

Global Agenda Council on Complex Systems 2012-2014



Understanding/Context

Complexity is not so much a subject of research as a new way of looking at phenomena. It is inherently interdisciplinary in that it takes its problems from the real world and its concepts and methods from all fields of science. Complexity lies at the root of important issues that people face every day, such as hunger, energy use, water supply, healthcare, climate change, security, increasing urbanization, sustainability, innovation and the impact of technology.

Shaping the Agenda

The Global Agenda Council on Complex Systems is developing holistic strategies to help other Global Agenda Councils understand the relationships between the different issues that are addressed within the network. To this end, the Council published a [white paper](#), *Perspectives on a Hyperconnected World*, for the 2013 Annual Meeting in Davos-Klosters, describing how a complex-systems perspective can bring clarity and insight to many of the world's problems. For example, it highlights that through a complex systems perspective, rather than looking at a financial instrument, policy-makers would look at how the instrument interacts in the larger scheme of global markets, and rather than think about poverty, they might look at how income relates to conflict, politics and the availability of water. Instead of looking at a system in isolation, complexity scientists step back and look at how the many parts interact to form a coherent whole.

To further raise awareness, Council Members have begun work with other Councils, such as the Councils on Catastrophic Risks and on Design & Innovation, to develop joint workshops incorporating a complex-systems perspective into their work. Council Members are also working with the World Economic Forum to provide a data analysis of Forum events to study interlinkages and demonstrate the effectiveness of data-driven network analysis.

“Complexity lies at the root of important issues that people face every day, such as hunger, energy use, water supply, healthcare, climate change, security, increasing urbanization, sustainability, innovation and the impact of technology.”

In the coming year, the Council aims to expand these activities and promote its work for greater application within other Councils. It will contribute to talk on financial system resilience, drawing on a range of experts and stakeholders. Ultimately, the Council aims to raise awareness of complexity approaches among a new generation of leaders.

Contact Information

Research Analyst: Karen Wong, Global Agenda Councils, karen.wong@weforum.org

Council Manager: Stephan Mergenthaler, Associate Director, Strategic Foresight, stephan.mergenthaler@weforum.org

Forum Lead: Kristel Van der Elst, Director, Head of Strategic Foresight, kristel.vanderelst@weforum.org