

RC51 *Newsletter*

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Editors' Introduction

Dear RC51 members,

This May we received sad news that Humberto Maturana, a great thinker and scientist, has passed away. His work has been and will be an inspiring spring that never runs dry for sociocyberneticians. Bernard Scott's text, which was written on behalf of the RC51 board, presents Maturana's scientific insight on what life is. Bernard also depicts the importance of Maturana's work for the theoretical development of second-order cybernetics. A contribution by Ksenia Sidorova, Francia Peniche Pavía and Astrid Karina Rivero Pérez, who are The Walter Buckley Memorial Award 2018 winners, shows us that Maturana's legacy lives on in their field research in Yucatán.

The Covid-19 pandemic is still haunting us and casting a shadow on our lives and research activities. However, in February 2021, the ISA held its first international online forum after the postponement from July 2020. This issue includes two contributions on the forum from the organisers and a participant's perspectives. The program coordinators for RC51 Research committee for Sociocybernetics, Martina Raponi, Patricia E. Almaguer-Kalixto and Raija Koskinen, made great efforts to deal with many and unprecedented issues to coordinate the RC51 sessions. Their report tells us that it is an encouraging achievement to have held such a huge worldwide conference in this difficult time. Looking back on his past participation in the RC51 session and research history, Satoshi Iguchi talks about his experience of the online forum and, on the other hand, how he is looking forward to meeting everybody face-to-face and having lively discussions soon.

We also have a conference report by Bernd Hornung. In The 7th International Degrowth and ISEE-ESEE International Online Joint Conference, the RC51 members held two sociocybernetic sessions. Bernd's contribution offers us a vivid report of sociocybernetic efforts that tackle contemporary challenges in our societies.

We appreciate all contributions!

Toru Takahashi and Andrew Mitchell

RC51 Newsletter Editors

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Letter from the President

Dear friends and members of RC51,

Greetings from Mexico.

We have been in the pandemic now for more than a year and a half with different effects all over the world, from public to private life. We have reacted by adapting ourselves to the new contextual conditions, but we still have a long way to go to respond with systemic strategies to halt the social and individual deterioration resulting from this health and social crisis.

We are experiencing the immediate consequences, but we are entering into those of medium and long duration in economic, productive, and educational dynamics to mention a few. We require more strategies and proposals from a second-order, socio-cybernetic vision that are both reflective and operative to foreseen alternative scenarios.

We know that all the socio-cyberneticians of RC51 are, in each of their geographical locations, contributing with projects and analyses to think in a different way, with community and social responses to the crisis. In order to know the resources we are generating locally and regionally, we want to map the projects we are contributing to, and the specific ways in which we are linking socio-cybernetics and systems thinking to those social challenges. During next autumn, we will be launching a survey in which you can participate to share your scientific output and the projects that are making a difference locally and globally. We want to put into perspective the added value of the systems view that we are using not only in theory but also in practice.

In doing so, we want to strengthen the RC51 networks within and outside our own “system”. Within, because of the impossibility of meeting in person, we want to strengthen the synergy of topics, debates, and even potential projects inside our academic community. Outside, because we want to include new perspectives from young researchers and from established academics and professionals from different parts of the world who want to contribute to the interdisciplinary analysis of complex problems. We have a particular commitment to connect with academics from emerging countries in order to strengthen our diagnoses with their perspective, and vice versa. Therefore, we are establishing contact with associations and academics linked to sociological analysis from a systemic perspective in these territories.

The reality is that the pandemic is changing the structures and priorities of all organizations. As we all know, ISA President Sari Hanafi and his team have been working to reframe the 20th ISA World Congress of Sociology "Resurgent Authoritarianism: Sociology of the New Entanglements of Religions, Politics and Economies." Initially scheduled for July 2022, after a global survey and long debate presented at the specific issues we are working on, the ISA Assembly of Councils on May 1st rescheduled it for 2023, hoping that the conditions of travel, vaccination and economic resources of the majority will make this reunion possible.

In the meantime, we will continue to strengthen our ties and we have been working towards that end. We are already making progress on prototype videos that will promote the key concepts of systems thinking and the sociocybernetics approach and we will soon announce the date to present Bernard SCOTT's latest book to our academic community entitled "Sociocybernetics and Complexity", published by Brill (<https://brill.com/view/title/60011?language=en>). We highly recommend it!!! This is the second book of the collection that we are dedicating to provide an outlet for scientific production, coordinated by Chaime MARCUELLO.

I can only thank the teamwork that is being done on the board: Raija KOSKINEN who together with Martina RAPONI did an excellent job as program coordinators at the ISA Forum in February, this year. To Toru TAKAHASHI and Andrew MITCHELL for offering us a new issue of the newsletter and to Andrew also for joining the JoS editorial team together with Fabio GIGLIETTO. To Luciano GALLON for keeping the social networks active and to Saburo AKAHORI and Manuel MEZA as treasurer and secretary respectively.

Above all, we would like to thank all the members who have proposed activities to keep the network active: Bernd HORNUNG and John RAVEN who coordinated the special session on "Systemic concepts for change in the times of climate and health crisis" in the framework of the ISEE-ESEE-DEGROWTH 2021 Online Conference (July 2021). We also organized the special session "Socio-cybernetics and big data in social policy debates" in the context of the V International Conference on Sociology of Public and Social Policies Artificial Intelligence, Economics, Democracy and Law: an unavoidable convergence (May 2021, Zaragoza) and Cor VAN DIJKUM and Bernd HORNUNG are currently coordinating a seminar on the work of Fritjof CAPRA and Pier Luigi LUISI "The systems view of life" an unifying vision that has led to interesting conceptual debates.

In this period of individual fatigue and burnout, only collaborative work will make the effort to stay connected more meaningful and rewarding. The world requires more systemic analysis as we do in our projects: it is time to share it to strengthen sustainability strategies at local and global level. In the meantime, we send you our warmest greetings, in the hope that your families and communities are well.

On behalf of the RC51 Board
Patricia E. Almaguer Kalixto
RC51 president.

Humberto Maturana (September 14, 1928 – May 6, 2021): some recollections and reflections¹

By Bernard Scott on behalf of the RC51 Board

I encountered Humberto Maturana three times but never had the pleasure of engaging him in conversation. In 1972, I was present at a lecture he gave at Brunel University, UK. He was there at the invitation of Gordon Pask, who was a professor in the department of Cybernetics. Sadly, the department no longer exists. In due course, it was absorbed into the department of Computer Science.

In his lecture, Maturana set out his thesis that the key aspect of living systems is that, in the ongoing process of being alive, the organisation of the system, whatever else it does, must reproduce itself. This was before he coined the term 'autopoiesis'. He presented his ideas very clearly and, as I listened, I thought what he was saying was common sense. Someone in the audience asked him if he was a Marxist. It was only later, after much reflection, that I realised how profound his ideas were. A day or so later, we met in London at the First International Conference on Self-referential Systems, convened by Oliver Wells. I remember an animated conversation between Gothard Guenther and Dionysius Kallikourdis about circularity in conceptual systems but little else. (For an account of this event, see Scott, 2004).

