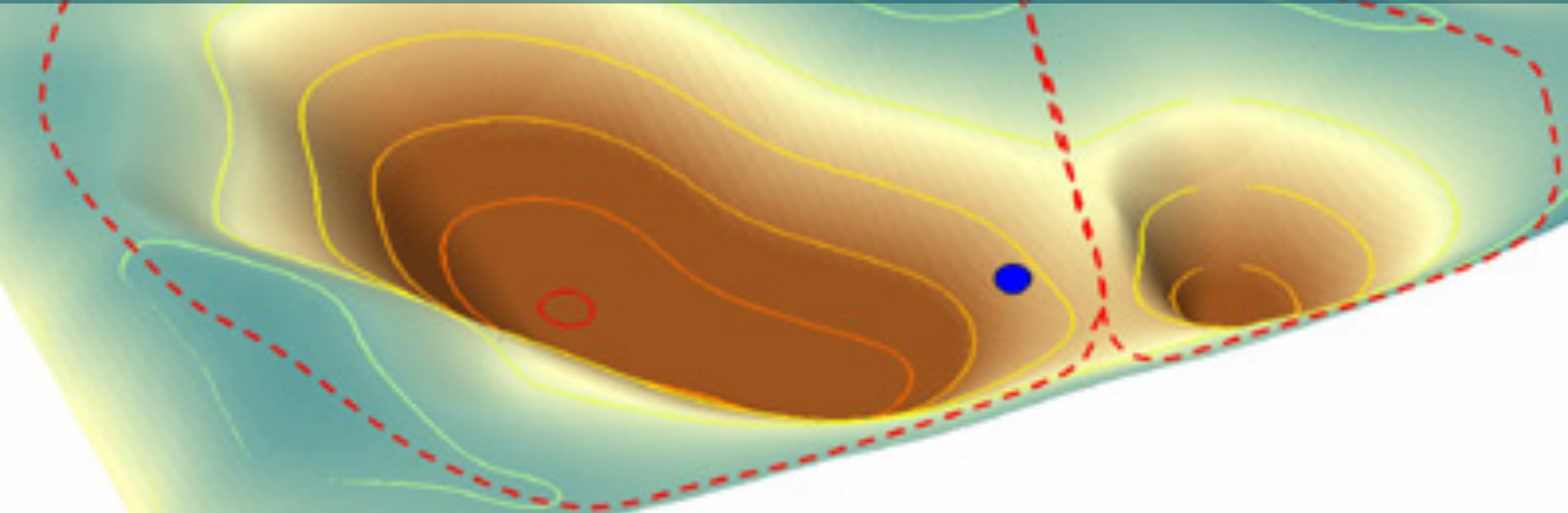


Harnessing the power of complexity in development

An extended, unique expedition through complexity approaches to enhance agile, adaptive and appropriate work in dynamic and uncertain development contexts.



This course gives you a unique opportunity to gain experience and expertise in complexity, through a guided journey covering the fundamentals of complexity. Projects taken from participants' real-world situations (not hypothetical case studies) will be used to apply these principles, teams being mentored all the while by two expert practitioners.

“We cannot solve our problems with the same type of thinking that created them.”

attr. Albert Einstein

Logframes, pilots and RCTs epitomise the current ‘type of thinking’ in development. The methods based in this linear, cause-and-effect paradigm have helped in many situations and improved millions of people’s lives around the planet.

There remain, however, big challenges that these methods – and the thinking modes behind them – are not able to address – and in some cases are made worse by the inappropriate way in which they are tackled.

In recent years, various actors in international development have recognised that **a new way of doing development is needed**, which led to movements like ‘Doing Development Differently’ emerging.

The foundation for this is an understanding that the intractable challenges development is facing are complex. Advocates for the new way of doing development promote:

- adaptive programming instead of multi-year strategies;
- flexible planning and budgeting instead of rigid logframes and fixed budgets; and
- a focus on feedback, adapting and learning rather than only accountability in monitoring change.

The Cynefin framework – a key tool in complexity thinking



Complexity offers a complementary way of thinking – not rejecting the old methods, but adding a new way of looking at situations and systems. It holds the potential for more sustainable, better adapted, contextually appropriate ways to tackle development challenges.

Yet development actors are still far from effective in applying complexity thinking in strategy development, operational programming and, indeed, day-to-day work. Practical experience remains limited.

This course aims to redress that with a focus on the practical application of complexity theory.



