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Get your paper submitted to the XVIII ISA Congress of Sociology...!

Bernard Scott


IFSR and ISA Events information
Dear RC51 members,

Welcome to the RC51 Newsletter, Issue 28.

In this issue we report on the contents and highlights of the 12th RC51 2013 Conference on “The Sociocybernetics of Social Systems and Social Networks” held in Mérida, Yucatán (Mexico).

We thank Toru Takahashi who wrote a personal overview of the Conference (page 7). In the same way, Ksenia Sidorova, Roxana Quiroz Carranza and Astrid Karina Rivero Pérez, part of the new RC51 Merida’s group, contributed in this issue with their experience (page 9).

We also report on the Walter Buckley Memorial Award for Excellence in presenting Sociocybernetics, in the context of the Conference, this year granted to Dr. Luciano Gallón (Colombia). His extended abstract is included so that you can know what about his research.

In addition, we have two very interesting collaborations: first, on page 12, Bernd Hornung summarises part of his presentation on an initiative created within the RC51 and the SCiO related to the topic of Management of Complex Organizations. Bernd, who wrote a presentation about this thematic group in our last Newsletter, reflects on its importance, renews the invitation to collaborate and provides the specific information to do so.

Second: Bernard Scott shares a report of the American Society for Cybernetics Conference, 2013, University of Bolton, UK, July 30th - August 1st. We are happy to share that in that context, Bernard Scott was one of the recipients of The McCulloch Award “for outstanding and profound lifelong contributions to nurturing cybernetics through the development of both cybernetically based praxis in education, and major theories concerning learning and the learnable”. Congratulations! And thanks for the interesting insight into this parallel Conference, too.

As always, we bring to you some IFSR events and information, in this issue: the Ludwig von Bertalanffy PhD Scholarship 2013, the annual International Symposium on Knowledge and Systems Sciences in China and an interesting Conference on Research Integration and Implementation that you can attend online (see the final page).

Final message: Do not forget to submit your paper in time for the XVIII ISA World Congress of Sociology. We bring to you all the RC51 sessions so you can choose the best for your research topic.

Patricia Almaguer-Kalixto
RC51 Newsletter Editor
endev.research@gmail.com
MONDAY JUNE 24

8:00 – 9:00  Registration
9:00 – 9:30  OPENING CEREMONY
- DRA. GENNY MERCEDES NEGROE SIERRA, Director of the Faculty of Anthropological Sciences, Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán (UADY).
- DRA. EVA BUCHINGER, President of the ISA Research Committee 51 on Sociocybernetics.
- DRA. CARMEN CASTILLO, Local Organizing Committee.
- DRA. PATRICIA E. ALMAGUER KALIXTO, Abstract Committee Coordinator.
- DRA. MARGARITA MAASS, (Chair) Vice-President of the ISA Research Committee 51 on Sociocybernetics (CEIICH, UNAM).

9:30 – 11:00  OPENING LECTURE:
Trans-disciplinary research of socio-ecosystems at the International Long Term Ecological Research Network (ILTER)
Dr. Manuel Maass Moreno, Centro de Investigaciones en Ecosistemas (CIECO) Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México

Session 1  Chair: Eva Buchinger
12:30 – 13:10  1 From Cybernetics of Cybernetics to a Triadic Social Network Model
José A. Amozurrutia y Campos (CEIICH – UNAM / MEXICO)

13:10 – 13:50  2 Moral Populism in the Age of Systemic Crisis: A Case Study According to Luhmann’s Social Systems Theory
Prof. Toru Takahashi (Chuo University/ JAPAN)

13:50 – 14:30  3 Management of Intentionality, a fractal 2nd order cyber-technology in networks of systems of intentional actions
Henrique P. Santos, Joaquim B. Gouveia, Ana S. Cardoso (Centro de Estudos de Recursos Naturais Ambiente e Sociedade, ESAC / Universidade de Aveiro /PORTUGAL)

14:30 – 15:45  Welcomecocktail
15:45 – 17:00  Visit Museo del Mundo Maya

TUESDAY 25th of JUNE

Session 2  Chair: Bernard Scott
8:30 – 9:10  4 The sociocybernetics of social systems and social networks
Michael Paetau(Center for Sociocybernetics Studies Bonn / GERMANY)