In 2000, I was at an American Society for Cybernetics meeting, in which the neurophysiologist, Candace Pert was presented with the society's Wiener gold-medal by Stafford Beer. She said that it was only after Stafford pointed it out did she realise she had been doing cybernetics...She gave a talk on 'molecules of motion' based on her book of that title (Pert, 1999). She explained how, at the molecular level, there is no distinction between the nervous system, the immune system and the endocrine system. A particular large molecule, travelling through the bloodstream, might affect any of the systems, depending on where it arrived. She referred to these molecules as information carriers', Maturana took part in the discussion, in which he, Peter Corning and I tried to explain that her usage of the term information in this context was conceptually confused. Essentially, the point we were making was that 'information' cannot be separated from its utilisation within a particular cybernetic circuit.

I have mainly learned about Maturana's life and work from his books, papers and the commentaries of others. I first came across his name as a co-author of the now classic paper, "What the frog's eye tells the frog's brain" (Lettvin, Maturana et al., 1966)², which demonstrates the frog's visual experience is a function of basic feature detectors that help the frog avoid predators and to capture moving flies. The paper is evidence for von Uexküll's proposal, first made in 1934, that every organism

¹ For a detailed account of Maturana's life, see <https://biologyofcognition.wordpress.com/about/> (accessed 02/07/2021).

² Available at https://hearingbrain.org/docs/letvin_ieee_1959.pdf (accessed 02/07/2021).

inhabits its own 'umwelt' (lifeworld). See von Uexküll (2010). The next landmark for me was reading Maturana's (1970) paper, "Neurophysiology of cognition", in which he sets out the thesis that the nervous system is 'operationally closed'. This means that, as far as the brain is concerned, the firing of a nerve cell (neuron) is always followed by the firing of another nerve cell. Motor actions lead to changes in the sensory system which lead to further actions. That these actions and sensations arise in the context of an external environment (the organism's world) is something that is computed by the nervous system. That is the reality that the organism experiences is constructed. This is a powerful argument for a 'constructivist' rather than a 'representationalist' account of cognition, cognate with proposals made by Jean Piaget, Heinz von Foerster, and others. However, what makes Maturana's paper truly original and revolutionary is that he considers what this means for a human being (an observer). The observer must also acknowledge that the reality he is experiencing in his 'phenomenal domain' (Maturana's term) is a construction (computation) made by his nervous system. Reading this paper had a marked influence on my understanding of what it is to be a living system who wishes to understand what it is to be a living system.

The next landmark was reading Maturana's paper, "The biology of cognition", in which he describes the process by which living systems reproduce themselves from moment to moment. In 1972, in a paper co-authored with Francisco Varela, he coined the term 'autopoiesis' for this process. Both papers appear in the book, *Autopoiesis and Cognition* (Maturana and Varela, 1980).³ Others have applied the term autopoiesis to refer to the self-organisation of other categories of systems, such as psychological systems, business organisations, and social systems in general. In his later writings, to make clear he is basing his ideas on the process of being alive, Maturana refers to 'autopoiesis at the molecular level'.

In later years, Maturana, using the concept of autopoiesis as a starting point, developed original ideas about the biology of language, the biology of self-consciousness, the experience of time, and the biology of love. Rather than attempt to summarise these ideas here, I provide suggestions for further reading. Maturana has a very logical, precise way of explaining his ideas. He can make his reader or listener aware that she, too, is a living system, alive in the moment. Here is an example: "The observer is not a condition of being, it is not a transcendental entity that exists by itself, it is not a material entity, it is our experience of being aware of ourselves doing what we do as we human beings operating as observers observing. And what do we do as human beings operating as observers in observing? We make distinctions. We make distinctions of objects, of notions, of ideas, of concepts, ..., of entities that we bring forth with our operations of distinction together with the domains of existence in which they arise. In the patriarchal/matristic culture that we presently live, we live the entities and their circumstances that we bring forth in our distinctions as if their existence were independent from what we did as we distinguished them, and as if they existed prior to our distinguishing them. We human beings, we observers are not different in this from other entities, we do not pre-exist to our distinction of ourselves, and we arise as selves, as we distinguish ourselves as

³ Francisco Varela (1979) proposed 'organisationally closed' as a general term for the autopoiesis of systems other than the biological.

human beings observing. We arise as human beings in the experience of observing ourselves observing” (Maturana, 2005, p.58).

Maturana was a long-time friend of Heinz von Foerster and Gordon Pask. Alongside Gregory Bateson and Gotthard Guenther, I see these three as establishing what is now generally labelled as ‘second order cybernetics’, a term first used by von Foerster to refer to the cybernetics of observing systems, distinct, but complementary to, the (first order) cybernetics of observed systems. Other names used for these developments were ‘the new cybernetics’ and ‘neo-classical cybernetics’. A close reading of Maturana, von Foerster, and Pask shows they share many core concepts, albeit, with different labels.

Although he was often thought of as a philosopher, he always insisted he was a scientist, a biologist. In his paper, “Response to Jim Birch” (Maturana, 1991) he concludes by saying, “I consider that none of the criticisms that Birch makes of my work applies. Moreover, I consider that Birch makes a confusion of conceptual domains. He, in a philosophical mood, wants to save the notion of objectivity as an ontological notion, and, as he does so, he unavoidably distorts, abandons or neglects experience. I, in a scientific mood, want to explain the observer and observing as biological phenomena, and as I do so I find that I have to leave out or abandon reality as an ontological notion, and replace it by reality as an explanatory proposition. After recognizing that there is this fundamental difference between Birch and myself, it is obvious that nothing of what I say will satisfy him, and nothing of what he says will satisfy me.”

Bernard Scott (July, 2021)

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Recommended further reading

Maturana, H.R. (2002). "Autopoiesis, structural coupling and cognition: A history of these and other notions in the biology of cognition". *Cybernetics and Human Knowing*. 9, pp. 5–34. Available at <https://cepa.info/685> .

Many of Maturana's papers are to be found in the Constructivist E-Publication Archive, <https://cepa.info/?query=%22Maturana%20H.%22&in=authornames> (accessed, July 9th, 2021).

There is an archive covering the work of Maturana and Varela at <http://www.enolagaia.com/AT.html>, (accessed July 7th, 2021).

Humberto Maturana: humanistic guidelines to human action domains

Ksenia Sidorova, Francia Peniche Pavía, Astrid Karina Rivero Pérez

Humberto Maturana's thinking has transcended disciplinary frontiers. The explanations of human nature, human knowing, and human coexistence, comprised in Maturana's biology of knowledge and biology of love, are humanistic guidelines to any domain of human action, be it education, science, politics, or others.

According to Maturana (1989, 1990), being human is being in language, which is seen by the author as occurring in relational space; in conversations, through languaging and emotioning, we create our world with others. As Maturana & Nisís (2014) explain, it is in the "relational and interactional space" that "we turn human beings as living systems in structural coupling with an environment that we contribute to create with others as we create our dimension" (p. 49)⁴. The interactional space is, then, extremely important, since, determined by our biological structure (autopoiesis), we are structurally coupled with our environment: "we are what we are in congruence with our medium, and our medium is what it is in congruence with us, and when the congruence is lost, we don't exist" (Maturana, 1990, p. 69).

