



# RC51 *Newsletter*

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# Editor's Introduction

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Dear RC51 members and friends,

I am very pleased to bring you RC51 Newsletter No. 47.

As Saburo mentions in the President's Letter and Chaime reflects in the tribute, this issue opens with the sad news of the passing of our founding President, Bernd R. Hornung, in January. I would like to express my deepest sorrow and condolences at this great loss to our community.

I first had the privilege of meeting Bernd at the 2024 conference in Kraków. I vividly remember how he not only provided sharp and constructive comments during the sessions but also spent his breaks sitting quietly on a campus bench, intently taking notes. His unwavering scholarly dedication left a lasting impression on me. When I was appointed as the editor of this Newsletter, he encouraged me with these words: *"For a newsletter, maintaining regular and consistent publication is just as important as the content itself. Please keep up the good work."* I had truly looked forward to seeing him again, and I feel a profound sense of loss. To honor the legacy of RC51 and the advancement of sociocybernetics that Bernd worked so tirelessly for, I feel a renewed sense of commitment to my role.

Turning to our current contributions, as shown in the highly insightful essay by our new member John A. Challoner, systems theory serves as a vital bridge, connecting disparate phenomena and perspectives that are often understood in isolation. This reminds me once again of how the interdisciplinary nature and intellectual openness of sociocybernetics allow us—despite our different languages, academic disciplines, and practical backgrounds—to remain closely connected and to collectively explore new academic frontiers. Welcome to the community, John!

I look forward to seeing many of you in person at the conference in Oaxaca this August.

Special thanks to Andrew for his thoughtful review and editorial support for this issue.

Warm regards,

**Satoshi Iguchi**

RC51 Newsletter Editors

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# Letter from the President

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Dear RC51 Members,

I write to you with news that weighs heavily on all of us.

Bernd Hornung, the founding President of RC51 and a towering presence in the field of sociocybernetics, passed away in January 2026. Bernd was there at the very beginning of our Research Committee, and it was his vision, determination, and scholarly openness that gave RC51 its shape and its soul. What is perhaps most remarkable is that he never stepped back: until very recently, he remained a constant and vital presence in our conferences, seminars, and discussions, always offering insight, encouragement, and a sense of continuity that connected our community to its roots. We extend our deepest condolences to his family and to all who had the privilege of knowing him. His loss is profound, and we are resolved to honor his memory by carrying forward the work he gave so much of himself to.

Turning to the activities ahead, I am pleased to announce that the Call for Abstracts for the 19th International Conference on Sociocybernetics is now open. The conference will be held in Oaxaca, Mexico, from August 3 to 7, 2026, under the capable leadership of David Karminski. Mexico has long been one of the most vibrant centers of sociocybernetics, and Oaxaca—a city of extraordinary cultural depth—promises to be an inspiring setting for our scholarly exchanges. We warmly encourage all members to submit abstracts and to share the call with colleagues and students. Details on submission guidelines and deadlines are available on our website.

Our Open Online Activity sessions have continued to bring members together across distances, and we look forward to sharing details of upcoming sessions shortly. These virtual gatherings remain an important part of RC51's life as a genuinely global community.

Looking further ahead, preliminary preparations are also underway for RC51's participation in the ISA World Congress of Sociology, to be held in Gwangju, South Korea, in 2027. We will be soliciting session proposals in due course and hope to attract a strong in-person presence at this significant gathering.

In memory of Bernd Hornung, let us carry forward the spirit of rigor, collegiality, and generosity of mind that he embodied so fully. I look forward to seeing many of you in Oaxaca, and to our continued collaboration in the months ahead.

Best regards,

On behalf of the RC51 Board

**Saburo Akahori**

RC51 President 2024–2027

Visit our website: <https://sociocybernetics.org/>

RC51 Newsletter: <https://sociocybernetics.org/newsletter>

Journal of Sociocybernetics: <https://papiro.unizar.es/ojs/index.php/rc51-jos/index>

# In Memory of Bernd R. Hornung

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**IN MEMORIAM,  
*Bernd R. Hornung***

April 24, 1952 - January 30, 2026



*A brilliant thinker, a generous colleague,  
a great human being,  
and a devoted steward of Sociocybernetics*

With profound sorrow, yet also with deep gratitude for an extraordinary life dedicated to knowledge and service to others, we bid farewell to Dr. Bernd R. Hornung, distinguished sociocybernetician, sociologist, researcher, and thinker who left us on January 30, 2026.