Over the course of the three months, this programme will help you:

- Understand what complexity and complex systems are all about
- Grasp and practically apply the principles of working with complexity
- Apply the ground-breaking *Cynefin* framework to decide when complexity-based approaches are warranted for
- Know when and how to combine expert viewpoints with community knowledge
- Understand the limits of big data as a solution to big problems
- Design the core elements needed for safe programme implementation
- Use complexity thinking in your daily work
- Learn how to reach scale in complexity
- Grapple with the organisational implications of complexity approaches

This exploration of complexity will include:

- A guest speaker during the middle weekend, bringing in concrete experience from their own work
- An online environment to help participants collaborate, debate and share during the course and beyond
- Real-world problems, not hypothetical case studies, to ensure experiential, practical learning
- Mentoring and coaching from tutors throughout the course, including opportunities to consult on current work issues as well as on coursework

Course approach and structure

The aim is to build the theoretical understanding of complexity while enabling practical, hands-on experience of applying the ideas in real-world, participant-brought problems.

The course therefore combines intensive theory sessions with periods of guided application and experimentation. An initial **three-day workshop** held at [Cranfield University](#), a **mid-point one-day workshop** and a **final two-day workshop** are supplemented with regular **two-hour long sessions every two weeks**. These shorter sessions are recommended, but not essential. These will also then form the skeleton dates for **one-to-one clinic sessions for all participants** to meet with trainers for advice and coaching.

The course structure combines:

- Theory-focused sessions on key concepts from complexity science



- Practical exercises that take these concepts and apply them to real-life problems
- Drop-in sessions every fortnight to deepen some the understanding of selected concepts and support course participants in the application of the learned in their daily work
- Experiential learning in the form of two concrete month-long projects in which

the participants will collaborate with other participants to apply the techniques and explore options

- A guest-speaker input giving a real-life account of applying the ideas of complexity to programme management
- A self-guided wrap-up session to help the participants make sense of the learned, discuss initial experiences gathered and allow for the emergence of

The course tutors

The course tutors have decades of experience in applying complexity in development and other fields. They combine theoretical and practical knowledge and have taught the approaches and techniques around the world. Together, they have designed this new course to give attendees the opportunity to combine class-room learning with direct and guided application to real-world problems in current work projects.

Marcus Jenal, Mesopartner

Marcus has been known as thought leader on addressing development work from a systems and complexity perspective for many years. With a background in environmental sciences, he has brought systemic principles to practical approaches to market and economic systems around the world.

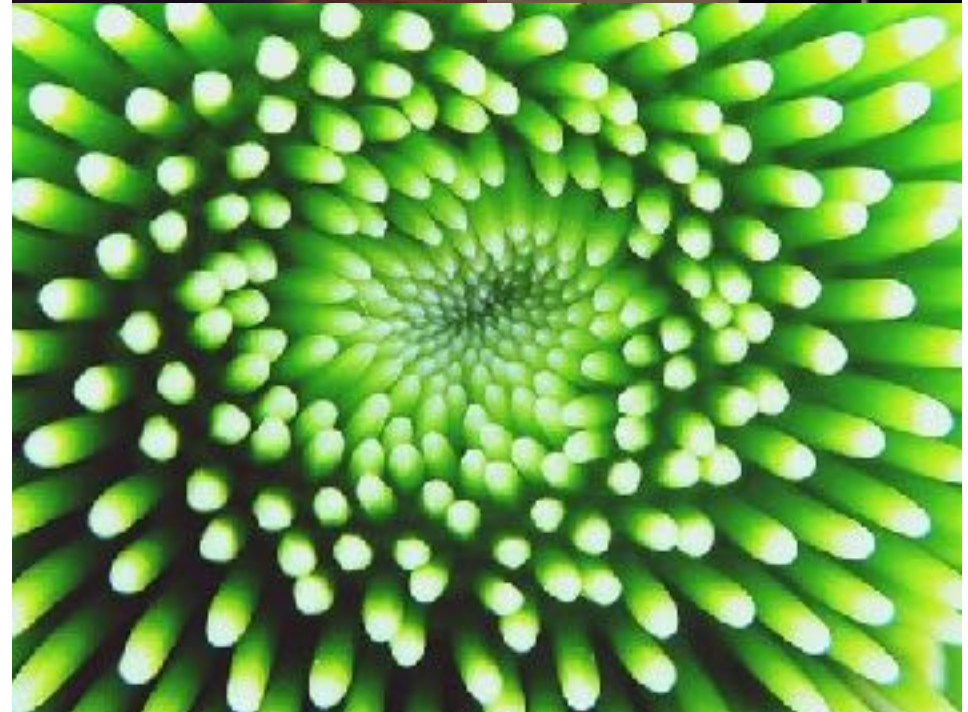
He has significantly shaped Mesopartner's Systemic Insight logic, which guides teams in a process of continuous exploration. He regularly shares his knowledge and expertise on his blog [here](#).

Tony Quinlan, Narrate

Tony has been applying complexity-based approaches to development problems since 2010. Working with organisations like UNDP, GirlEffect (previously GirlHub), BRAC and IRC as well as commercial organisations and national governments, he has applied these techniques to sustainable livelihoods, prejudice, WASH and gender issues.