Still, Maturana has made his point clear: while multiple domains of reality –our action domains– are constructed in conversations, not all of them are social. The key to the social is in emotioning, referring to emotions as action domains, not as sentiments; our actions are driven by emotions, not reason (Maturana, 1990, p. 23). The social is based on the emotion called love, defined as "the action domain where our recurrent interactions with other make the other be a legitimate other in coexistence" (p. 23). It's through a history of conversations based on love that the social can emerge in any sphere of human activity. Aggression, in turn, is the negation of other; neither can we create the social based on indifference.

The mentioned above is important if we consider knowledge construction and science, a dominant institution in the Western world. Talking of human knowing, Maturana (1990) has argued that as observers –unable to distinguish between illusion and perception–, we explain our experience. That's why "*science –and the validity of scientific explanations– is not constituted or founded in reference to an independent reality that can be controlled*, but is founded rather on the construction of a world of actions commensurable with our living" (p. 61). When we recognize this, we take the path of "objectivity in parenthesis", accepting the existence of different explanatory domains. On the contrary, "objectivity without parenthesis" leads to negation of other observers' explanations pertaining to other explanatory domains, and thus to imposing of what one deems the truth.

⁴ All quotations in this text were translated by the authors from the original texts in Spanish.

Maturana's "explanatory path of objectivity in parenthesis" is "an *invitation* for the other to enter a certain domain of operational coherences" (1990, p. 64); the observers that take this path "know that there are other cognoscitive affirmations equally legitimate in other domains of reality that the other can prefer" (p. 64). We see it as an invitation to richer interdisciplinary conversations, where observers belonging to different disciplines esteem each other as legitimate others. It is also an invitation to intercultural conversations with other observers that construct their explanations within explanatory domains different from that of Western science. We regard it as a path that could lead to knowledge ecology or *ecología de saberes* (Santos, 2009), an essentially intercultural social domain.

Maturana's explanations of human nature, human knowing, and human coexistence have a transcendent ethical stance. As human beings we are fully responsible for creating and sustaining truly social domains, based on the recognition of others "as a legitimate other in coexistence with oneself under any circumstance" (Maturana & Nisis, 2014, p. 45). A path to improve our coexistence can occur through reflexions in the language, because "The reflection in the language brings us to see the world we inhabit and to accept it or reject it consciously" (Maturana, 2014, p. 32). Maturana talks about "ontological conspiracy" as a way to "construct a common world", based on mutual acceptance, respect, and sincerity (Maturana, 1990, p. 85). The author insists that coexistence –for example, democracy– is a desire, a willingness, not a rational obligation.

As we reflect on the importance of Maturana's legacy, we wish to acknowledge the impact of his ideas on our own work as social researchers. In our project with urban youth of Maya descent we have encouraged conversations, where reflexions in the language and emotioning based on the recognition of others as legitimate others occur. We deem these conversations as a path for cultural identities –minorized and negated in the urban context– to strengthen, and for all the participants in the conversations to open up to new realities and ways to explain them. In these conversations a history of "recurrent consensual coordinations of our actions" (Maturana & Nisis, 2014, pp. 46-47) is being constructed in an ontological conspiracy, as we are willing to create an intercultural social domain, "a common world based on the desire to coexist" (Maturana, 1990, p. 85).

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Many useful and inspiring lessons gained from the ISA FORUM 2021

Report from the Program coordinators for RC51

Due to COVID-19, the ISA FORUM was held online from 23rd - 28th February 2021 (<https://www.isa-sociology.org/en/conferences/forum/porto-alegre-2021>). This required adaptation of the original format and program to the realm of online conferences. Coordinating the RC51 conference program within the structures of the ISA in this historical era of pandemic has provided unique and multifaceted learning opportunities. We, as program coordinators for RC51, had the advantage over many other program coordinators of the ISA FORUM as we could utilize the feedback received from an earlier experiment, one which took place during similar type of occasion. As the original plan for the ISA FORUM in Porto Alegre was cancelled in spring 2020 due to pandemic, and further planning was postponed to the autumn, the RC51 board decided to organise its annual conference online, with it being held on the 14th - 16th July 2020. The positive experience of organizing this *16th International Conference of Sociocybernetics - The Pandemic Era: Observations and Reflections from a Sociocybernetics Perspective* (<https://sociocybernetics.org/conference>) as a small-scale online conference gave us a lot of insights into how an online event at a bigger scale could function.

From the sociocybernetic perspective it has been encouraging to witness and to be part of the large conference organization for ISA FORUM and to get a glimpse of the processes that finally resulted into organizing the conference online, sticking to the original program format according to Porto Alegre, Brazil time zone. In the pandemic, overwhelming uncertainty, fear, and sorrow has influenced the everyday lives of each and everyone of us. In these demanding circumstances, the conference organization and its key members gradually found a way to proceed with concrete plans for the online event. Many negotiations and a lot of communication by e-mail and through online meetings were needed to deal with evaluating all kinds of risks, to deal with the frustration and disappointment of not being able to meet in real life event in Porto Alegre, and to make bigger and smaller decisions.

On behalf of RC51 program coordinators we also made some concrete initiatives to the conference organization and ISA administration to make the best of the challenging situation, and to utilize the opportunities available when realising the forum online. It was gratifying to experience during the ISA FORUM, that many solutions were found and provided. There were opportunities for non-presenting authors to participate as attendees in the conference with reduced price or with no cost. The forum opening sessions, as well as 6 plenary panels, were livestreamed on the ISA Facebook page and thus were made available for a wide audience.

During the pandemic era humankind: individuals, groups, communities, and organizations have taken a huge leap in terms of utilising new technologies. This marks a momentous change in the attitudes and abilities of us human beings as users of new solutions, not only the technical ones, even though technical facilities are continuously being developed further. When looking back to the RC51 program in the ISA FORUM, we can be delighted with the abundance of alternative perspectives present in the themes of the sessions to enrich our observations and to learn matters of importance in life.

We would like to thank the ISA FORUM conference organization and ISA administration for their valuable work in their perseverance to find ways to realise the conference. Thank you to all who contributed with organising RC51 sessions, providing the content of an interesting event, chairing the sessions, presenting papers and being active in online discussions during the forum in a collaborative, concentrated and cosy manner characteristic to RC51 activities.

Program coordinators for RC51 Research committee for Sociocybernetics, ISA

Martina RAPONI, Noiserr, Netherlands

Patricia E. ALMAGUER-KALIXTO, Universidad de Zaragoza, Spain

Raija KOSKINEN, University of Helsinki, Finland

ISA IV Forum: essay by Satoshi Iguchi

I am very glad that I could have worthwhile discussions with colleagues at RC51 from all over the world through the online meetings at the IV ISA Forum of Sociology. I would like to thank all of you for this wonderful opportunity. What a convenient world we live in! At the same time, I was reminded that we are still constrained by (local) time (I can't fix jet lag in my room).

