



Research Committee 51  
on Sociocybernetics  
ISA International Sociological Association

# RC51 *Newsletter*

ISSUE NO.39 JUNE 2020

EDITORS: Toru Takahashi, Andrew Mitchell  
[rc51newsletter@sociocybernetics.org](mailto:rc51newsletter@sociocybernetics.org)

## CONTENTS:

|  |  |           |
|--|--|-----------|
| <b>Editors' Introduction</b>   | <b><i>Toru Takahashi and Andrew Mitchell</i></b> | <b>2</b>  |
| <b>RC51 letter from the President</b>  | <b><i>Patricia Almaguer-Kalixto</i></b>          | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>16<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Sociocybernetics</b><br><i>The Pandemic Era: Observations and Reflections from a Sociocybernetics Perspective</i>             | <b><i>RC51 Board</i></b>                         | <b>6</b>  |
| <b><i>Conferences in times of Corona</i></b><br><br><i>and</i><br><b><i>The 8th International Conference on Degrowth for Ecological Sustainability and Social Equity</i></b> | <b><i>Bernd R. Hornung</i></b>                   | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>Seminar: Sociocybernetics applied to North America Studies. (UNAM-CISAN)</b>  | <b><i>Juancho Barrón and Jorge Cardiel</i></b>   | <b>11</b> |
| <b>Degrowth: A Book Review from Bernd R. Hornung</b>   | <b><i>Bernd R. Hornung</i></b>                   | <b>13</b> |

# Editors' Introduction

Dear RC51 members:

This special issue of the newsletter is being published in perhaps the most turbulent times in a generation. With the emergence of COVID-19 late last year in China, its subsequent spread across the world, and the global health emergency that has emerged as a result, we are seeing repercussions across every aspect of world society.

Even in Japan, a country that has so far managed to avoid the worst of the pandemic, various social cleavages have become prominent. For example, some members of the foreign community here have faced their own unique challenges. Technical interns, working factory or agricultural jobs for the most part, are stranded: unable to return home, unable to work, unable to make remittances to their home countries that their families rely on. Xenophobia has also reared its head once more: some Japanese politicians openly questioned whether foreign residents deserve the same financial support that Japanese residents receive.

Such scenes are being played out around the world, though with different actors and often to a different tune – whether it be with immigrants or the working class, essential workers or those laid off. And this is to say little of the more mundane but nevertheless very real stresses that those confined to their homes by their hundreds of millions have faced for months. Outside of times of war, it is difficult to think of a situation which impacts so many across the socioeconomic spectrum and across the globe at the same time.

Such world-changing events demand a sociocybernetic response. With no chance for the members of RC51 to meet in person this year with the postponement of the Porto Alegre conference, we feel that it would be fitting for us to take advantage of the emerging trends in video communication to hold our own virtual conference in June 2020. With COVID-19 as the backdrop, we believe this would be the perfect chance for the sociocybernetics community to come together and discuss the core concepts of the discipline, as well as reflect on the pandemic through a sociocybernetic lens.

We invite all interested people, whether members or not, to take part in this first for RC51. The conference is free so we hope you and your colleagues can all attend.

We hope you all remain safe during these troubling times and look forward to seeing you at the conference.

***Toru Takahashi and Andrew Mitchell***

*RC51 Newsletter Editor*

[isa.rc51.newsletter@gmail.com](mailto:isa.rc51.newsletter@gmail.com)

# Letter from the President

*ISA RC51. Quo vadis? Our latest and future activities*

**Dear RC51 Members,**

I hope that you are doing well. I hope that you, along with your families, neighbors and communities, are coping in the best way possible given that COVID19 has assaulted all geographic areas of the world. This is indeed a global complex challenge and I consider that the reflective and systemic approach of sociocybernetics proves to be necessary to rethink our alternative scenarios and anticipate those that are to come.

I am very happy to present the current activities of RC51. I want to dedicate these lines to reflect on two things, first, the activities that we are developing in RC51 in the context of lockdown. Second, the challenge to maintain efficient and operational communication between our members.

