

## Editor's Note (2.1)

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The year 2000 promises to be an invigorating one for those interested in the conjunction of scientific thought and management practice. Complexity as a buzzword has perhaps become too popular. It is used in advertisements and even on the side of a New York City bus. That popularity is one of the greatest risks to the serious development of the field.

In the face of such populist rhetoric, the year has or will see the publication of several of the most promising books on complexity and management. Perhaps the best book I have ever read on complexity (out of more than 100) is Alicia Juarrero's *Dynamics in Action: Intentional Behavior as a Complex System* (MIT Press). While not explicitly dealing with management or organizations, Juarrero writes with great clarity on the thinking and actions underlying the very prospect of managing or organizing. As a companion piece, I recommend Robert Axelrod and Michael D. Cohen's *Harnessing Complexity* (Free Press). Together, these books provide a solid foundation on which both academic research can be built and managerial practice improved.

In that spirit, this issue of *Emergence* aims for the heart of what the topic of this journal is all about. Jeff Goldstein opens by writing of emergence itself, followed by Paul Cilliers on complexity and Ken Baskin on management: Our title recaptured in three articles but for the notion of issues. Ted Fuller, Paul Moran, Jeffrey Goldberg and Livia Markóczy fill that gap by focusing on metaphor and rhetoric—issues at the core of many a debate about what the role of complex systems thinking can be in a managerial and organizational context. The last decade has seen shrill debate among those who believe in complexity as metaphor and those who believe in complexity as structural model. Fuller and Moran approach the question from the pragmatic side. Goldberg and Markóczy approach it from the theoretical side. But all of these authors reach nearly the same conclusion: there is much that can be learned by thinking about organizations as embodiments of the models used in complex systems theory, but we must recognize the limitations of the models and of the words we use.

It is one thing to use metaphor to inspire thinking, it is another to attempt literal application of strategies that apply in a model world. Finally, Black, Farias and Boisot attempt to provide foundations to link complexity, strategy, and the “real” world faced by managers on a daily basis.

The high peak of research, which Juarrero, Axelrod, and Cohen have created, needs to be filled out if it is to be used as a landing strip for much of the lofty rhetoric the media has used surrounding complexity and management. The remaining issues of *Emergence* for the year aim to provide a significant portion of that landfill. Look for articles regarding the application of complexity thinking, the development of new approaches to marketing and the provision of services, and in-depth examinations of just what can be learned from complexity modeling.

To our old readers, thanks for being part of the family. To our new readers, welcome. *Emergence* is in its second year, our chosen field in its second decade, and the challenges of both await us as the year unfolds.