The first time I presented at RC51 was in 2012 at the II ISA Forum of Sociology in Buenos Aires. As I felt at that time, RC51 provides us a very pleasant forum for discussion. In Japan, sociocybernetics tends to be regarded as a philosophical or literature research subject and separated from empirical study. However, at RC51, there are a lot of applicable studies. So, I am always encouraged. RC51 is valuable for researchers seeking to apply systems theoretic thinking to the empirical analysis and practical solution of concrete social problems.

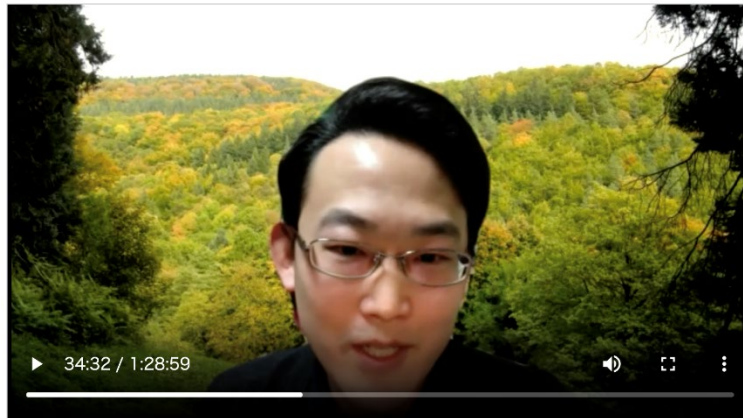


ISA's party 2012

I am currently examining Niklas Luhmann's risk theory and risk dialogue theory to comprehend the structure of social conflicts surrounding nuclear technology and how to overcome them, which have become more serious since the Fukushima nuclear disaster in 2011. I am interested in his empirical diagnosis and policy advice regarding risk and ecological issues. I would like to examine the validity and significance of his diagnoses in the specific context of Japan.

My fascination with Luhmann's theory began when I was an undergraduate student and read a book "Niklas Luhmann's theory of society" written by Professor Yasuo Baba. He is one of the most well-known researchers of Luhmann studies in Japan. In his book, he explains Luhmann's key concepts such as complexity, double contingency, and functional differentiation, and shows what is radical and innovative about Luhmann's thinking. I found his descriptions fascinating and decided to study Luhmann's theory further.

Professor Baba also translated many Luhmann's books, including *Soziale Systeme*, *Das Recht der Gesellschaft*, and *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft*. He passed away in April 2021. It is now up to us to figure out how we can succeed his enormous intellectual legacy.



My 2021 presentation

I also believe that the online session was a great success. It is convenient to be able to rewatch the recorded videos to review the conference. On the other hand though, I am also looking forward to partaking in face-to-face meetings again. I want to visit local places and restaurants. I need my colleagues to encourage me when I am worried about the success of my presentation after the session. Above all, I miss the ISA's party. The best one for me is the party in Buenos Aires in 2012. I danced around together with sociologists from all over the world. I felt like I was able to get closer to everyone. Sociologists need a "Collective effervescence" too. I hope we can all meet again soon!

RC51 Program Forum

618 - Sociocybernetics and Problem-Solving: In Search for Social Elasticity

We are facing various problems locally and globally. In the past, the government was responsible for most of all public issues. However, in the age of so-called 'Government 2.0', the public, private and civil sectors see each other as partners to cope with societal problems. This perspective could lead to interdisciplinary studies of societal efforts to solve collective problems. Sociologically, it is interesting that people's activities contribute to building a better society. Georg Simmel once wrote that a myriad of people's interactions constitutes social elasticity. 'Elasticity' can be rephrased as 'resilience' in the context of disaster research. Both of the two words mean capability of society to overcome a challenge. In this session, we will discuss concepts and cases which are relevant to this theme from the point of view of sociocybernetics. Topics such as governance, volunteering, social movements, and media can be discussed in this session. Other topics will also be welcomed. We hope that the session will be a productive intersection between conceptual and case studies.

618.1 The Adaptive System for Social Analysis, Sias

Jose Antonio AMOZURRUTIA, Centro Investigaciones Ciencias y Humanidades de la UNAM, Mexico, Mexico

618.2 Strategic Agreement As Form of Stakeholder Collaboration in Risk Governance

Satoshi IGUCHI, Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, Japan

618.3 Foreign Communication during Disasters: A Sociocybernetics Exploration of the Role of Kumamoto International Foundation during the Kumamoto Earthquakes

Andrew MITCHELL, Kumamoto University, Japan

619 - Observing the Blind Spot of Society: Sociocybernetics As a Tool to Think Differently

Questioning taken-for-granted ideas and assumptions is the main concern of sociology. There might be numerous subjects, however, among others this session invites papers which deal with the issues from the perspective of sociocybernetics.

We expect contributions referring to concepts and ideas such as radical constructivism, autopoiesis of communication, feedback loop, circular causality, second-order observation, society as an operationally closed system, and so on. Adding that, we will welcome not only theoretical but also empirical studies which are going to shake the obviousness of common sense and everyday life.

619.1 Word Embeddings and Neural Networks. Tools to Show Hidden Bias in Big Data

Capitolina DIAZ, University of Valencia, Spain and Pablo DIAZ, Technologist, Spain

619.2 Desiring Desiring: On the Social Construction of Frustration and Emptiness

Saburo AKAHORI, Tokyo Woman's Christian University, Japan

619.3 The Systemic Design Model Relating Democracy, Environment, Inequalities and Intersectionality

Goran MATIC, OCAD University, Canada

620 - Observing the Blind Spot of Society: Sociocybernetics As a Tool to Think Differently (II)

Questioning taken-for-granted ideas and assumptions is the main concern of sociology. There might be numerous subjects, however, among others this session invites papers which deal with the issues from the perspective of sociocybernetics.

We expect contributions referring to concepts and ideas such as radical constructivism, autopoiesis of communication, feedback loop, circular causality, second-order observation, society as an operationally closed system, and so on. Adding that, we will welcome not only theoretical but also empirical studies which are going to shake the obviousness of common sense and everyday life.

In this session, we will discuss concepts and cases which are relevant to this theme from the point of view of sociocybernetics. Topics related to democracy, environment, inequalities, and intersectionality is invited to be discussed. Other topics will also be welcomed. We hope that the session will be a productive intersection between conceptual and case studies.

620.1 Sociocybernetic Approach on the Construction of Gendered Emotional Models of Intimate Partner Violence

Dalila CEREJO, NOVA/FCSH, Portugal and Manuel LISBOA, FCSH/NOVA, Portugal

620.2 Public Sphere and Social Representation in Niklas Luhmann

Emerson PALMIERI, Universidade Federal de São Paulo (Unifesp), Brazil

621 - Art, Resistance, Otherness, Agency

Art and literature have been a vehicle of cultural and political resistance since the very beginning of the twentieth century in Latin America, the Carribeans, continent Africa, several countries of continent Asia, and communities of domestic aliens within imperialistic territories. Artists have responded to the social, cultural, economic and psychological traumas caused by colonialism, imperialism, and neoliberalism, by making visible, resisting, and deconstructing power mechanisms and strategies of domination.