In 2019 we had a year with important achievements that made the strength of RC51 visible: [the 15th International Conference of Sociocybernetics “Dark Ages 2.0, Social Media and Their Impact”](#) coordinated by Fabio GIGLIETTO, Laura GEMINI and Giovanni BOCCIA (University of Urbino “Carlo Bo”) with a good number of newcomers from internet studies community. Also, an important milestone was the [Monograph in Current Sociology \(Volume 67 Issue 4, July 2019\)](#) dedicated to SOCIOCYBERNETICS with 10 articles of our members. Due to the number of downloads of his article **Toru TAKAHASHI was declared the sociologist of the month by Current Sociology** in December 2019. [Sociologist of the month campaigns](#) are monthly campaigns on social media to highlight the work of sociologists from around the world, who have published with Current Sociology. During the period of their feature, their article is available as free access. This is one way among others to draw attention to the work of diverse sociologists and promote sociology more generally. So, we were very happy to have this distinction received by a very active RC51 member!

During 2020 we have been devoted to coordinating **RC51 participation in the ISA FORUM**. Raija KOSKILNEN and Martina RAPPONI have been crucial to put together 15 different sessions along with a pre-conference workshop. But as in the whole world, 2020 has been turbulent and has forced us to adapt agendas, thus we supported the decision to postpone the ISA FORUM for 2021.

The reality of the pandemic has forced us to think on alternative spaces to meet despite the lockdown and travel restrictions. We consider it is crucial to discuss COVID19 effects collectively from a sociocybernetics perspective. For this reason, during the lockdown period, the board has continued with its regular meetings, and we bring you a series of activities that, although they are disruptive, hope to contribute to facilitate the dialogue among sociocyberneticians in these conditions.

First, you will find in the newsletter details of our annual conference **16th International Conference of Sociocybernetics**, this time –and for the first time- in virtual mode. The Board have proposed a compact and hybrid format with synchronous and asynchronous spaces. Synchronous because we will have 3 days of online conference but only in a time slot (12.00 p.m. to 2.30 p.m. UTC) feasible for the geographical areas where most of our members are located (i.e. 7 am for Mexico City /14 pm Spain / Italy / Germany / 3 pm Helsinki/ 9 pm Japan).

In those two and a half hours we will have to debate and discuss second order observation on COVID19, and core concepts on sociocybernetics. Previous to the sessions, in addition to an abstract, we will send a video in order to see and hear each presentation previously (5 minutes) and come to our meeting for a second-order debate. These materials will be an important audiovisual document to be able to disseminate among our members after the congress, and also a testimony of our reflections during this outstanding times. *Due the extraordinary conditions*, the conference is free of charge. So we look forward very much to receiving your contributions.

There is no much time left until the conference (14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of JULY 2020), so you just need to decide to participate, elaborate your proposal and contact us. If you feel that making the video could be a challenge, feel free to ask for our help and Manuel, Martina or myself can help you with the technical aspects. Please contact Manuel MESA at [rc51secretary@sociocybernetics.org](mailto:rc51secretary@sociocybernetics.org). Remember this is not a substitution of the ISA FORUM, as its session structure, abstracts accepted and logistics have just been postponed until February 2021.

Our Conference is mainly about sharing our theoretical reflections on the concepts of second-order cybernetics that are relevant to these moments of high social turbulence, and the empirical observations we are making in light of them: terms such as adaptation, instability, resilience, disruptive innovation, systemic emergency, and anticipation, are beginning to be used more frequently to describe the events triggered by COVID19. Can we learn from the processes we are experiencing? Can we reflectively modify the course of our social systems and subsystems? Schools, universities, jobs, industry of all kinds, obviously health, economic, financial systems as well as the psychic and socio-emotional ones have been affected by the pandemic that has complex impacts at different scales. It becomes evident that these effects are generalized, but those who are already exposed to greater social risk suffer greater vulnerability and it is there where we have to strengthen our sociocybernetic analysis to contribute from our theoretical-practical trench to an interdisciplinary dialogue.

