



## Rethink fragility

podcast concept

The objective is pretty simple: To help people work smarter in fragile states. We do this by bringing together good thinking from different disciplinary perspectives, and providing a little bit of practical inspiration.

Each podcast takes about an hour to record, and is edited down to one or two fifteen minute segments. They're hosted on Youtube, iTunes, and [rethinkfragility.com](http://rethinkfragility.com).

### Who's the audience?

Our target market and our target guests are the same: **restless practitioners**. We don't believe that positive change happens top-down, the product of visionary leaders. It rather happens through people taking individual responsibility and pushing the agenda when they can, and where they can.

We want to engage with these people, who are dissatisfied with the status quo and trying to improve it. They may be actively experimenting with new ways of doing things, and running up against obstacles. They've felt the uncertainty and risks of sticking their neck out, and of working in areas that are well outside their comfort zone.

We think the best help that we can give each other, being spread around the globe and in our different organisational bunkers, is to share fresh ideas and the hard-earned lessons of hindsight.

### What are the interviews about?

The main thing is the tone. We're aiming for an open, honest conversation, and that means we definitely don't want a rapid-fire series of fixed interview questions. But that doesn't mean there isn't a plan. Our two main areas of interest are the following:

**The view from ground level.** How do things look from the inside, as a humanitarian or a military observer, an ethnographer, or whatever? How did you get started, and why do you stick with it? How has your thinking changed as you've gotten older, and made mistakes?

**Highs and lows.** Where have you seen things work really well? In that case, how did you deal with all the distractions to keep moving forward? Conversely, what have been the darkest moments? What did you take away from the really bad screw-ups?

## What preparation is needed?

Not much, hopefully! The main feedback we've gotten from past guests is to think in terms of **stories**. What have been the 'a-ha' or 'oh shit' moments in your career? What were the turning points early on? What was the best advice you ever received, or the worst, and who gave it to you?

For sample content that will give you a sense of the "look and feel", please take a look at:

- The Youtube series, 'How stabilisation failed in the Congo'.
- The WPR article, 'Redefining success: New approaches to engaging with fragile states'.

## The practicalities

Where possible it's best to do the interview in person, with a microphone and a laptop. This is unobtrusive equipment, and it's easy to get used to with a warm-up exercise or two. Afterwards I'll edit the raw file down to a manageable length, and pass the final version by you before publishing.

Where in-person isn't feasible, we can also record via telephone. The challenge here is the sound quality, so there are a few steps to get this working well. If you have a Skype account and a pair of headphones, you're good to go.

## A leadership fable

Here's another way of explaining, lifted from the leadership theorist Brian Arthur. Let's say that you enter a large casino, with executives, warlords, and politicians all milling about. You sit down at the table marked "stabilisation", or "humanitarian aid", and talk to the croupier.

'How much to play?'

'A few million and up, plus a lot of lives in the balance', they reply.

'Who'll be playing?'

'We don't know until they show up.'

'What are the rules?'

'Those will emerge as the game unfolds.'

'What are my odds of winning?'

'We can't say. Do you still want to play?'

How would you tell the story of that game, as it happened? How did you work out the rules, and how you wanted to play, with all the casino's noise and spectacle happening in the background? What's your advice for someone sitting down at the table, with all the benefit of hindsight?