Born in St. Georgen, in the Black Forest region of southwestern Germany, Bernd was a true citizen of the world. His intellectual curiosity led him from the lecture halls of Munich and Paris to the communities of Peru, from the academic salons of Bielefeld—where he had the privilege of studying under Niklas Luhmann—to international cooperation projects in Africa and Central Asia.

Bernd's most enduring contribution lies in his tireless dedication to the advancement of Sociocybernetics. As first President (1998-2006) of the Research Committee 51 on Sociocybernetics of the International Sociological Association (RC51-ISA), and subsequently as an active member, he played a key role in shaping this field where sociology, systems theory, and cybernetics converge and go beyond. His leadership during his tenure on the ISA Executive Committee (2002-2006) helped consolidate Sociocybernetics as a theoretical and methodological framework for understanding complex social systems. He remained deeply committed to RC51 until his final days, actively participating in the team preparing a forthcoming volume for the Brill Research Perspectives in Sociocybernetics (BRPSC) series, entitled *Sociocybernetics and the Web of Life*—a contribution to his unwavering dedication to advancing the field he so loved.

His doctoral dissertation, *Foundations of a Problem-Functionalist Systems Theory of Societal Development - Theory Construction in the Social Sciences with Qualitative Computer-Assisted Methods*, supervised by Niklas Luhmann, laid important theoretical foundations that would inform his

subsequent work. Bernd's scholarly contributions bridged philosophical epistemology, information theory, and practical applications, demonstrating how systems thinking could address real-world challenges in health care, international development, and information society governance.

As Senior Researcher at Marburg University and Data Protection Officer of Marburg University Hospital, Bernd masterfully integrated theory and practice. His work encompassed data protection and IT-security in healthcare, international development and information society studies, sociological theory and systems science, and innovative explorations of art and aesthetics from an information-theoretical perspective. At the Eduard-Pestel-Institute for Applied Systems Research in Hannover, he developed computer-based systems for policymaking and pioneered the modelling and simulation of socio-technical systems.

His international impact was particularly significant in the RC51 community. He served as senior scientist and convener in the European EUROCARDS Concerted Action for smart-card systems in healthcare and led NATO-sponsored projects with the Uzbek Academy of Sciences in Tashkent addressing IT, healthcare, and the ecological crisis of the Aral Basin. As a consultant for WHO and the German Agency for Technical Cooperation/Asian Development Bank, he brought systems thinking to management information systems in developing nations. Following three years of practical fieldwork in Africa with the UN, he applied these methodologies to health care systems and information technology assessment.

An accomplished polyglot—fluent in German, English, French, and Spanish—Bernd generously shared his wisdom as guest lecturer in Lima, Prague, México and Zaragoza, leaving an indelible mark on students and colleagues worldwide. His work on art and aesthetics under an information-theoretical perspective demonstrated his rare ability to unite scientific rigor with humanistic inquiry, revealing deep connections between cybernetic principles and aesthetic experience.

Bernd embodied an example of a sociocybernetician dedicated to expanding knowledge and improving everyday life: a rigorous thinker who never lost sight of the human dimension of his work, a sociocybernetician who combined theoretical depth with practical application, a scientist committed to making the world better through knowledge. His sociocybernetical vision—that understanding complex feedback loops and systemic relationships is essential for addressing humanity's greatest challenges—remains more relevant than ever.

His legacy lives on in his academic contributions, in the systems he helped develop, in the minds he inspired, and in the hearts of those of us who were fortunate enough to know him. Our Sociocybernetic community, especially RC51, has lost one of its most dedicated members, and the world has lost a great and exceptional human being.

Rest in peace, dear Bernd. Your tireless pursuit of knowledge and your dedication to serving others will continue to light the way for those who carry on the work you embraced with such passion.

