me understand complexity in organizations, nature and society. Complexity theory became concrete and alive through telling examples and videos, alternated with participatory games. It gives you a lived experience of how utterly interconnected life is. Highly recommended." - Lisette van der Wel, Participant



Robin de Carteret is an educator, facilitator and consultant in participatory education, complexity science and sustainability. He specialises in using experiential activities for investigation, learning and communication. Robin has an MSc in Holistic Science from Schumacher College. He has worked in education for the last 10 years successfully implementing ideas for improving sustainability and was co-founder of Transition Leicester, applying a systems perspective to reviving local communities. He also teaches performance improvisation.

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Please get in touch with me to discuss your context as I tailor all sessions to your learning and organisational needs. Here are some examples of activities and themes that I can include.

Activities include...

- ▶ Exploring emergent group behaviour and how small changes in behaviour and ways of relating and communicating affect the whole group
- ▶ Different levels and speeds of feedback cycles in communication within and outside of the organisation
- ▶ Models of complexity in communication and collaboration
- ▶ Developing frames of mind for innovation and creative thinking
- ▶ Exploring the balance between redundancy and efficiency and its impact on resilience

Session Themes...

- ▶ **Interdependence and systems games** - Experiential activities that model the interconnected nature of life and concepts such as feedback, emergence, chaos/stability and self-regulation accompanied by inspiring images & film clips of living examples.
- ▶ **Climate change, peak everything and visioning a positive, resilient future** - How do we create, prosperous, thriving organisations that are resilient to the effects of resource depletion, climate change and financial crises?
- ▶ **Biomimicry: technological and social Innovation inspired by nature** - what can we learn from nature's 3.8 billion year research and development programme?
- ▶ **Outdoor activities** - Developing awareness of the patterns & relationships in nature. Practices to use the outdoors for developing intuition, inspiring creativity, wellbeing, and creating the space needed for good decision making
- ▶ **Spontaneity and improvisation** - Theatre games that develop responsiveness, presentation, listening and communication skills, collaborative creativity and the courage to aim high.