For this session of RC51 in Porto Alegre 2020, we call for papers, creative writing, workshops, artistic interventions, performative lectures, hybrid interdisciplinary research presentations from the arts, written and design field with a focus on the notion of the Other and Otherness. The Other is here a broad conceptual container for creative writing, writing on art, art projects and researches spanning from post-colonial theory and aesthetics, cultural studies and decolonial theory, cooperatives, contemporary alternative structures of collectivities and social economies, to disabilities, trans, and post-humanism, or radical pedagogies.

We are looking for written and artistic contributions able of reconsidering the position of individuals and communities within the systems of oppression or/and liberation in which they operate, highlighting their agency, their relationship with their environments, and the processes they activate. We are also looking for those contributions to be constructed within the frame of a complex thought that accounts for a second-order observation and interdisciplinary approach.

621.1 Between Agency and Aesthetics: The Performativity of the Migrant Bodies.

Erika CASTAÑEDA ARREDONDO, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana Cuajimalpa, Mexico

621.2 Digital Nomads -Film Archive and Artistic Research through Film Method.

Julia SOKOLNICKA, Nederlandse Filmacademie, Netherlands

621.3 New Noises New Voices

Martina RAPONI, Noiserr, Netherlands

621.4 Songs of Life: Music and Soundscapes in Empowering the People and the Society

Mikko ROMPPANEN, HAMK, Finland

622 – Reflexivity

The purpose of my session is to discuss the transformation of reflexivity, to study reflexivity from various points of view and to study application of reflexivity to many fields.

Reflexivity is the concept of reflecting on oneself in the presence of others, and changing oneself in relation to others. By repeating this process, the agent changes who he/she is.

Scott Lash and John Urry criticize the reflexive modernization theory of Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens, as they presuppose that reflexivity is cognitive and institutional. Lash draws attention to the aesthetic dimension of reflexivity over the cognitive. He insists capitalism opens up possibilities for, not only cognitive but also, aesthetic reflexivity. He also discusses hermeneutic reflexivity.

In addition, I suggest that new reflexivities can be born and transform in and through markets, which I call market reflexivity. I also suggest media reflexivity that can be born and transform in and through media. In this session, I would like to discuss aesthetic reflexivity, hermeneutic reflexivity, market reflexivity, media reflexivity and other reflexivities including these application in order to predict its future affects of our society.

622.1 Journalism and Societal Reflexivity: A Consideration on Morality in Self-Observation of Society

Toru TAKAHASHI, Chuo University, Japan

622.2 Reflection in Action – Reflective Practitioner in the Digital Era

Raija KOSKINEN, University of Helsinki, Finland

622.3 Transformation of Reflexivity in Global Society

Machiko NAKANISHI, Chukyo University, Japan

623 - La Visión Sistémica Del Proceso Del Envejecimiento y La Vejez

Esta sesión presenta aquellos papers relacionados con la vision sistémica del proceso de envejecimiento y la etapa de la vejez. Incluye los procesos bio-psico--socio-neuro-inmuno-endocrinologicos que inciden en las personas adultas mayores

623.1 Consecuencias Del Estrés Sociocultural En El Sistema Psico-Neuro-Inmuno-Endocrinológico (SPNIE) En El Proceso De Envejecimiento De Las Mujeres y Los Hombres

Ma Judit DURAN FLORES, UADEC-CEIICH-UNAM, Mexico

623.2 Comprensión Epistemológica Del Sistema Social De La Vejez En Tres Subsistemas Casa Del Adulto Mayor “La Armonía”, Residencia “San Juan” En Colima y “Centro De Convivencia De La Tercera Edad Del DIF Estatal Colima”.

Minerva MACIEL MORÁN, Universidad de Colima, Mexico

623.3 El Auto-Cuido, La Auto-Generación y La Auto-Organización Comunitaria, De Los Adultos Mayores: Un Desafío Del Siglo XXI Para Mejorar La Calidad De Vida

Elisa Margarita MAASS, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico

624 - Scientific Citizenship: A Systemic Approach.

Although there is no general academic agreement on the notion of citizen society, it is possible to assess that it refers to citizens' right and duties in knowledge-based societies.

More specifically, scientific citizenship refers to the citizens' right and, at the same time duty to acquire a scientific mastery, knowledge of the progresses achieved in the main scientific branches (medicine, engineering, physics etc.) and openness to innovation policies, in order to effectively carry out active citizenship activities: elections, activism, lobbying and even direct contribution to scientific progress (citizen science).

The point is that nowadays, while astonishing have so far been scientific and technological progresses, citizens' competences and interests are incredibly distant from the requirements of a knowledge-based society. On the contrary, deep is the mistrust towards science, which is perceived as biased by strong financial interests; furthermore, electoral programs of many political forces openly aim at reducing the importance of the competences and the skills that a knowledge-based society requires.

As a consequence, in order to strengthen the openness to knowledge and innovation in contemporary societies, complex development policies are necessary, who consider the the multi-disciplinary aspects (technological, cultural and political) that characterize phenomena related to scientific citizenship.

This panel welcomes papers, both theoretical and empirical, that adopt the systemic approach to deal with issues related to scientific citizenship.

624.1 Digital Technology and Youth Justice: Practitioner Perspectives on Shaping and Being Shaped By Social Technology in the Public Sector

Ravinder BARN, Royal Holloway University of London, United Kingdom and **Balbir BARN**, Middlesex University, United Kingdom

624.2 Social Innovation Labs and Citizen Science: A Sociocybernetics Review

Patricia Eugenia ALMAGUER-KALIXTO, Interdisciplinary Institute on Human Ecology and Sustainability, Mexico and **Pedro ESCRICHE**, Universidad de Zaragoza, Spain

624.3 Redes Colaborativas > Dialógicas y Dialécticas Del Caminar Juntos. Collaborative Networks > Dialogics and Dialectics of Walking Together.

Yuri AGUILAR, UNAM, Mexico

626 - Netnographic Analysis and Sociocybernetics of Software Mediated Societies

Millions of people around the world embrace Internet. They work, negotiate, play, flirt and live by different devices. The information and communication technologies have transformed the traditional way of life. Now it is evidence. Our digital societies are mediated by software and hardware. This requires a theoretical framework to consider the effects of the 'Internetization' and 'digitalization' of our lives and especially, its effects in the emergence of social movements, new political challenges and 'fake news'. Online social networks have become a parallel universe of socialization from which interactive dynamics are generated until recently unknown.

This session aims to explore and discuss the relevance of netnography, from a sociocybernetical perspective, as a methodology of network analysis, analysing the characteristics of the social structure observed online. The netnography allows to show the ways of interacting and the significant polarization patterns in the online conversations.

We expect selected papers applying netnography and also theoretical debate base on Sociocybernetics. Nevertheless, be free to submit papers imaginative and speculative regarding possible developments of this methodology. We will expect a dynamic session; it will provide ample time for discussion.