*Chaime Marcuello-Servós  
Zaragoza  
February 7, 2026*

## **Why Social Science Needs Systems Science — and Why Systems Science Needs Social Science**

**John A. Challoner**

I have recently joined ISA Research Committee 51 and am very pleased to do so. There are, of course, social reasons for joining any intellectual community. However, I would like to briefly explain my intellectual reasons. These arise from a long-standing interest in the relationship between systems science and the social sciences, and from a growing conviction that each depends upon the other for its further development.

My original training was in Civil Engineering. Like many professional engineers, I became accustomed to thinking in terms of forces, constraints, flows, and stability. Civil engineers are also closely involved in liaison with the public their projects serve, since infrastructure must meet social needs as well as technical requirements. This practical experience highlighted the importance of relationships as well as components. When I later encountered systems theory, I realised that it offered a way of understanding both the technical and social dimensions of engineering within a single coherent framework. It shifted attention away from isolated components and towards relationships, processes, and organisation.

On the technical side, this was immediately recognisable. The stability of a bridge, for example, depends not simply on the strength of its individual parts, but on the pattern of forces between them. Loads are distributed, stresses are balanced, and stability is maintained through the continuous interaction of structural elements. The bridge functions as a system.

What struck me equally strongly, however, was that the same kind of explanation applied to the social side of engineering. Projects depend on cooperation between clients, engineers, contractors, regulators, and the public. Expectations must be aligned, communication maintained, and emerging problems addressed through processes of feedback and adjustment. When these relationships function well, projects tend to succeed. When they break down, projects often encounter difficulty regardless of their technical merit.

Seen in this way, social systems themselves are not static objects but ongoing processes maintained through communication, interaction, and shared understanding. Institutions, organisations, and communities persist only so long as the patterns of relationship that constitute them continue to be reproduced.

Concepts such as feedback, emergence, functional differentiation, and system–environment relations provide powerful tools for understanding these processes. Feedback helps explain how behaviours reinforce or regulate themselves. Emergence helps explain how coherent social structures arise from

individual interactions. Functional differentiation helps explain how societies manage complexity through the development of specialised roles and institutions, each contributing to the viability of the wider system. System–environment relations help explain how societies adapt, or fail to adapt, to changing circumstances.

At the same time, systems science itself depends critically on engagement with the social sciences. Systems theories do not arise in isolation. They are developed by human beings whose perceptions, assumptions, and preferences are shaped by their psychological dispositions and social environments. What we notice, how we interpret it, and how we choose to represent it are all influenced, to some degree, by human cognitive and social processes. The development of systems theory is therefore itself a social and psychological process.

Without an understanding of these influences, systems science risks being shaped by unexamined assumptions, metaphorical thinking, or disciplinary traditions that may limit its accuracy or applicability. The social sciences therefore play a crucial role, not only in applying systems science, but also in helping to refine and strengthen it. In recent years, I have come to see systems science less as a specialised discipline and more as a general way of thinking; one that is capable of integrating insights across fields. By improving our understanding of how human beings perceive, construct, and communicate knowledge, we can develop systems theories that are clearer, more reliable, and better suited to the complex realities they seek to describe.

In summary, for social scientists, systems science offers a valuable framework for understanding how individual actions and social structures shape one another.

For systems scientists, the social sciences provide both an essential domain of application and a necessary source of reflexive insight into how systems theories themselves are formed. It is my hope, therefore, that RC51 will continue to provide an important forum in which this mutually beneficial relationship can develop further.

# Announcement

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## 19th International Conference of Sociocybernetics “Glocal Intersections”

Oaxaca, Mexico, August 3-7, 2026 (Hybrid Format)

The 19th International Conference of Sociocybernetics will take place in Oaxaca, Mexico, from August 3rd to August 7th, 2026. This event is organized under the theme “**Glocal Intersections**” and is coordinated by **the ISA Research Committee 51 on Sociocybernetics (RC51) Board**, with David Karminski Katz serving as Chair of the local organizing committee.

Rapid global transformations and emerging risks highlight the critical need to understand how information flows, social structures, and feedback processes operate simultaneously across multiple scales, shaping hybrid realities. In this context, the “glocal” becomes crucial analytical lens. Participants are encouraged to explore the interrelations among social complexity, risk, emerging technologies, adaptive governance, and processes of self-organization within an increasingly interdependent world.