9:10 – 9:50  5 Cybercultur@, Sociocybernetics and networks: A proposal for setting up a network of communities Emerging Interdisciplinary Research
Margarita Maass (CEIICH · Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México /MEXICO)

9:50 – 10:30  6 Managing complex organizations - Challenges and Proposals
Bernd R. Hornung (University Hospital Giessen and Marburg GmbH / GERMANY)

10:30 – 11:10  7 Building knowledge from interdisciplinary work and communication networks
Ana Lucía Recaman Mejía (Universidad La Salle, Cuernavaca / MEXICO)
Session 3  Chair: Fabio Giglietto

12:30 – 13:10 8  Innovation in social systems theory  
Eva Buchinger (AIT Austrian Institute of Technology / AUSTRIA )

13:10 – 13:50 9  Sustainable Technology Assessment and Sustainable Scenarios of Techno Social Phenomena  
Michiko Amemiya-Ramirez (UNAM / MEXICO)

13:50 – 14:30 10  Doing Justice: Humans, Society, Life, Evolution. The price to be paid  
Helmut Loeckenhoff (Independent Researcher / GERMANY )

14:30 – 15:10 11  Educational Networks in Bourdieu’s Habitus and Capitals integration: a Sociocybernetics perspective  
Norma Angélica Martínez López (Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, México)

15:10 – 16:30 LUNCH
16:30 – 18:30 Workshop 1 (By Bernard Scott, Center for Sociocybernetics Studies, Germany/UK)

19:00 – 20:00 Board Meeting

WEDNESDAY 26th of JUNE

Session 4  Chair: Juan Carlos Barrón-Pastor

8:30 – 9:10 12  Reflections on the Sociocybernetics of Social Networks  
Bernard Scott (Center for Sociocybernetics Research, Bonn GERMANY /UK)

9:10 – 9:50 13  The Paradox of Social Ties after the ICT Revolution: A Second-Order Observation  
Saburo Akahori (Tokyo Woman’s Christian University / JAPAN )

9:50 – 10:30 14  Can urban society self-organize its government? The case of Teotihuacan  
Tom Froese, Linda Manzanilla and Carlos Gershenson (UNAM/Centro de Ciencias de la Complejidad / MEXICO)

10:30 – 11:10 15  Social Experiments and Comparison of Disparate  
Ihar Miklashevich (Belarusian National Technical University, BELARUS)

Session 5  Chair: ChaimeMarcuello

12:30 – 13:10 16  A systematic approach of death and its scope in contemporary society  
David Karminsky (Universidad Anahuac de Oaxaca / MEXICO )

Arturo Augusto Cano Cabrera (Center for the Study of Religion and Culture AC / MEXICO)

15:10 - 16:30 LUNCH
16:30 – 18:30 Workshop 2(in Spanish)  
Sociocibernética y sistemassociales. Dr. Felipe Lara-Rosano (UNAM, Mexico )
THURSDAY 27th of JUNE

Session 6  8:30 – 9:10  Chair: Michael Pateau
18 Semantic Cartographies for Social Representations in B-learning activities: A sociocybernetic perspective.
José A. Amozurrutia, Juan Carlos Pérez (LabCOMplex (CEIICH, UNAM) / Universidad del Altiplano / MEXICO)

9:10 – 9:50  19 A Sociocybernetic framework for meaning construction
Felipe Lara-Rosano and María Guadalupe Velázquez-Guzmán. (UNAM / U. Pedagógica Nacional /MEXICO)

9:50 – 10:30  20 Sociocybernetic approach to sustainability: collaborative planning, sport fishing and tourism.
Michiko Amemiya-Ramírez, María Fernanda Contreras del Valle, Germán Ponce Díaz,DanielLluch,Luis A. Bojórquez-Tapia / (MEXICO)

10:30 – 11:10  21 The complexity of meanings of rural-urban relocation of high dam migrants in time: Case study of keban dam migrants in Elazig, Turkey
Ilknur ONER (Sociology Department, Elazig, TURKEY)

Session 7  12:30 – 13:10  Chair: Patricia E. Almaguer-Kalixto
22 Regional Sustainability Model. A Networking Building Tool for the Promotion of Sociocybernetics
Luciano Gallón (Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana / COLOMBIA)