626.1 Netnography and Online Health Community Studies: A Review of the Literature

Leticia BARBOSA, Oswaldo Cruz Foundation, Brazil

626.2 New Youth Societies: Ethnography in Online and Offline Space

Edgard ALBUQUERQUE NETO, SEECT-PB, Brazil and Vanderlan SILVA, UFCG, Brazil

626.3 Beyond the Algorithms: From Netnographic DATA Collection to DATA Hermeneutics

Chaime MARCUELLO SERVOS, Departamento Psicología y Sociología, Facultad de Ciencias, Sociales y del Trabajo, Universidad de Zaragoza, Spain

627 - Digitalization and Societal Innovation: One Shaping the Other

It is a common understanding that digitalization is profoundly changing our societies. Hopes concern better public services; better jobs; better private enjoyment; better health services; and overall smart living. But there are also threats such as loss in privacy, cyber-violence, and control by algorithms (robotics, self-driving vehicles air/land). However, digitalization happens within societal relations shaping digitalization as well as being shaped by digitalization. Consequently, we can speak about societal innovation.

- The session should contribute the clarification of the concept of societal innovation related to digitalization, dealing with both aspects: shaping and being shaped. System and socio-cybernetic complexity approaches may prove helpful here.
- What are drivers and opponents within this intertwined process? Are they motivated by money, values or being part of a swarm?
- What role plays digitalization in relation to megatrends such as demography (aging, migration), natural resources (food security, biodiversity), and climate change (low carbon energy, circular economy)?
- Is digitalization fostering or threatening democracy? Does it accelerate or hinder inclusion? Does it mitigate or create inequality? What about e-literacy & e-skills and digital divide?
- All these questions may result in the questions of ethics of digitalization. Do we need them? Should there be one ethic or rather several ethics? Who defines them?

Theoretical as well as empirical contributions are welcome dealing with one or more of the aspects mentioned above, including alternative conceptions and reflections of our presently transforming societies.

627.1 Sociology of Digital Society

Liudmila VASILENKO, the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration, Russian Federation

627.2 Digitalization: Competing for Control of Societal Innovation through Software

Dzifa AMETOWOBLA, Technische Universität Berlin, Germany

627.3 Societal Innovation & Digital Transformation: A Social Systems Theory Perspective

Eva BUCHINGER, Innovation Systems, Austrian Institute of Technology AIT, Austria

628 - Digitalization and Societal Innovation: One Shaping the Other (II)

This is the second part of the session “Digitalization and Societal Innovation: One Shaping the Other”.

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- What role plays digitalization in relation to megatrends such as demography (aging, migration), natural resources (food security, biodiversity), and climate change (low carbon energy, circular economy)?
- Is digitalization fostering or threatening democracy? Does it accelerate or hinder inclusion? Does it mitigate or create inequality? What about e-literacy & e-skills and digital divide?
- All these questions may result in the questions of ethics of digitalization. Do we need them? Should there be one ethic or rather several ethics? Who defines them?

Theoretical as well as empirical contributions are welcome dealing with one or more of the aspects mentioned above, including alternative conceptions and reflections of our presently transforming societies.

628.1 How to Study Digitization? Micro-Approaches for Big Questions

Myène TANNERI MACHADO, *University of Lausanne, Switzerland*

628.2 A Second-Order Observation to Prevent Bias on Big Data Analysis

Manuel MEZA CUERVO, *Interdisciplinary Institute on Human Ecology and Sustainability (INTERHES), Mexico*

628.3 Social Work and Online Social Networks in the Face of Social Emergencies. the #Brumadinho Case.

Joaquín CASTILLO DE MESA¹, **Pablo ÁLVAREZ-PÉREZ**², **Antonio LÓPEZ PELÁEZ**³ and **Jorge FERREIRA**², *(1)Universidad de Málaga, Spain, (2)ISCTE-IUL, Portugal, (3)UNED, Spain*

628.4 Social Bots As a Tool for Democratization of Society

Valeriya VASILKOVA and **Natalia LEGOSTAEVA**, *St. Petersburg State University, Russian Federation*

- Handout available

629 - Transnational Spaces and Digital Divide Using Sociocybernetic Tools and Concepts

A key aspect of inequalities reproduction is the social gap regarding access, use and impact of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) that can be applied to regions, countries and specific populations. In regions such as North America and Europe, transnational social spaces are growing due to many reasons. For example, since there are people building multiple networks connecting through cyberspace to different countries, due to the creation of social groups with members from different countries, or because of migration dynamics where people settling in a different country use cyberspace to keep linked themselves to their original social roots. Social groups going beyond national borders, physically or using media tools, face many challenges to access and use ICT, in front of many forms of violence and forms of exclusion. This session aims to bring together papers using sociocybernetic tools and concepts focusing transnational social spaces that are creating physical and virtual bridges of communication beyond borders, connecting people despite remoteness, or confronting physical or virtual impositions targeting to disconnect, restrict or confine people into specific prearranged destructive places or dynamics.

629.1 Manifestos: Media for Networking in the Historical Avant-Garde

Jorge CARDIEL, *National Autonomous University of Mexico, Mexico*

629.2 The Unreality of Reality: The Political Uses of Virtual Social Networks in the Post-2016 Brazilian Electoral Context and Their Role in the Decline of Traditional Media and Information As Truth

Julio FERREIRA, *Universidade Federal de Pelotas, Brazil*

[629.3 The Guild Type : An Emerging Group Shaped, between Affordance and Self- Aspiration, By the Virtual Worlds](#)

Olivier SERVAIS, *UCLouvain, Belgium*

630 - Complexity and Truth

A complex society does not accommodate one truth for everybody. Different functional systems, different organizations, and different individuals perceive different things to be true. Truth is not regarded – or at least not during the last few centuries – to be an absolute, but rather a socially produced construct. This perception is increasing the complexity of society – another person really is “other” if even her or his concept of truth is a different one. As a result of the multiplicity of truth, there are constant negotiations and power struggles over how one specific truth can become binding for several people or even one (national, global?) society. The social production of truth takes place within complex social situations characterized by bargaining, fighting, forging of alliances, etc.

[630.1 Complexity and Truth Regarding Security: A Sociocybernetics Approach.](#)

Mihail ANTON¹, **Eliza ANTON²** and **Dragos BARBIERU¹**, (1)*National Defense University Carol I, Romania*, (2)*Ministry of National Defense, Romania*

[630.2 The Meanings of Jair Bolsonaro's Stabbing: An Online Sociocybernetics Network Analysis on Twitter](#)

Otávio VINHAS, *University College Dublin, Ireland*

631 - Systemic View on Developing Social Work

The current developmental efforts in the field of social work in the local level often include international influence and collaboration like participating in conferences or studying the experiences described in current research literature. To reach more long-term goals in this kind of development, the interested parties may put together project plans and search external funding for their work.

