

KING'S COLLEGE LONDON  
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC POLICY  
POSTGRADUATE  
2013

**Public policy and the governance of complex societies**

**Module Organiser:** Professor Hilton Root

Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2013 – December 2013 (reading week)

0900-1100 hours

**Module Outline:** When policy makers confront a complicated problem, they often ask "What do we do first?" or "what is the best solution?" But for problems that are not just complicated, but complex in nature, those are the wrong questions. These problems -- which include everything from *state-building* to peacemaking to *consolidating democracy* -- are created by *networks* of interacting agents influencing each other in a dynamic system. So one cannot isolate a first step from a second, or identify a single optimal solution -- one has to approach the entire landscape of interacting units *as a complex system*, and identify its feedbacks and *interdependencies* to understand the effects of different actions. Only then can one build a strategy that is sufficiently dynamic and adaptive to attain desired outcomes in a constantly changing environment. **Without understanding the nature of complexity, policy makers will continue to fail -- as they have so often in the last few decades -- to make progress on crucial problems that develop from the dynamic interactions among actors within linked systems.**

This course employs concepts from the study of change in natural systems to examine the comparative sociology of the state, *global governance*, *global networks* and the global diffusion of public policies. The transforming impact of global interdependence on public policies and states in both developed and developing alike will be explored to answer questions such as: what is not governed, who is governed, who governs, who governs when nobody governs. The fundamental claim is that

traditional conceptions of global interactions such as *modernization theory*, “uniqueness of the West and the “end of history” are increasingly untenable. Instead of convergence to liberal norms “ungovernability” or the “*end of power*” is the condition of contemporary society that must be comprehended.

Ironically, many of the innovations in public policies developed by globalized political and administrative elites over the last two decades are being supplanted by the rise of new elites from the global periphery. They seek to cope with the persistent policy failures and ‘*ungovernability*’ of transitional societies with types of state action that are distinctively illiberal. These new actors in global policy-making and implementation are often the beneficiaries of expanding global markets and of capital market liberalization. Yet they perceive the ‘*good governance*’ agenda of the West to have had limited effectiveness on governability in emerging regions where states seeking the ability to harness the social capital and resources of the people it rules are impelled to follow trajectories that greatly diverge from those of Western incumbents. Moreover, emerging populist leaders in countries as diverse as Turkey, Venezuela, Thailand, Ecuador, Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe that have acquired power in the context of *emerging democracy*, validate their rule by catering to local demands for cultural authenticity. The governance alternatives they employ do not fall into classic authoritarian/democracy dichotomy. Clearly, the paths taken today will carry substantial *path dependence* with the inevitable consequence of *lock-in*, shaping the local trajectory while transmitting strong network effects globally.

How will the different local models of social order shape the multi-level context of global governance? What impact will frameworks designed to fulfil the local search for cultural authenticity have on global governance and global stability? How will the important example of the successful globalizing economies of East Asia and China be diffused? How will the models of authoritarian growth impact communities, states and *international systems*? What will be the impact of growing interdependence and network density on social movements, protest, social exclusion, social mobility,

immigrations, competition between ethnic groups, and on divergent globalising forms of capitalism?

The course will enable students to become familiar with the analytical framework of *complex adaptive systems* and to acquire new tools to understand the adaptive processes and possible discontinuities that will shape the emergent global order. Analysis of the military, political, economic and cultural interactions of both Western and non-western societies will illustrate and validate the complex systems approach, challenging conventional conceptions of what the state should do, and the ways in which it can act.

**Required Books:**

1. Bar-Yam, Yaneeer. 2005. *Making Things Work: Solving Complex Problems in a Complex World*. Neesi Knowledge.
2. Barabasi, Albert-Laszlo. 2003. *Linked: How Everything Is Connected to Everything Else and What It Means*. Plume
3. Root, Hilton L. 2013. *Dynamics Among Nations: The Evolutionary of Legitimacy and Development in Modern States*. MIT Press
4. Ormerod, Paul. 2012. *Positive Linking*. Faber & Faber.
5. Ramalingam, Ben. 2013. *Aid on the Edge of Chaos: Rethinking International Cooperation in a Complex World*. London: Oxford University Press.
6. Richerson, Peter J, and Robert Boyd. 2005. *Not by Genes Alone: How Culture Transformed Human Evolution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

**Recommended Background: (Masters Students)**

Waldrop, M. Mitchell. 1992. *Complexity: the emerging science at the edge of order and chaos*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Buchanan, Mark. 2007. *The Social Atom: Why the Rich Get Richer, Cheaters Get Caught, and Your Neighbor Usually Looks Like You*. First ed. Bloomsbury USA.

Bienhocker, Eric D. *The Origin of Wealth*. Harvard Business School Press.