In addition to this activity, which is a collective proposal of the board, other activities carried out by RC51 have been prepared: Chaime MARCUELLO, in collaboration with a recent RC51 member Joaquin CASTILLO DE MESA, have organized 3 online seminars during April and May **“Anticipating scenarios and responses to the Post-COVID19: diagnoses, challenges and initiatives for social work”** with great demand and which has given rise to **the 1<sup>ST</sup> International Congress Of Digital Social Work**, organized with support of the RC51, to be held online in September. On the other hand, Juancho BARRÓN and Jorge CARDIEL organize a new edition of the **Sociocybernetics Seminar Applied to North America**, with a session titled **New Normality? Notes from the socio-cybernetics in few days**, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of JUNE. Finally, Bernd HORNUNG together with John RAVEN have proposed a session of the RC51 titled **Systemic Concepts for Change in Times of Climate and Health Crisis** in the context of the **8th International Conference on Degrowth for Ecological Sustainability and Social Equity** on August 24th-28th, 2021 (see announcement in the newsletter).

These activities are just a sample of what RC51 members are doing to contribute to the challenges posed by the pandemic, but surely there is more. To paraphrase Von Foerster here “we don't know what we don't know”, we can only be aware that we ignore what many other members are up to and there, we need your feedback to share the activities you are doing.

We get in our last topic but also the most important one: Our RC51 communication challenges. During 2019 we finally switched to our own website [www.sociocybernetics.org](http://www.sociocybernetics.org). Manuel MESA, has worked on the transfer and protection of the previous content, which is protected by both the board and the server of the University of Zaragoza. Martina RAPPONI and Luciano GALLÓN continue to transmit the main news on our social networks (Twitter [twitter.com/RC51sociocyber1](https://twitter.com/RC51sociocyber1) and Facebook [facebook.com/groups/ISARC51Sociocybernetics/](https://facebook.com/groups/ISARC51Sociocybernetics/)). We have generated "official" email accounts to transfer to the next presidents and secretaries, once our period is finished, avoiding using personal emails and keeping the record of the contact.

However, it seems we have lost contact with some of you for two reasons: the "traditional" distribution list managed from UNIZAR, required a confirmation to accept the data protection regulation and only 40 % of subscribers did. Those who didn't do this were automatically excluded from the system. Also, some of our emails from our new address ([rc51secretary@sociocybernetics.org](mailto:rc51secretary@sociocybernetics.org) and [rc51president@sociocybernetics.org](mailto:rc51president@sociocybernetics.org), [rc51newsletter@sociocybernetics.org](mailto:rc51newsletter@sociocybernetics.org) ) may have be sent to your spam. So please check in the following days as we will be trying to get in touch with you.

RC51 is active and productive because its members do not stop. However, we have to pause to ensure that we are all in the conversation. Unfortunately, other aspects also interfere, especially now that the pandemic has forced us to adapt our work, family and social dynamics. If we have lost track of any email from you, we apologize as it has been unintended. I appreciate the volunteer work of Bernd HORNUNG, who is working to follow up on RC51 members both current and former. We will get in touch via email to enquire whether you all have our updated contact details and we will take the opportunity to verify yours. We will also take the opportunity to find out what are your latest systemic works (check SPAM just in case !!).

I insist again that today more than ever socio-cybernetics and its key concepts are necessary. So please engage in any of the activities proposed by our RC51 members. It is crucial to expanding the dialogue with other perspectives and forums, each of us sharing the strengths of our analytical tools and showing their possible practical applications.

Finally, I want to give a special thanks to Toru TAKAHASHI and Andrew MITCHELL as newsletter editors and all the board for the hard work done so far.

Best regards

Patricia E. Almaguer-Kalixto

RC51 President

[rc51president@sociocybernetics.org](mailto:rc51president@sociocybernetics.org)



## Presentation

Traditionally, the RC51 community in sociocybernetics, part of the International Association of Sociology (ISA), meets yearly in a special place somewhere on the globe. In these meetings we have interesting discussions about the theory, practice, and application of sociocybernetics and its ability to observe, understand and try to overcome the pressing needs of society.