13:10 – 13:50  23 Contributions of cultural diversity in land use planning to facilitate adaptation.
Lilina Racamán (Universidad del Cauca / COLOMBIA)

13:50 – 14:30  24 Identity and absorption of insecurity. An approach to the concept of religious lending in Niklas Luhmann’s social theory
Antonio Berthier (Universidad Anahuac de Oaxaca / MEXICO)

14:30 – 15:10  25 LUNCH

15:10 – 16:30  Workshop 3. Social Systems and Social networks: from Simulation to Observation
(Dr. Fabio Giglietto Urbino Bo University, Italy)

19:00 – 20:30  Business Meeting

FRIDAY 28th of JUNE

Session 8  8:30 – 9:10  Chair: Margarita Maass
25 Complex systems approach and critical thinking in the construction of the research project about the youth in a “marginalized” community in Merida, Yucatan, Mexico
Ksenia Sidorova, Roxana Quiroz Carranza and Astrid Karina Rivero Pérez (UADY / MEXICO)

9:10 – 9:50  26 Participatory network analysis as tool for enhanced reflexivity
Patricia E. Almaguer Kalixto/ Pedro J. Escriche Bueno (Centro de Estudios Rurales y de Agricultura Internacional CERAI / Universidad de Zaragoza / SPAIN)

9:50 – 10:30  27 “Back to Citizens the National Sovereignty: The Networked 5 Stars Movement in Italy
Aida Huerta Barrientos (UNAM / MEXICO)
Session9  Chair: José A. Amozurrutia y Campos

12:30 – 13:10

29  Second screen and Political Talk-Shows: Measuring and Understanding the Italian Participatory Coach Potato
Fabio Gigiletto (Department of Communication Studies, Università di Urbino Carlo Bo / ITALY)

13:10 – 13:50

30  Understanding hegemonic forms of autopoiesis and power reproduction: towards a heuristic model to explain mainstream media functioning in North America
Juan Carlos Barrón Pastor (CISAN-UNAM / MEXICO)

15:10 – 19:00 VISIT / LUNCH

20:00 – 23:30 Close of Conference and Conference Dinner

2013 Conference highlights:
Patricia Almaguer Kalixto

Following our previous conference topics related to complexity, social action and complex social systems, the 12thRC51 2013 Conference addressed “The sociocybernetics of social systems and social networks”, in fields of complex social phenomena such as education, economy, interdisciplinary research, international relations, management, migration, new social media communication, scientific production, sustainability, social movements and systemic violence.

43 papers were submitted in response the call for papers. The Chair of the Local Organizing Committee, Margarita Maass and the RC51 Secretary Czeslaw Mesjasz collaborated with the Head of the Abstracts Committee, Patricia Almaguer-Kalixto, to organize the blind reviewing by the International Scientific Committee: Michael Pateau (Germany), Chaime Marcuello (Spain), Eva Buchinger (Austria), Felipe Lara Rosano (Mexico), Bernd Hornung (Germany), Fabio Gigiletto (Italy), and Bernard Scott (UK).

Thirty papers were included in the final program, which also included three workshops, and the RC51 Business meeting. The workshops were successful at introducing newcomers to the central concepts of our research group as well as proposing new topics for further debates. We thank to Dr. Bernard Scott, (Center for Sociocybernetics Studies, Germany/UK) who gave the seminar “Introducing Sociocybernetics”, Dr. Felipe Lara-Rosano (UNAM, Mexico), who gave his seminar in Spanish entitled “Sociocibernética y sistemascociales” and to Dr. Fabio Gigiletto (Urbino Bo University, Italy) whose seminar was about “Social Systems and Social networks: from Simulation to Observation.”
We had participants coming from **11 countries**: Italy, UK, Germany, Japan, Spain, Colombia, Austria, Turkey, Portugal, Belorusia and Mexico. The event was held in at the “Centro Cultural Universitario” of the Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán (UADY) in Calle 60 No. 491-A x 57 Centro Histórico (City Centre), Mérida City, Yucatán (México). Thanks to the logistic support of Dra. Carmen Castillo and her research group based in UADY.