**Recommended Background: (Ph.D. Students)**

Mitchell, Melanie. 2009. *Complexity: A Guided Tour*. First ed. Oxford University Press, USA.

Simon, Herbert A. 1996. *The Sciences of the Artificial - 3rd Edition*. third ed. The MIT Press.

### **Week 1:**

*Building Blocks to examine global political economy and complexity*

- What is complexity?
- How do the global trends of growing economic and social inequalities result from the globalization of resource use, production and consumption

Root, Hilton L. 2013. *Dynamics Among Nations: The Evolution of Legitimacy and Development in Modern States*. MIT Press. Chapter 1, pages 1 - 15

Johnson, Jeffrey. 2010. "The Future of the Social Sciences and Humanities in the Science of Complex Systems." *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research* 23 (2): 115–134. doi:10.1080/13511610.2010.518422.

Simon, Herbert A. 1996. *The Sciences of the Artificial - 3rd Edition*. third edition. The MIT Press. Chapter 8: The Architecture of Complexity: Hierarchic Systems pp. 170 – 182

Johnson, Neil. 2009. *Simply Complexity: A clear guide to complexity theory*. Reprint. *Oneworld*. (pp. 3 – 18)

Goldstone, Jack A. "The New Population Bomb" *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 1 (January 2010). <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/print/65877>.

### **Week 2:**

*Internal Structure of Complex Systems*

- Why do all companies, large and small, eventually die but cities generally persist?
- Why does socio-economic complexity accelerate?
- How do selfish agents come to form groups that are not internally selfish?
- How do low-probability events and gradual-unfolding trends have far-reaching influence on the long-term future?

Bar-Yam, Yaneer. 2005. *Making Things Work: Solving Complex Problems in a Complex World*. NeCSI Knowledge. Chapters 1 – 2 and 5 – 7, pages 21 – 40 and 61 – 86.

Root, Hilton L. 2013. *Dynamics Among Nations: The Evolution of Legitimacy and Development in Modern States*. MIT Press. Chapter 2, pages 15 – 34 and Glossary 237-247.

Levin, Simon A. 1992. “The Problem of Pattern and Scale in Ecology: The Robert H. MacArthur Award Lecture.” *Ecology* 73 (6) (December 1): 1943–1967.  
doi:10.2307/1941447.

Schelling, T.C. (1971), 'Dynamic Models of Segregation', *Journal of Mathematical Sociology*, 1(1): 143-186.

**Week 3:**

*Pitfalls of Traditional Political Economy – new institutional economics and modernization theory*

Inglehart, Ronald, and Christian Welzel. 2007. *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence*. Cambridge Univ. Press. (pp. 15 – 48)

Root, Hilton L. 2013. *Dynamics Among Nations: The Evolution of Legitimacy and Development in Modern States*. MIT Press. Chapters 4 – 5, pages 57 - 74

**Week 4:**

*The Economy as a Complex Adaptive System*  
-Why do the rich get richer?

Root, Hilton L. 2013. *Dynamics Among Nations: The Evolution of Legitimacy and Development in Modern States*. MIT Press. Chapter 3, pp. 35 - 56

Ormerod, Paul. 2012. *Positive Linking*. Faber & Faber. Chapters 1 – 6

Arthur, B., Durlauf, S. and Lane, D. (1997). *The Economy as an Evolving Complex System II*. Addison Wesley, Redwood City Ca. Chapter 1.

“Economics Focus: Agents of Change.” *The Economist*, July 22, 2010  
<http://www.economist.com/node/16636121>.

Recommended for PhD Students

Bienhocker, Eric D. *The Origin of Wealth*. Harvard Business School Press. Pages 415 – 450. (Available on Keats)

Blanchard, Olivier J. 2008. The State of Macro. Working Paper. *National Bureau of Economic Research*. <http://www.nber.org/papers/w14259>.

Simon, Herbert A. 1955. "A Behavioral Model of Rational Choice." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 69 (1) (February 1): 99–118.

**Week 5:**

*Culture and Social Evolution*

Richerson, Peter J, and Robert Boyd. 2005. *Not by Genes Alone: How Culture Transformed Human Evolution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 1 – 4, pages 1 – 99

Ormerod, Paul. 2012. *Positive Linking*. Faber & Faber. Chapter 7.

Rendell, L., R. Boyd, D. Cownden, M. Enquist, K. Eriksson, M. W. Feldman, L. Fogarty, S. Ghirlanda, T. Lillicrap, and K. N. Laland. 2010. "Why Copy Others? Insights from the Social Learning Strategies Tournament." *Science* 328 (5975) (April 9): 208–213.

**Week 6:**

*Networks*

- How can the global convergence of information and communications technologies work for everyone?
- How can the threat of new and reemerging diseases and immune micro-organisms be reduced?
- Is there any hope of quality in a world where anyone having a Twitter account is an expert?