With the postponement of our ISA 2020 FORUM participation due to COVID19, the RC51 Board proposes to maintain our annual conference in a new, creative and practical way; one in which participants can maintain dialogues and help each other understand the pandemic and its possible future implications.

As such the RC51 Board present here a proposal for a virtual conference, one that is simple but charged with energy and in which the active participation of all members and people who wish to learn about sociocybernetics can be expected.

## Programme

### **Day 1 - Introducing sociocybernetics: widening systemic perspectives.**

**Tuesday, July 14 - 12:00 - 14:30 UTC Chair of session: Raija Kolskinen**

In this first online session, the RC51 Members will introduce basic sociocybernetics ideas, concepts, authors, and tools to a wider audience. The goal is for participants to engage with sociocybernetics in a friendly way to discuss: a) what is sociocybernetics and b) how is it useful for analytical purposes. Online materials (video & readings) will be recommended to watch beforehand. Selected members of RC51 will create ad hoc video clips to support this introductory session. The online session will be directed to discuss such materials and the participants' perspectives on the relevance of sociocybernetics for today societal challenges. This session will be oriented particularly towards young sociologists and researchers who want to know more about sociocybernetics.

### **Day 2 - COVID-19: A Second order observation**

**Wednesday, July 15, 12:00 - 14:30 UTC Chair of the session: Chaime Marcuello**

This session focuses on systemic analysis and/or sociocybernetics observations and reflections of COVID-19 around the world. Through short contributions previously submitted and selected, participants will be able to compare and contrast different perspectives on the pandemic. The goal is to share observational and analytical experiences using sociocybernetics and system thinking as a framework. You can participate by sending an abstract or as part of the audience.

**Day 3 – A manifesto for Sociocybernetics**  
**Wednesday, July 16 - 12:00 - 14:30 UTC. Chair of the session: Luciano Gallón**

This is a participatory session, open to all, to discuss the core concepts and methodologies of sociocybernetics. Through an online collaborative writing process, the goal is to produce a short reference document about “core” sociocybernetics principals, relevant for the analysis of sociological and interdisciplinary work in contemporary times. By signing up to this session you will be able to be part and/or witness this collaborative definition.

**Important dates**

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| June 15th, 2020  | Registration opens for general audience.                          |
| June 27th, 2020  | Deadline for abstract submission for authors proposals            |
| July 1st, 2020   | Acceptance communication  |
| July 7th         | Deadline for author’s video                                       |
| July 12th        | Registration closes   |
| July 14-16: 2020 | <i>16th International Conference of Sociocybernetics (online)</i> |

**Registration**

Conference registration: <https://forms.gle/dVppYe4VAe6CeG3ZA>  
Abstract submission in the following link <https://forms.gle/uQsHYerGU5zyYTXo7>

**Conference fee**

No fee.

**How can I participate in the conference?**

You can participate presenting a paper.

1. Sending your abstract to be reviewed by the scientific committee
2. Register for the conference
3. If accepted, create a video (5 minutes max) presenting your topic and proposal.
4. Participate in the sessions. The audience will have had access to your video beforehand, so in the sessions we all be able to give feedback and expanding the debate.

As active audience:

1. Register for the conference
2. Check out the author’s videos that will be accessible before the conference
3. Give feedback! Ask questions and post comments in the online session.
4. Participate in the follow-up of a specific topic with the author and in the collaborative work during the sessions.



**Notes:** Due to the format, we will only be able to accept up to a maximum of 30 videos to be selected and discussed during the conference. Selection will be made by the International Scientific Committee who will select upon: a) relevance to the conference scope, b) reference to systemic and/or sociocybernetic perspectives.

In order to have a representation of ISA's different languages we welcome abstracts and videos in Spanish, French and English. However, a literal translation into English has to be provided in order to facilitate attendee's language captions. The online sessions will be held in English.