The event provided an excellent opportunity to visit Mérida, Yucatan, and its contemporary and ancient Mexican cultural expressions. Four excursions were organized at the conference. You can find further information about the conference, such as abstracts, participants, etc., on the official website of the RC51 or you can download the program from the following address:


**An Inspiring Encounter with Sociocybernetics: Experiences in the 12th Conference of Sociocybernetics of RC51 in Merida.**

*Toru Takahashi, Faculty of Law, Chuo University, Japan*

About 20 years ago, my academic mentor taught me the social systems theories of Talcott Parsons and Niklas Luhmann with great passion. In retrospect, that was my first contact with sociocybernetics. Since then, I have participated in translation projects of Niklas Luhmann’s books as a co-translator in Japan (*Soziale Systeme, Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft, Die Gesellschaftsstruktur und Semantik 3*) and tried to apply social systems theory to contemporary social phenomena. But, it’s my prehistory before I had significant contact with international colleagues in sociocybernetics.

Picture: Takashi’s presentation at the Conference.
Photo provided by the author: Toru Takashi ©
This year, I decided to participate in the 12th Conference of Sociocybernetics of RCS1 in Merida. Of course, this is the first participation in the RCS1 conference. And it’s my first visit to Mexico and Latin America! As I expected, the experience in Merida was great. I learned the rich tradition of sociocybernetics from the instructive workshop and was inspired by aspiring and interesting presentations. And I was convinced that sociocybernetics has great potential for its theoretical development and fertile fields for empirical studies. In various research fields, the approach of sociocybernetics has proven its applicability to concrete social processes—not only micro processes such as interpersonal communications and organizations, but also macro processes such as interrelations between functional systems (ex. politics, economy, mass media etc.) and social processes in regional societies. And I also learned that sociocybernetics includes ecological, mathematical, historical, and psycho-social approaches in the conference. As I am fascinated by the theme, the future of the complex society, I think that studies of long-term societal change from macro perspectives could be important parts of sociocybernetics.

Experiences in Yucatan, foods, streets and buildings of Merida and the legacies of Mayan civilization were also very interesting and enjoyable for me. I talked about Mayan Glyph and kanji (Chinese character) with my colleague in El Gran Museo del Mundo Maya de Mérida. In Japanese writing, we use a mixed writing system of logographic (ideographic) character and syllabic character. The former makes it difficult to learn Japanese writing for foreign students, but sometimes it is useful to translate Luhmann’s complicated (!) theoretical concepts. Now I can say with confidence that I made a really good choice to participate in the 12th Conference of Sociocybernetics of RCS1 in Merida.
ISA Conference of Sociocybernetics in Merida: an insightful experience
Ksenia Sidorova, Roxana Quiroz Carranza and Astrid Karina Rivero Pérez (Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán, México)

It has been a great experience attending the RC51 Conference of Sociocybernetics in Merida. Going into our first RC51 Conference has given us a good sense of how this research group works, how committed its members are to the development of sociocybernetics theory and research, as well as what their epistemological, theoretical, and methodological position on the research in social sciences and sociocybernetics, in particular, is. We were pleasantly surprised to meet a truly international and multidisciplinary group of researchers. The papers that they presented allowed us to see the multiplicity of approaches to sociocybernetics and a vast array of complex social phenomena and processes that sociocybernetics can help explain. We were also able to confirm that there is a variety of methodological strategies that can be applied when conducting sociocybernetics research, ranging from systems modeling and simulation to qualitative in-depth explorations of social phenomena, including ethnography and life histories, as far as the reality studied is visualized as a complex social system.

Social networks as the object of the conference proved to be an interesting debate issue. There are different types of social networks, as well as the ways to approach, define, and research them. What are the similarities and differences between systems and networks? What kind of networks and social action are created through social media? How do these networks shift the social meanings of solidarity? How do social support networks in poor urban communities motivate young people to go on with their lives in a search of a better future? These are only some of the questions that the participants posed and tried to respond.
We think it important to mention that the conference was very well organized. There was enough time and a lot of disposition on the part of the conference participants to listen to their peers’ presentations, share ideas, make questions, and give valuable feedback, although—as is to be expected in a multicultural context—there were some language barriers, which the participants tried to overcome through individual effort and mutual cooperation. Even so, we think it is important to think of more inclusive strategies to deal with language barriers.