As a past partner and associate to Cognitive Edge, he has developed, trained and delivered complexity classes across the globe.

For a teaser of his work, visit the UNDP Innovations Conversation video he gave in September 2017 [here](#).



Course timings

Building the bases

The course will begin with an intensive three-day workshop running from **Friday 7th September to Sunday 9th September**. These three days will introduce core concepts of complexity thinking, a range of ready-to-use exercises to support participants and will culminate with teams identifying real-world projects for collaborative work in the subsequent weeks.

This initial workshop will be held at Cranfield University.

In between

In between the initial workshop and the mid-point digging deeper day, there will be fortnightly short sessions in London. They will usually take place every other Wednesday between 8 and 10am. These will include updates and further work on projects, deeper exploration of a core topic.

These days will also - uniquely on this course - give participants one-to-one clinic sessions with either Marcus or Tony. These can be used to address issues around current work issues or the coursework projects.

Digging deeper

On **Wednesday 17th October**, we will reconvene for a day-long workshop, probably in London. This will include a guest speaker on the practicalities and need for complexity approaches; concluding current coursework projects; and identifying new projects for the second phase.

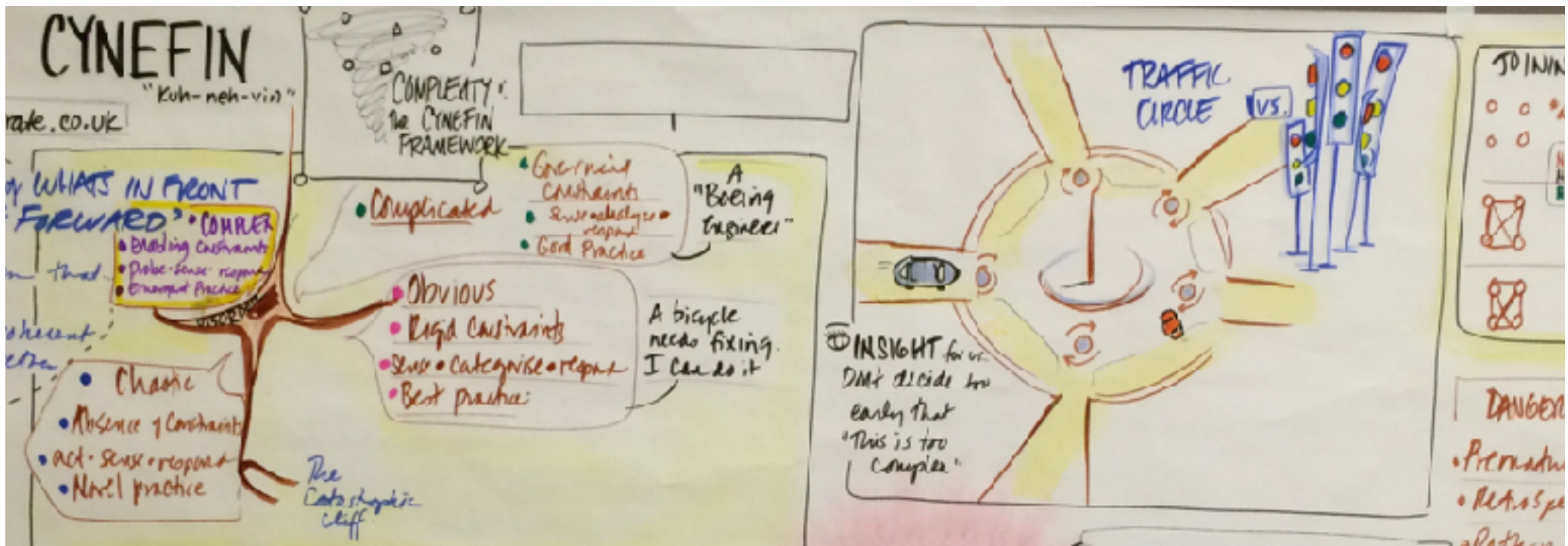
Skype sessions with Tony and Marcus can be arranged anytime during the course period.

Wrapping up

The course will conclude with a two-day workshop on **30th November - 1st December**. This will be a participant-led workshop to re-cover requested topics, gather feedback and reflections on projects and celebrate the experience.

The venue for this will be decided in conversation with participants.

| September | October | November |
|---|--|---|
| 7-9 Building the bases - 3-day event | 3 Drop-in session | 14 Final drop-in session |
| 19 First drop-in session | 17 Digging deeper - 1-day event | 30-1 Wrapping up - 2-day event |
| | 31 Drop-in session | |



Pricing

Full course cost after 30th June 2018: £3,475

Register before 30th June 2018 to save 20% or almost £600: £2,895

Group bookings of three or more people from the same organisation receive a further discount of 15%.