### **Organizing Committee:**

Patricia E. ALMAGUER KALIXTO, Universidad de Zaragoza (Spain)  
Raija KOSKINEN, Häme University of Applied Sciences (Finland)  
Manuel MEZA CUERVO, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (México)  
Martina RAPONI, Noiserr (Netherlands)  
Luciano GALLÓN, Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana (Colombia).  
Chaime MARCUELLO, Universidad de Zaragoza (Spain)  
Andrew MITCHELL, Kumamoto University (Japan)

### **International Scientific Committee:**

Bernard SCOTT, (RC51-ISA Past President) (UK)  
Bernd HORNUNG, (RC51--ISA Past President) (Germany)  
Eva BUCHINGER, (AIT Austrian Institute of Technology) (Austria)  
Toru TAKAHASHI, Chuo University (Japan)  
Saburo AKAHORI, Tokyo Woman's Christian University (Japan)  
Fabio GIGLIETTO, University of Urbino "Carlo Bo" (Italy)  
Joaquin CASTILLO DE MESA (Universidad de Málaga)

### **Venue**

Online: Google Meet session. Link provided upon registration.

Further information: [www.sociocybernetics.org](http://www.sociocybernetics.org)

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ISARC51Sociocybernetics/>

twitter: @RC51sociocyber1



# Conferences in times of Corona

Two large international conferences in which members of ISA-RC51 intended to participate were postponed, like many other conferences.

The IV ISA Forum of Sociology, to be held this summer in Porto Alegre, was postponed until February 23-27, 2021.

The 7th International Degrowth and 16th ISEE Joint Conference to be held in Manchester, UK, in September 2020 was postponed until August 24<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> 2021, then to be held in The Hague in the Netherlands.

RC51 participation in the Degrowth conference was conceived as an alternative in Europe focussed on a more narrowly circumscribed topic, i.e. degrowth to achieve a sustainable and viable society in the age of climate change, ecological disaster, and post-Corona conditions.

The organizers of the Degrowth Conference have offered to maintain the original session proposals if so desired, although the new dates are still way ahead. Therefore, we as session organizers, extend this invitation to participate as a Call for Declaration of Interest.

---

## **The 8th International Conference on Degrowth for Ecological Sustainability and Social Equity**

International Institute of Social Studies (ISS), The Hague, The Netherlands

August 24th-28th, 2021

<https://www.degrowth.info/en/the-hague-2021/>

The conference will be academic and activist in nature and will encourage the participation of artists, practitioners and policymakers, taking place over five days at and around the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in The Hague, an institute that is part of Erasmus University Rotterdam, in partnership with WEGO Innovative Training Network (Well-being, Ecology, Gender and Community). The intention is to explore, develop and share information on how communities respond to economic and ecological changes and how they organize for well-being in efforts to move out of situations of inequality and exclusion.

---

### **Session on**

#### **SYSTEMIC Concepts for Change in Times of Climate and Health Crisis**

##### **a. Convenors:**

Bernd R. Hornung, Marburg University, Germany, (retired); John Raven, Edinburgh, UK

##### **b. Presenters/roundtable participants anticipated:**

This Call for Declaration of Interest is directed primarily to the members of ISA RC51 and is also communicated to the Viable Systems organization (SCIO – Systems and Complexity in Organizations) in the UK and Germany.

**c. Session abstract:**

To handle the climate change along with the challenges caused by new pandemics – if it still can be handled – requires radical changes, not just degrowth in the economy, but changes across all sectors of society, including social life, values, and culture, i.e. in the way of life. If such a change can be accomplished at all, it cannot be done by old and "proven" recipes and strategies. Also in this field radical innovation, experimentations, and innovative learning strategies, as part of a learning society, are required. To design, develop, and implement such strategies and social and economic change only cybernetics and systems science promise to provide adequate scientific tools, in particular in the form of sociocybernetics and viable systems science. The session proposed is intended to bring together such approaches and proposals for the design of steps towards a viable and sustainable degrowth economy and society adapted to the climate change and change in our biological-ecological living conditions. Points of intervention in the complex systemic feedback circles involved are to be identified.