As newcomers to this research group we cannot but feel grateful to all the colleagues for their attention and feedback on the paper we presented. The atmosphere of mutual respect that characterized all conference sessions and the exigency of scientific rigor of the presentations, commentaries, and discussions, were highly encouraging. In fact, this insightful debut has motivated us to get more involved in the interdisciplinary research of the social reality from a sociocybernetics approach.

Finally, we would like to express our heart-felt thanks to people who have made this RC51 conference possible and those who have shared their knowledge during that one interesting week in Merida. We fully enjoyed the one-week event that has benefited us so much.

Walter Bucley Memorial Award for Excellence in presenting Sociocybernetics granted to Dr. Luciano Gallón (Colombia)

This year, best presentation in our Conference was granted to Luciano Gallón from Facultad de Ingeniería Industrial, Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, who presented a REGIONAL SUSTAINABILITY MODEL: A NETWORKING BUILDING TOOL FOR THE PROMOTION OF SOCIOCYBERNETICS, in a retrospective way, giving the process of construction for his model. One of the aspects recognized by the Committee in its final decision was Luciano’s capacity to summarise in the presentation, the overall process of his work in recent years.
Luciano’s abstract:
This research deals with mental models of reality that can be captured and encoded into a model built with the help of software tools based on system dynamics. It is done to better understand the structure and dynamics of development and poverty of human beings and societies in a particular region. Thus, collecting different mental models, then capturing them through the codification with system dynamics and finally, linking them properly, you get a simulation tool that allows one to analyze and synthesize relationships between development, poverty and sustainability.

The model was made through a process of synthesis which has been called Complex Systems Mass Modeling with System Dynamics, and proposes a model that includes:

- One (1) Population module
- One (1) Workforce module
- Ten (10) deciles of income / consumption
- Fifteen (15) Productive Sectors
- One (1) Economic aggregates calculations module
- Twelve (12) types of Capital
- Five (5) types of Connectivity
- Eight (8) types of Technology
- Ten (10) types of Mobility
- Ten (10) types of pollution/contamination
- Twenty (23) types of ecosystem services
- Five (5) types of Natural Resources
- Eleven (11) types of Biome
- One (1) Sustainability integrator module from multiple perspectives (HDI, Human Wellbeing Index, ecological footprint, balance of complex nested multi scale systems)
- Five (5) scenarios, each defined by forty (40) parameters
- More than six thousand variables
- And a simulation horizon of 300 months (25 years)

That the simultaneous interaction of variables can be simulated on a PC, easily, makes it possible to have available, for the first time, a tool to analyze the consequences of management and government decisions in different areas of intervention in a region and can better understand the consequences on their sustainability.

The process of modeling the Regional Sustainability Model (RSM) was divided into four phases: initial drafts, structured drafts, adaptation of previous models and modular RSM. This paper provides an overview of the developments that followed the modeling work through the stages in order to document the application of the methodology of system dynamics. The RSM development described in this article took two years and was part of the author's doctoral thesis. The paper described five aspects directly related to the model developed using system dynamics: how it was built with the tool, which
architectures represent it, what scenarios were identified and parameterized, of which elements are formed the database that feeds it and how is the interface to interact with it.

Building section covers various aspects of its antecedents and systems dynamics base models and describe the contributions and the process followed by the author during the evolution of modeling. The Architecture section describes the selection of variables and their overall, modular, relationships and of each of the modules architecture; the Scenarios section shows the history and base scenarios and describes the process of construction and parameterization of the RSM scenarios; The Database section presents and explains the sources and data architecture, and finally, the Interface section explains the five developed user interfaces for interaction with the model.

In this context of explanations, one finds that in the observed system (by humans) the space and time scales at which salient events occur are changing, while for most of observers, his capability of observation of these new scales, not, and this happens not only because there is not the will to do it, but by the inherent capabilities of the observer system. With his distinction between first-order studies of observed systems and second-order of observers systems, sociocybernetics provides a conceptual, epistemological and methodological unifying framework.

Conceptual thinking of sustainability is an approach that is based on the observation of the behavior of the observer, and makes of sociocybernetics an essential framework to treat systemic complex problems in which the observer is part of the system. Human Sustainability is a second-order cybernetics problem and cannot be solved only by using first-order tools.