### Call for Papers

The conference welcomes theoretical, methodological, and applied papers that contribute to advancing this new sociocybernetic paradigm. We particularly encourage submissions that integrate systemic models, second-order cybernetics, network analysis, artificial intelligence, resilience dynamics, or transdisciplinary approaches connecting local and global dimensions in contemporary social phenomena.

All papers should demonstrate academic rigor and critical engagement with glocal intersections, offering innovative contributions that expand the field of sociocybernetics and its capacity to explain, anticipate, or intervene in complex social systems.

### Conference Format

The conference will be held in a hybrid format. While in-person participation in Oaxaca is strongly advised and encouraged, online presentations will also be possible. Oral sessions will combine both in-person and virtual presenters, based on their preferences.

This conference is grounded in an epistemic principle that seeks to foster horizontal, in-person interaction among researchers, students, and individuals outside the academic sphere. This approach promotes an open and accessible space for dialogue, where diverse perspectives can contribute to the collective construction of knowledge. Furthermore, it aims to encourage the creation of theoretical and methodological interconnections across a wide range of topics, thereby supporting a transdisciplinary reflection that enriches sociocybernetic approaches to complex phenomena.

### Submission Guidelines

Abstracts should be on 500-750 words, clearly stating the research problem, objectives, methodology, results, and implications. Use the following link for submission:

[Submission link](#)

We welcome original research papers, case studies, and review articles that align with the conference theme. Submissions should be in English, not exceeding 8,000 words, including references, tables, and figures. Selected works will be invited by the [Journal of Sociocybernetics](#) editors to submit their work for a special issue.

### Venue

The 19th International Conference of Sociocybernetics will take place in:

**Biblioteca Francisco de Burgoa** [www.facebook.com/BiblioBurgoa/](http://www.facebook.com/BiblioBurgoa/)

**Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) – Oaxaca** [unidadoaxaca.unam.mx](http://unidadoaxaca.unam.mx)

The participants are responsible for arranging accommodation on their own. Oaxaca is an attractive tourist centre so short visits will be arranged by the local organizers during the Conference. Get information in [www.oaxaca.travel/index.php/en-us/](http://www.oaxaca.travel/index.php/en-us/)

### Important Dates

Abstract Submission opens:	<b>6th March 2026</b>
Abstract Submission ends:	<b>15th April 2026</b>
Notification of Acceptance ends:	<b>30th April 2026</b>
Registration opens:	<b>6th March 2026</b>

Full Paper Submission Deadline: **15th July 2026** (to be considered for *Journal of Sociocybernetics* special issue)  
Conference Dates: **3rd – 7th August 2026**

### Publication

Selected authors will be invited to submit their work for a special issue of the [Journal of Sociocybernetics](#).

### Participation fees

RC51 non members: **100 USD**

Student fee RC51 non members: **50 USD\***

RC51 regular members in good standing (ISA and RC51): **No fee.**

\*For academic registration a student credential is needed to obtain the discount.

Interested in becoming an ISA RC51 member? [Find information here](#)

### Local Organizing Committee

David KARMINSKI KATZ (México) (Chair)

Jorge CARDIEL, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (México)

Other Committee members: TBA

### RC51 Organizing Committee

Saburo AKAHORI, Tokyo Woman's Christian University (Japan, Chair)

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Andrew MITCHELL, Kumamoto University (Japan)

Toru TAKAHASHI, Chuo University (Japan)

### Conference Background

This multi-disciplinary, International Conference on Sociocybernetics is the annual symposium organized by **the Research Committee 51 on Sociocybernetics (RC51) of the International Sociological Association (ISA)**. The main aim of RC51 is to stimulate and inform systems science approaches in sociology and other social sciences.

## Contact

**David KARMINSKI KATZ**, karminski.k@gmail.com, Chair of the local organizing committee.

For queries related to submission, please contact **Andrew MITCHELL**,

mitchell.andrew.neil@gmail.com, ISA RC51 Secretary and **Saburo AKAHORI**, akahori@lab.twcu.ac.jp, ISA RC51 President.

More information visit: [sociocybernetics.org/conference/](https://sociocybernetics.org/conference/)

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.

*Satoshi Iguchi*

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*End of RC51 newsletter Issue 47*