**d. How does this session relate to the overall conference theme:**

Coping with the ecological and political crisis going along with climate change requires a degrowth society and drastic changes in the lifestyle and livelihood practised and aspired in contemporary societies along with a substantial reduction of social and economic inequality. The session will explore ways towards alternatives.

**e. Format:**

Paper presentations with a round-table of the paper presenters and a general debate at the closing session.

**f. Number of 1-2 hour sessions anticipated:**

Three, but the final number will depend on the response to the final Call for Papers, the number of accepted papers, and the time slots allocated by the conference organizers.

**g: Send your Declaration of Interest to:** <HornungRC51@AOL.com> with the title and a short paragraph on your potential presentation.

**h. About the Conference:** <https://www.degrowth.info/en/the-hague-2021/>

**Please respond before September 1ST!!!**

# Seminario de Sociocibernética Aplicada a América del Norte Seminar: Sociocybernetics applied to North America Studies. (UNAM-CISAN)

The purpose of this seminar is to bring together those interested in socio-cybernetics (or second-order cybernetics: Heinz von Foerster) to discuss some of the most representative texts of systems theory, complexity science, and constructivism at light of current socio-political phenomena, situations and events. Can we use the theoretical-methodological tools proposed in these readings today to observe the challenges and problems of the North American region? How can we use second-order cybernetics to enhance critical reflection on the mechanisms with which power operates and through which government is exercised? Starting from the definition of cybernetics as a science that studies control and communication (Norbert Wiener) in all kinds of possible machines (W. Ross Ashby), it emphasizes the need for interdiscipline and calls for proven people from all fields of the social Sciences.

.....

El propósito de este seminario es reunir a aquellos interesados en la sociocibernética (o cibernética de segundo orden: Heinz von Foerster) para discutir algunos de los textos más representativos de la teoría de sistemas, las ciencias de la complejidad y el constructivismo a la luz de los fenómenos, las situaciones y los acontecimientos sociopolíticos actuales. ¿De cuáles herramientas teórico-metodológicas propuestas en estas lecturas podemos servirnos hoy día para observar los retos y los problemas de la región de América del Norte? ¿Cómo podemos usar la cibernética de segundo orden para potenciar la reflexión crítica sobre los mecanismos con los que opera el poder y a través de los cuales se ejerce el gobierno? Partiendo de la definición de la cibernética como ciencia que estudia el control y la comunicación (Norbert Wiener) en todo tipo de máquinas posibles (W. Ross Ashby), acentuamos la necesidad de la interdisciplina y convocamos a personas provenientes de todos los campos de las ciencias sociales.

## **Coordinadores:**

Juan Carlos Barrón Pastor (CISAN) y Jorge Cardiel Herrera (FCPyS).

Debido a que el registro de la sesión alcanzó los 100 asistentes, se habilitará un espacio para transmisión vía YouTube live para que pueda visualizarse via streaming.

Due the session registration reaching 100 attendees, a space will be enabled for transmission via YouTube live so that it can be viewed via streaming

Más información pronto en: Soon Further information:

[www.sociocybernetics.org](http://www.sociocybernetics.org)

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ISARC51Sociocybernetics/>

twitter: @RC51sociocyber1

LA UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL AUTÓNOMA DE MÉXICO,  
EL CENTRO DE INVESTIGACIONES SOBRE AMÉRICA DEL NORTE  
Y EL COMITÉ DE INVESTIGACIÓN EN SOCIOCIBERNÉTICA DE LA  
ASOCIACIÓN INTERNACIONAL DE SOCIOLOGÍA (ISA-RC-51),  
A TRAVÉS DEL SEMINARIO PERMANENTE DE SOCIOCIBERNÉTICA  
CRÍTICA APLICADA AL ESTUDIO DE AMÉRICA DEL NORTE PRESENTAN EL PANEL:

# ¿Nueva normalidad? APUNTES DESDE LA SOCIOCIBERNÉTICA

Jueves 25 de junio, 10:00 h

PANELISTAS

**PATRICIA ALMAGUER** 🇨🇵 🇨🇪  
**JORGE CARDIEL** 🇨🇵 🇨🇪  
**LUCIANO GALLÓN** 🇨🇵 🇨🇪  
**CHAIME MARCUELLO** 🇨🇵 🇨🇪

COMENTARISTAS

**ANA DE LUCA**  
**HUGO RODAS**

COORDINADOR ACADÉMICO

**JUAN CARLOS BARRÓN PASTOR**, CISAN-UNAM

Informes: [jbarronp@unam.mx](mailto:jbarronp@unam.mx)

registro previo →



En respuesta a la Ley 1001 del  
40 CSN de su decisión



[unamcisan@facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com/unamcisan)

[@cisanunam](https://twitter.com/cisanunam)

[cisan\\_unam](https://www.instagram.com/cisan_unam)

[cisanunamweb](https://www.youtube.com/c/cisanunamweb)

[cisanunam.blogspot.mx/](https://www.blogspot.mx/cisanunam)

<http://ru.micisan.unam.mx/>

[www.cisan.unam.mx](http://www.cisan.unam.mx)

# Book Review from Bernd R. Hornung

**Giorgos Kallis:** Degrowth, 1st edition

Agenda Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne 2018

English, 218 pages, 17,82 Euro

ISBN-13: 978-1911116806

Giorgos Kallis is professor at the Institut de Ciència i Tecnologia Ambientals (ICTA), Autonomous University of Barcelona.

The book is extraordinarily well-written and enjoyable to read. It provides a comprehensive and coherent overview of the concept of Degrowth and its key ideas as they have been developed and promoted by the Degrowth Movement. Degrowth aims at proposing a possible solution to the problems of the ecological crisis and climate change. Research and the different social movements involved in Degrowth have not yet come up with a completed model or strategy for a new society. So what Kallis describes in his book is also a work in progress. Over the two hundred pages, which do not overload the reader, it is evidently impossible to cover exhaustingly all aspects of such an all-including topic.

The details presented are not new as such. The high value of this book lies in drawing a coherent and large picture along the main lines of the problem discussed. Kallis does not present an explicit system or sociocybernetic approach. However, systemic properties of the ground covered are easily to be identified. A kind of neo-marxist view limits somewhat the range of analysis and of the theoretical framework with its strong focus on capitalism.

Problem-analysis of the ecological and subsequent economic and social problems is limited to the necessary. In the first part the book concentrates on the concept of Degrowth and its implications as an alternative to endless economic growth. The latter is identified as the main engine driving the ecological destruction of life on the Earth, going along with a mistaken understanding of economy including the worship of GDP. From the perspective of Degrowth, GDP is a completely unsuitable measure of welfare and well-being. Describing in the second part Degrowth as a possible strategy and alternative to unlimited economic growth, the author does not restrict his look to the economic aspects. He puts Degrowth well into the wider context of social, political, and cultural domains, i.e he conceives it in a societal context. In the overall picture the social and the cultural, among others education, are under-valued, however. Also, the reader might wish a better elaboration of the relations between the agency of actors, which play an important role in the first part of the book, and the macro-evolutionary view expressed primarily in the second part. Some policy proposals are included, how to reorganize society to achieve economic stability and well-being without growth.

The book can be highly recommended, both for novices in this field as an easy and informative access to the topic and for experts as an excellent summary of the state-of-the-art.

The **RC51 Newsletter** is open for permanent feedback to integrate new suggestions and ideas to achieve its goal: promote news among the ISA RC51 members and a broader scientific community interested in Sociocybernetics.

Please contact the Newsletter editor for any information you would like to include or any further suggestion.

*Toru Takahashi, Andrew Mitchell*

[RC51newsletter@sociocybernetics.org](mailto:RC51newsletter@sociocybernetics.org)

RC51 website <http://www.unizar.es/sociocybernetics/>

ISA website <http://www.isa-sociology.org>



*End of the RC51 newsletter Issue 37*