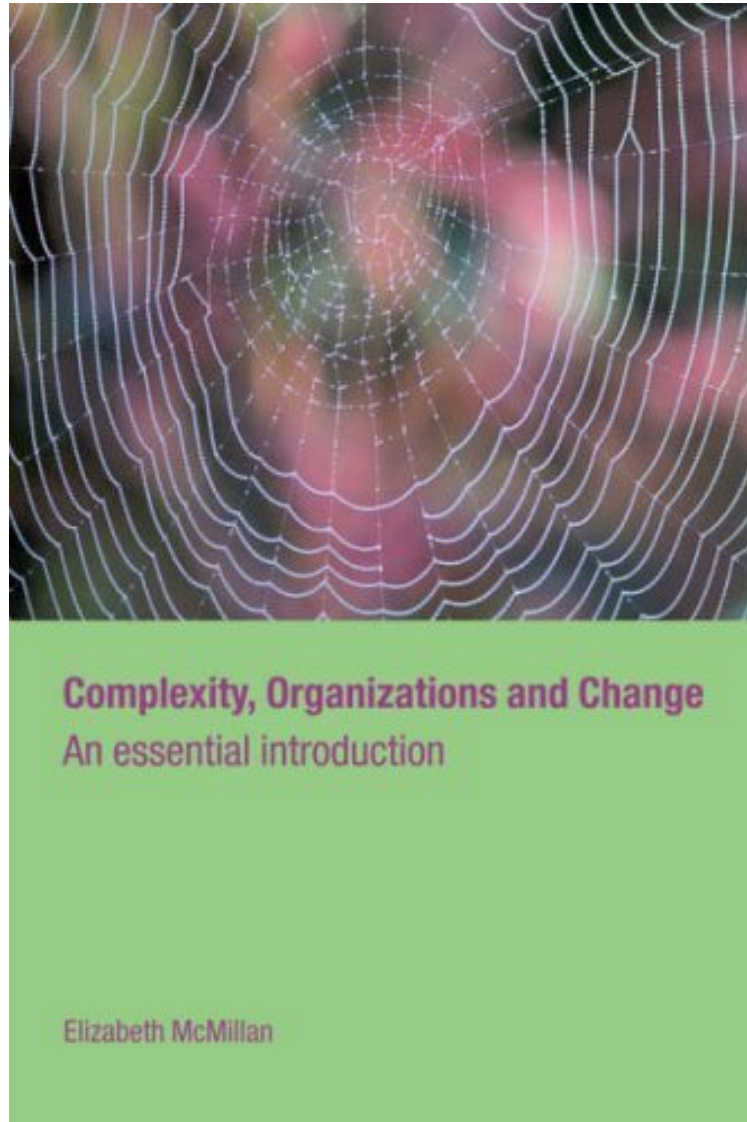


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## Complexity, Organizations and Change (Routledge Studies in Complexity and Management)

*Elizabeth McMillan*

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**Elizabeth McMillan : Complexity, Organizations and Change (Routledge Studies in Complexity and Management)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Complexity, Organizations and Change (Routledge Studies in Complexity and Management):

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Review of Complexity, Organizations and ChangeBy Lee DyerElizabeth McMillan firmly believes that the Newtonian-Cartesian (bureaucratic) model of organizations has had its day and that a complexity-based paradigm is now the way to go. Her purposes in writing this book, then, are first to

bring others around to this point of view and second to show managers how the new paradigm might be applied in their organizations. The book divides roughly into three parts. Part 1 (Chapters 2 through 5) introduces the reader to key concepts from complexity science. Although this material suffers from repetition and redundancy, it nonetheless is the best part of the book. Part 2 introduces a major change program that took place at the authors' university between 1993 and 1996 (Chapter 6) and then attempts to use concepts from complexity science to explain what happened (Chapter 7). This doesn't work. The change effort is too insipid to serve as a stimulating example and the analysis is pure ad hoc retrofit. There is no evidence that complexity science played any role in the unfolding of the change process, nor is it at all clear that complexity science is superior to more conventional approaches in explaining what actually occurred. In Part 3 (Chapter 8) the author provides her prescriptions for managers, but these fall flat in the face of what has come before. It is difficult to recommend this book. The uninitiated may find the material in Chapters 2 and 5 useful in grasping the key concepts of complexity science as they apply to organizations - a helpful overview, if not quite the "essential introduction" that the book's title promises. But others will ask: "What if anything does complexity-based thinking add to our understanding of organizations?" Here the author does a distinct disservice. It is simply too easy to walk away from the book concluding that the answer to this question is "not much", which in my view is far from the case.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. An Excellent Book  
By Paul T. Thomas  
This is an excellent starter book for all managers and thinkers on Complexity, Change and new approaches/thinking. Once finished then move on to McMillan's second. I now insist that all my PhD MSc students read this book by Elizabeth before moving on with their study. It's easy to read, with each chapter moving forward the thinking and argument that complexity is not just another fad or rational, reductionist view of change, but a well thought out and wonderfully argued perspective of real life. The book uses language that doesn't put off the reader. It's clear, and uses some excellent case studies to provide explanation of the critical points. This book is a must for managers, leaders, CEO's and change agents looking to implement change which will last, and of course actually happen.

Complexity science has seriously challenged long-held views in the scientific community about how the world works. These ideas, particularly about the living world, also have radical and profound implications for organizations and society as a whole. Available in paperback for the first time, this insightful book describes and considers ideas from complexity science and examines their use in organizations, especially in bringing about major organizational change. Author McMillan explores how organizations, their design, the way they operate and, importantly, the people who co-create them, are thought of. Explaining the history and development of complexity science in an accessible way for the non-scientific reader, this outstanding book describes key concepts and their use in theory and practice. Illustrated with real-life examples from organizations in the UK, Europe and the USA, the book includes an in-depth case study of an organization which used complexity principles as part of a strategic change intervention. From this, useful models for introducing a complexity-based change process are derived. Complexity, Organizations and Change will appeal to academics, researchers and advanced students who are interested in complexity science and what it means for strategy, organization and management theory and organizational change.

'The book offers convincing and cogent arguments regarding the nature of complexity science and its centrality in day-to-day human behaviour ... The book comes across as a challenging, almost 'cheeky' textbook intended to encourage and inspire readers to seek out and develop a different approach to change in the workplace.' - Leadership Organization Development Journal  
'Elizabeth McMillan deserves great credit for producing such a helpful text. In particular, the introductory sections which organize the many and varied roots of complexity thinking offer an excellent summary of a vast array of material. Students new to complexity thinking will find the text a great starting point.' - Robert MacIntosh, Professor of Management and Director of Teaching Learning, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, UK  
About the Author  
Elizabeth McMillan is currently a Research Fellow at the Open University where she co-founded the Complexity Science Research Centre. She is also a co-founder and a Director of the UK Complexity Society and a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, with many years experience as a senior manager.