Barabasi, Albert-Laszlo. 2003. *Linked: How Everything Is Connected to Everything Else and What It Means*. Plume.

Bar-Yam, Yaneer. 2005. *Making Things Work: Solving Complex Problems in a Complex World*. NeCSI Knowledge. Chapter 3, pages 41 - 51

Recommended for PhD students

Hausmann, Ricardo, and Cesar Hidalgo. 2011. *The Atlas of Economic Complexity: Mapping Paths to Prosperity*. Harvard Kennedy School, <http://www.cid.harvard.edu/documents/complexityatlas.pdf>.

Stanford Network Analysis Project (SNAP) Website at: <http://snap.stanford.edu>

**Week 7:**

*Development and Complexity*

- Why do outbreaks of political or economic instability occur?
- How can we separate causes into structural conditions and triggering events?

Root, Hilton L. 2013. *Dynamics Among Nations: The Evolution of Legitimacy and Development in Modern States*. MIT Press. Chapter 6, pages 95 - 114

Ramalingam, Ben. 2013. *Aid on the Edge of Chaos: Rethinking International Cooperation in a Complex World*. London: Oxford University Press. Part III, pages 239 – 364

Bar-Yam, Yaneer. 2005. *Making Things Work: Solving Complex Problems in a Complex World*. NeCSI Knowledge. Chapters 14, pages 201 – 217

Barder, Owen. 2012. “What Is Development?” *Global Development: Views from the Center*. <http://blogs.cgdev.org/globaldevelopment/2012/08/what-is-development.php>.

### **Week 8:**

*Social Institutions and the State*

- Why if most policies fail, do states grow larger?

Root, Hilton L. 2013. *Dynamics Among Nations: The Evolution of Legitimacy and Development in Modern States*. MIT Press. Chapter 7 – 8, pages 115 - 164

North, Douglass C., John Joseph Wallis, and Barry R. Weingast. 2009. *Violence and Social Orders: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History*. 1st ed. Cambridge University Press. Selections (TBA)

### **Week 9:**

*Achieving state capacity, parallel political modernization – China and Europe*

- How can genuine democracy emerge from authoritarian regimes?

Root, Hilton L. 2013. *Dynamics Among Nations: The Evolution of Legitimacy and Development in Modern States*. MIT Press. Chapter 9, pages 165 - 196

Cederman, Lars-Erik. 1997. *Emergent Actors in World Politics: How States and Nations Develop and Dissolve*. Princeton University Press. (Chapters 1 - 2). Available on Keats.

Buzan, Barry and Richard Little (2000), *International Systems in World History: Remodeling the study of international relations*. Oxford University press (Chapter 1). Available on Keats.

### **Week 10:**

*No Captain at the Helm – global power and global networks*

- How can policymaking be made more sensitive to global long-term perspectives?
- How can shared values and new security strategies reduce ethnic conflicts, terrorism, and the use of weapons of mass destruction?

- How can transnational crime and terrorist networks be stopped from becoming more powerful and sophisticated global enterprises?
- What kinds of network-based cooperation are likely to replace the post-hegemonic international order based on liberal world order?

Root, Hilton L. 2013. *Dynamics Among Nations: The Evolution of Legitimacy and Development in Modern States*. MIT Press. Chapters 10 – 11, pages 197 - 236

Bar-Yam, Yaneer. 2005. *Making Things Work: Solving Complex Problems in a Complex World*. NeCSI Knowledge. pages 259 – 274

**Assessment** will be determined on:

20% **Class Discussion & Presentation**

20% **Short Essay**, 1,000 words due in Week 5

60%: **One term paper**, 4,000 words due at the end of the semester

### **Policy on Plagiarism**

The profession of scholarship and the intellectual life of a university as well as the field of public policy inquiry depend fundamentally on a foundation of trust. Thus any act of plagiarism strikes at the heart of the meaning of the university and the purpose of a graduate education. It constitutes a serious breach of professional ethics and it is unacceptable.

Plagiarism is the use of another's words or ideas presented as one's own. It includes, among other things, the use of specific words, ideas, or frameworks that are the product of another's work. Honesty and thoroughness in citing sources is essential to professional accountability and personal responsibility. Appropriate citation is necessary so that arguments, evidence, and claims can be critically examined.

Plagiarism is wrong because of the injustice it does to the person whose ideas are stolen. But it is also wrong because it constitutes lying to one's professional colleagues. From a prudential perspective, it is shortsighted and self-defeating, and it can ruin a professional career.

Any plagiarized assignment will receive an automatic grade of "F." This may lead to failure for the course.

To help enforce the policy on plagiarism, all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services.

### **Statement on special needs of students**



If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me.