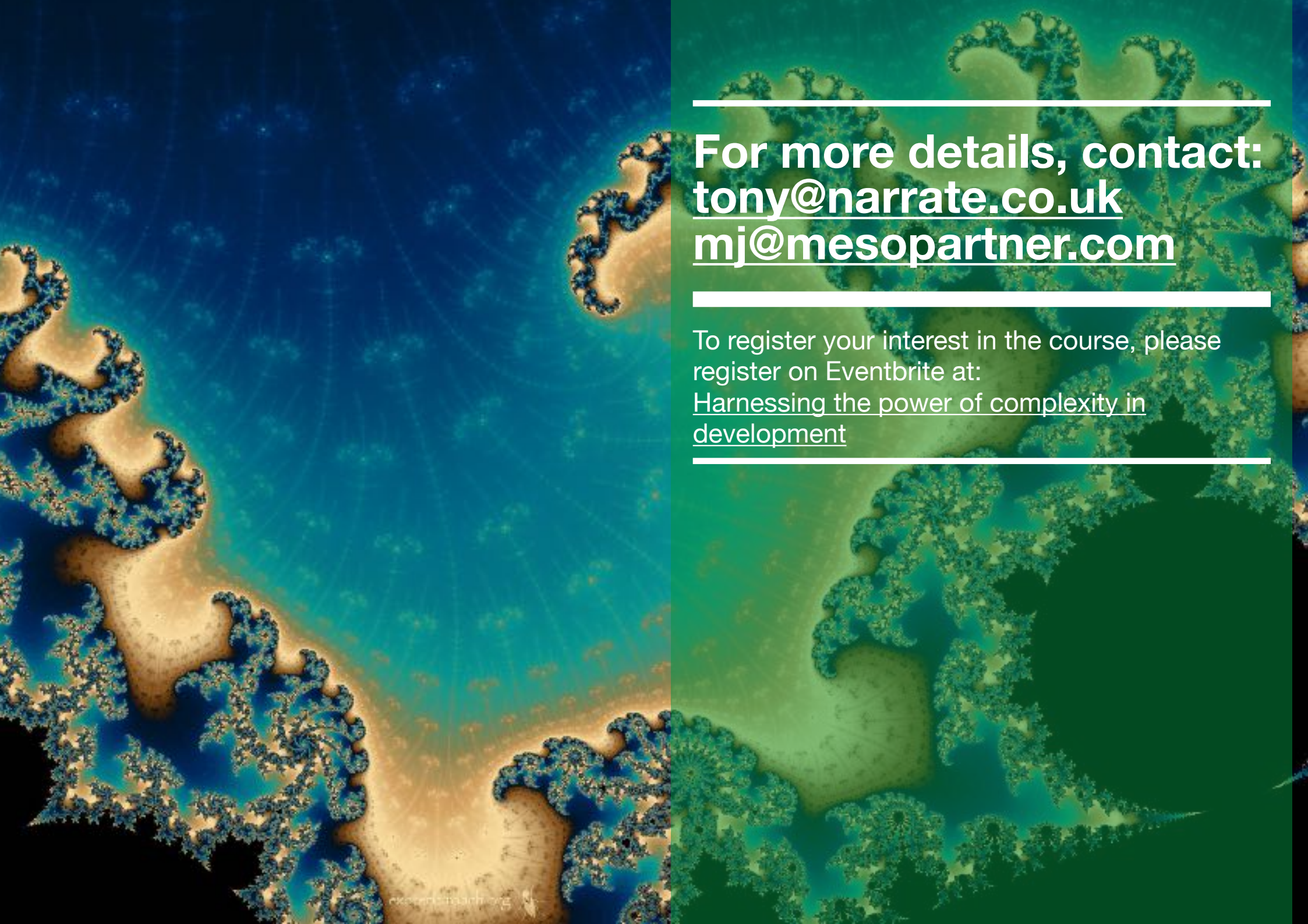
Cancellations of 1 month before the course start receive a full refund (less Eventbrite's admin fees), cancellations between 1 month and 2 weeks will receive a 50% refund (less Eventbrite's admin fees). Substitutions are permitted at any time.

Instalment plans are available - please email meg@narrate.co.uk

Course pricing covers all teaching sessions, four 2h drop-in-sessions including one-to-one clinics, and email and Skype support for the duration of the course. During full-day sessions, snacks, coffee/tea, and lunch is included.

It does not cover accommodation, travel costs or expenses for dinner during the 3-day and 2-day events. (We have access to discounted accommodation for the opening weekend at Cranfield University and are exploring options for discounted accommodation for the final weekend – please contact meg@narrate.co.uk if you would like details of these)

All prices are exclusive of VAT



For more details, contact:
tony@narrate.co.uk
mj@mesopartner.com

To register your interest in the course, please
register on Eventbrite at:
[Harnessing the power of complexity in
development](#)