Whatever the form of collaboration, multifaceted challenges of implementation occur when ideas from other contexts are utilized as source of inspiration for the local development. In this respect, sociocybernetics helps us engage with the world around us in a meaningful way. Systems thinking and systemic view keep on reminding us how the developmental efforts focused on a chosen subsystem need to be constantly viewed in terms of the whole system, including also other subsystems. This is more easily said than done. Therefore, openness and curiosity, as well as courage and perseverance are vital for systemic view.

Focusing on the local and global developments of social work, this session aims to organize discussions in a fruitful dialogue reaching out also to the overall themes of IV ISA Forum: Democracy, Environment, Inequalities and Intersectionality. For this purpose, this session welcomes presentations of cases, as well as conceptual studies from various parts of the world.

The organizers of the session have experience in building up a network to develop social work in long-term basis, since 2017. Finland and Kazakhstan, differ in many ways as countries. However, many shared interests have been found, and reflected upon.

[631.1 Social Workers Challenging the Welcome Projects for Asylum Seekers and Refugees. an Empirical Research and Recommendations for Professional Practice](#)

Andrea BILOTTI, *UNIVERSITY OF SIENA, Italy*

[631.2 Dysfunctional Families: Implementation of Case Management Models in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan](#)

Madi ZHAKUPBAYEV, *Nazarbayev University, Kazakhstan*

631.3 Cooperation Development and International Social Work: A Systemic Model Proposal.

Patricia Eugenia ALMAGUER-KALIXTO, *Interdisciplinary Institute on Human Ecology and Sustainability, Mexico* and **Pedro ESCRICHE**, *Universidad de Zaragoza, Spain*

631.4 Actor-Relational-Approach (ARA) and Systems of Social Work in Finland and Kazakhstan

Raija KOSKINEN, *University of Helsinki, Finland*, **Dinara YESSIMOVA**, *Eurasian National University named G.N.Gumilyov, Kazakhstan* and **Sairan ABDUGALINA**, *Kazakh University of Economics, Finance and International Trade, Kazakhstan*

632 - Facts and Data of the 21st Century: A Sociocybernetics Approach

The four dimensions presented for the IV ISA Forum of Sociology as challenges of the 21st Century are: Democracy, Environment, Inequalities and Intersectionality. However, as sociocyberneticians observing the observers of the data that describes these dimensions, we can ask for the trajectories, states and dynamics behind the scenes, we can ask for the Facts of the 21st century. With the possibility of open-access data available over the internet, this hands-on workshop session will submerge the participant on a discovery activity about the state of world, steering new thinking on the contradictory results. At the end, some conclusions will enrich the sociocybernetics approach on facing the problems to understand the envisioned solutions better. To join the session, the participant will need a smartphone, tablet or laptop with internet access.

632.1 Complexity and Chaos As Persuasive and Performative Metaphors in Social Sciences

Czeslaw MESJASZ, *Cracow University of Economics, Poland*

632.2 Agile-Cognitive Production Systems: Social Impacts and Modifications

Stefan WALTER, *VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland, Finland*

632.3 An Introduction for a Sociocybernetics Approach to Think the Facts of the 21st Century

Luciano GALLON, *Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, Medellin, Colombia*

633 - Sociocybernetics: A Tool Box to Face World Challenges

In XX Century the human face for the first time the real possibility to destruct themselves because of their military capacity. In the XXI Century, we continue facing the same challenge but now because of the way of life. The military risk could be faced limiting the use of massive destruction weapons. However, the XXI Century challenge is asking to limit or change the way that we improve our lives, our health, our energy and production of goods. In other words, to survive, we need to change our way of life.

This is a complex challenge. The UN's, millennium goals, are asking for a better life for humanity, but how could we improve our life without damaging nature? At this moment even the green tech have a significant impact on our carbon footprint. Many solutions in one area become a new problem with another.

Sociocybernetics theory can observe, delimitate and explain the problem in order to capture all its complexity. Their methodologies give us a toolbox that allows us to understand the complex relations between all the parts of our social system in many observations levels. These tools allow us to understand the local problems in the context of global problems.

In this panel, we will discuss how the methodologies and tools from sociocybernetics can be applied to solve specific local social problems always in a global perspective

633.1 A Sociocybernetics Approach to Understanding Livelihoods Transformations and Sustainability

Carla GALAN-GUEVARA, *National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), Mexico*

633.2 Paradoxes and Barriers of Sociocybernetics in Information Society

Czesław MESJASZ, *Cracow University of Economics, Poland*

633.3 Sociocybernetics and Political Theory in a Complex World: Recasting Constitutionalism

Roberto MANCILLA, *Movimiento Ciudadano (political party), Mexico; (RC51 Member), Mexico*

RC51 ON SOCIOCYBERNETICS

IN

The 7th International Degrowth and ISEE-ESEE International Online Joint Conference
hosted by the University of Manchester, July 5th - 9th, 2021

BUILDING ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOODS IN TIMES OF ECOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL CRISIS

By Bernd R. Hornung

To contact any of the speakers please write to: HornungRC51@AOL.com

DEGROWTH is a worldwide movement and network of activists and academics, groups and organizations, sharing the view that endless and unlimited economic growth on a limited planet is impossible, and that the stabilization of the current level of consumption of non-renewable resources by the Global North by a steady-state economy will still deplete non-renewable resources rapidly. This is especially important if the justified claims of the Global South for equal rights and an equal share of material well-being are to be implemented.

Therefore a “degrowth” of the economy and a drastic restructuring resulting in substantially less resource use is indispensable.

The DEGROWTH Movement also shares the conviction that a good life, or even a better life, will be possible nevertheless, or even because of, such a change, which cannot be limited to the economy but has to include another way of life. This requires the shifting of goals and values from material affluence, greed, envy, and competition to quality of life, social and cultural wealth and well-being, and a livelihood in partnership and compatible with nature and the ecosystems we live in and which are the very basis of our life.

The DEGROWTH Movement has been organizing large international conferences since years. The conference to take place in 2020 in Manchester, UK, had to be postponed to 2021 and took place as an online conference due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



In this conference two so-called Special Academic Sessions were organized by John Raven and Bernd Hornung on behalf of RC51 on Sociocybernetics of the International Sociological Association (ISA). Most of the speakers were members of RC51.

The main objective of the two sessions was to bring in the systems and cybernetic view along with the large sociocybernetic processes that work behind our backs but are decisively influencing our lives. The latter is a topic dealt with explicitly over many years already especially by John Raven in the context of our RC51 International Conferences on Sociocybernetics. These objectives were deemed to be necessary, because an explicit systems view is lacking in the DEGROWTH Movement. To understand the world we live in with its high complexity, and to find points of intervention to at least reduce the consequences of the pandemic, climate change, and the pending ecological disaster, systems and cybernetic theory and a systems view of life ⁽⁵⁾ are indispensable and vital for the survival of the human species.

Surely an extremely ambitious endeavor, to which the two modest sessions of RC51 could make at best a very small contribution only. But also many small steps can lead a long way. Small, because of the very limited time available, but also because of a host of technical problems encountered. The latter, however, should not be a surprise in such a large and technically exigent online conference.

All sessions were recorded by the conference organizers and it can be expected that the recordings will be available online in due time.

