

CLEA Seminar x Imaginary Institute

The Atlas of Social Complexity: The Unfinished Space by Brian Castellani & Lasse Gerrits

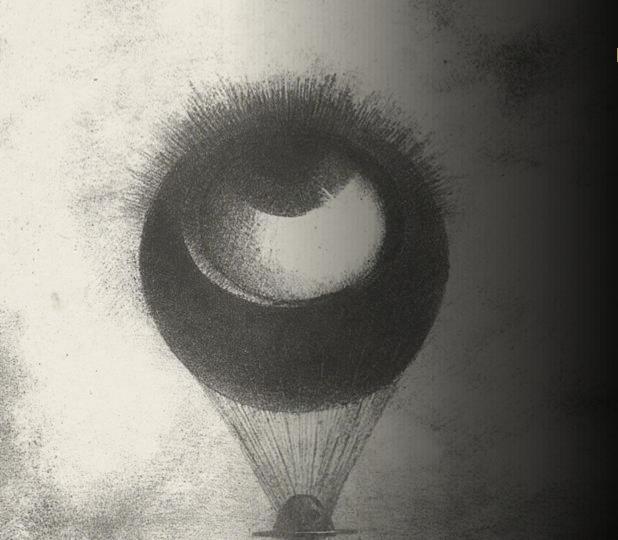
FRIDAY 21 MARCH 2025 16h - CLEA house Krijgskundestraat 33, 1160 Brussels + online

More info clea.research.vub.be



Imaginary Institute

clea.research.vub.be/ii



unfinished space

atlas of social complexity

Brian Castellani

&

Lasse Gerrits

social complexity, reimagined

• 1990s: complexity-turn

• mid-2000s: growth and stagnation

2025: social complexity imagination

how to rekindle imagination

BRIAN CASTELLANI LASSE GERRITS



THE ATLAS OF SOCIAL COMPLEXITY



Imaginary Institute x Atlas of Social Complexity

publications, arts, interviews...

- collective concern: how to get out of the stalemate
- this seminar: discussing the need and utility of unfinished spaces



unfinished spaces

 complexity sciences thrive in unfinished spaces, where the terrain of knowledge is always shifting, demanding curiosity rather than finality

 just as the world itself is never fully mapped, the study of social complexity must resist the impulse to settle into rigid conclusions



art of incompleteness

- theorizing complexity necessitates an acceptance of incompleteness, an understanding that knowledge is not an endpoint but an evolving dialogue
- like a rough sketch or an unfinished symphony, incompleteness is what gives science its vitality, allowing for reinterpretation, expansion
- incompleteness is not a flaw but a feature—it compels us to remain engaged, to constantly refine our questions, and to remain open to unexpected insights.

unease and discomfort

- meaningful engagement with complexity is to resist the comfort of closure, to sit with the unease of not having final answers
- scientific communities tend toward self-referential closure, yet it is precisely in resisting this impulse that true innovation emerges.
- discomfort is a generative force



rhizomes of knowledge

 the study of social complexity must move away from hierarchical knowledge systems and instead foster an ecology of thought where disciplines intermingle freely.

 in a rhizomatic approach, the map is never final, the path is never singular, and new connections emerge unpredictably, shifting the terrain of understanding.



permeability and pores

 intellectual progress is not about breaking down silos but about making them porous, ensuring that ideas flow freely between domains.

 academic disciplines must remain permeable to avoid stagnation and ensure cross-pollination of ideas.



cultivating collaboration

 just as self-organization underlies complex systems, intellectual communities must foster environments where emergence can occur through collaboration.

 creativity does not arise in isolation but in spaces where diverse perspectives intersect

 the challenge is to design conditions where novelty can emer unpredictably, disrupting conventional wisdom.

becoming transdisciplinary

 transdisciplinary work is not borrowing from different fields but cultivating new modes of thinking that transcends disciplinary constraints.

• it requires an active engagement with the world, an ability to navigate between theory and practice, and a willingness to let go of familiar intellectual anchors.

transform and reimagine

- no matter how good your work is, you will have to change
 - micro patterns
 - macro outcomes

you will have to inspire others to change