RC51 had two sessions:

Systemic Concepts for Change in Times of Climate and Health Crisis
July 6th, 15:30 - 17:00 (British Summer Time)

Mapping the Social Forces that Have the Future of Mankind in Their Grip and the Societal Learning (Management) Arrangements Needed for a Sustainable Society.
July 7th 17:15 – 18:45 (British Summer Time)

⁵⁾ CAPRA, Fritjof; LUISI, Pier Luigi: The Systems View of Life, A Unifying Vision, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (UK) 2019

KALLIS, Giorgos: Degrowth, 1st edition, Agenda Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne 2018

LOVELOCK, James: Gaia, A New Look at Life on Earth, 2nd edition, Oxford Landmark Science, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2016 [1/1979]

Raven, John: The New Wealth of Nations, Royal Fireworks Press, Edinburgh, Scotland 1995; available as PDF on:
http://eyeonsociety.co.uk/resources/fulllist.html#new_wealth

Systemic Concepts for Change in Times of Climate and Health Crisis

"Some Fundamentals of Systems and Cybernetics"

Bernd Hornung (Germany) introduced the session with a short summary of some systems and cybernetic fundamentals, as the audience was expected not to be familiar with the theories of systems, cybernetics, and sociocybernetics.

"Systemic Concept and Research for a Living World After the Covid19 Pandemic"

Cor van Dijkum (The Netherlands) spoke about complexity theory as an important tool to understand our present world starting with the Covid19 pandemic. As argued by Fritjof Capra (2021) the pandemic is a signal that the sustainability of our planet is in danger. In this context Cor van Dijkum explained the difficulties of studying and influencing complex living systems. But he was also arguing that it is an effort that is necessary to work towards the sustainability of our planet. This is not impossible. The currently ongoing RC51 seminar, studying and discussing the book of Capra and Luisi about "The Systems View of Life", is an attempt to overcome these difficulties.

"On Rebound Effects in Complex Social Systems"

Theoretical foundations thus laid, Karl-Heinz Simon (Germany) talked about the rebound effect. This is an unintended consequence of intended economic and ecological change in social systems. In his presentation, connecting theory to the empirical reality, he explained that, e.g., increasing the energy-efficiency of some device does not necessarily reduce energy consumption, but may lead to cheaper operation of the device resulting in more extensive use of it.

"Self-reflexivity and Conversation Scales in Sustainability"

Luciano Gallon (Colombia) took us a step deeper into social life, talking about intricacies of the use of human language and the use of contemporary communication technologies like the Internet. He presented a sociocybernetic conceptual and theoretical approach to self-reflexivity and conversation. These concepts he explained with their possible scales regarding different ranges of observation (the observed and the observer) and the livelihood context of human daily life. This concluded with a discussion of how new understanding emerges from these ideas and how new ways of thinking based on these reflections could lead to new forms of politics, governance, and policies in society.

"Systemic Vision to Plan an Old Age with Health and Quality of Life"

Finally, Margarita Maass Moreno (Mexico) presented a practical real-life experience of another kind of livelihood for elderly persons. She talked about a retirement home run by a small community of

elderly and retired persons in Mexico. It is based on the principles of systems theory and cybernetics and implements a sustainable, and as far as possible, self-sufficient kind of livelihood. Self-organization and self-management, along with using various systemic cycles of infrastructure processes like food production, ensure a high quality of life.

Due to a lack of time and lack of a subsequent discussion, the large processes behind our backs unfortunately did not become explicit. Of course, they are only possible because of the complexity of our world, and rebound effects are part of them. The same is true for aspects of communications in mass media and the social media. A small community, as described by Margarita Maass, evidently cannot completely separate itself from its modern larger socio-economic environment.

Mapping the Social Forces that Have the Future of Mankind in their Grip and the Societal Learning (Management) Arrangements Needed for a Sustainable Society.

"The Myth of Free Will: Psycho-cognitive Barriers to Cultural Change"

The session started with a disquieting presentation from William E. Rees (Canada). He talked about the biological foundations of human life and human psychology. One key point was, that psychology is deeply rooted in human biology, including emotions and the unconscious. Therefore, the expectation of rational and reasonable behavior, especially in situations of crisis, is a very doubtful one. The second key point was, that in the biological history of the planet's species extended and grew, until they depleted the resources necessary for their survival, then becoming extinct. Biologically seen, humans are just another species progressing and growing with ever increasing speed towards depletion of resources and hence extinction. A hope, but a shaky one, is that the unique human capacity for intelligent behavior might after all permit us to change the situation.

"Towards an Ecologically Sustainable Community - The Model Community Ebsdorfergrund"

An, admittedly very limited, attempt to work in that direction was presented by Bernd Hornung (Germany). He spoke in the context of a systems framework about the management, development, and way of life in a small model community, Ebsdorfergrund, in Germany. In this community, consisting of 11 villages with a total of about 9000 inhabitants, a coherent strategy is being implemented to reach energy-self-sufficiency along with a high quality of life, while becoming sustainable as far as possible. Like in the case reported by Margarita Maass in the other session of RC51, also here the links to the economy, politics and life of contemporary society in Germany cannot be ignored and severed. Unfortunately, time was too limited to go into much detail, which would have been the most interesting part of the presentation.

"Mapping the Social Forces that Have the Future of Mankind in Their Grip and the Societal Learning (Management) Arrangements Needed for a Sustainable Society"

Finally, John Raven (UK) exposed the wider context of the problems that became visible in the previous papers. Referring back to the original studies of the "Limits to Growth" of the 1970s, which were largely ignored outside academia until droughts, floods, heat waves, fires, and dying forests started to devastate the "moderate climate" in the Global North in recent years. Those studies were trying already to map forces behind our backs. They already made clear that single factor studies and interventions are useless, as they tend to be neutralized by the reactions of the overall system. What is necessary are systemic interventions. John Raven exemplified this by talking about the educational system. He argued that in this case, but doubtlessly in others too, the major flaw is the omission of key social inputs which drive the causal feedback loops of the system. These either stabilize the status quo or they drive the system even in an unwanted and undesirable direction. As a key issue in this respect John Raven identified "the onward march of hierarchy". In other words, the ever-increasing bureaucratization, centralization, and construction of ever higher and stronger hierarchies, in which those who give the top-down orders are always farther and farther away from real life and the citizens. To tackle this enormous problem, he proposes a learning society with a highly participative and transparent decentralized political-administrative structure.

Due to the time constraints already mentioned, John Raven could only discuss these issues very briefly.

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Unfortunately, in both sessions there remained no time for discussion. This was due in part to the time constraints of the sessions themselves, but also to the technical difficulties encountered. Furthermore, complex issues can be explained in simple words, but not in a few short sentences. This, adding to the analysis of Luciano Gallon, may be another reason why our complex world and correspondingly complex potential problem solutions are so little understood. It may be speculated that top executives and top politicians are so busy and overloaded with work and information, that they don't have the time to think before they decide and instead readily use ready-made recipes, recipes made by lobbyists who are backed by a lot of money and staff.

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.

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