Therein lies the origin of the need of first-order cybernetics tools (boundaries, sub and supra-systems, circular causality, positive and negative feedback and simulation) to study the observed system, and of second-order (self-reference, self-direction, self-organization, self-catalysis and autopoiesis) to study the observer system, so the problems of the present and the future, including sustainability, can be dealt with a wide range of alternatives.

Finally the paper suggests why it is attractive to move forward in structuring and feeding the database that supports the RSM, determining connectors with public databases, explore the possibility of designing and operating a data observatory useful for the system dynamics modeling community so that, by networking, the RSM can be expanded, improved and used as a teaching tool in which system dynamics serves as a transformative mechanism in the new curricula focused on education for sustainable development and including the ideas of sociocybernetics.
Management of Complex Organizations at the 12th International Conference of Sociocybernetics
Bernd Hornung, University of Marburg, Germany
Mérida, Yucatán (México), June 24-28, 2013

The management of complex organizations was not an explicit topic of this conference of ISA RC51 on "The Sociocybernetics of Social Systems and Social Networks: Interaction and Multiple Systems". However, already the opening lecture by Manuel Maass Moreno on "Trans-disciplinary Research of Socio-ecosystems at the International Long Term Ecological Research Network (ILTER)" made clear, that the highly complex ecological environment with the problems it imposes on human society and its organizations cannot be understood, much less managed, by traditional multi-factorial approaches. Moreover, in many cases the problems are not imposed on social systems but rather created by those very social systems in the first place, which afterwards are confronted with negative impacts of the ecological consequences. The social systems and organizations entangled in intricate feedback loops with ecology which require, from a sociocybernetic view, a systemic approach taking into account positive and negative feedbacks, relations between systems, subsystems, an over-arching larger sytems, as well as phenomena of self-organization.
In terms of complexity, the contribution of Manuel Maass Moreno, as well as other presentations, showed the high relevance of Ashby’s "Law of Requisite Variety", which states that only a system with sufficient internal variety can effectively deal with (cope with or manage) external, environmental variety. More explicit on complexity, but basically professing the same idea, is Luhmann’s dictum that "Only (internal) complexity can reduce (external) complexity". This was also illustrated in other contributions, especially those dealing in some way with community development and the development of social networks, whether related to ecolocial problems or not.

The presentation on "Managing Complex Organizations: Challenges and Proposals" (by Bernd R. Hornung) was explicitly devoted to this particular topic. The presentation resumed the thread of previous presentations at conferences of RC51 in Cracow, Poland, and in Faro, Portugal. Apart from up-dating on recent developments at the university hospital used for an example, a series of hypotheses was presented and discussed on what may constitute a "sociocybernetic management of complex organizations":

1) Formulate clear policies, priorities, explicit structures & processes.
2) Run your organization in a goal- and client-oriented way.
3) Real client satisfaction first, not only on the website.
4) Be consequent and consistent in your actions and with policies.
5) Give clear directions with reasons when and where appropriate.
6) The most important resource and capital is human capital: Your staff.
7) Use feedback and (cybernetic) control (not policing).
8) Use and organize local knowledge (inside and outside your organization).
9) Listen to and seek advice from your staff.
10) Use formal and informal communication channels.
11) Delegate as far as possible – but keep informed.
12) Respect and make use of subsystem-autonomy (reduction of complexity).
13) Adapt and develop your organization including all stakeholders.

This paper and the discussions it provoked, but also quite a number of other contributions as reported above, showed the importance and the high interest of this particular topic: "Management of Complex Organizations". It is much more specific and concrete than the catch-all-category of "Complexity Studies" in general.

Therefore the invitation to members of RC51 as well as to interested non-members is to be renewed here: To join the Internet discussion group "Task Force on Management of Complex Organizations", which is affiliated both with ISA RC51 and SCIO- Systems and Cybernetics in Organisation. SCIO is a UK-based society promoting in particular practical applications of sociocybernetics in different kinds of organizations. More information can be found on Bernd Hornung’s website on management of complexity http://sociocybernetics.unizar.es/chen/Hornung/webcompl.html.
While maintaining close exchanges with both organizations and using the meetings and conferences both of SCiO and RC51 for face-to-face discussions and presentations of papers, the Internet Task Force will act independently from both. The focus will be on Internet communication to avoid time and resource constraints which usually go along with conferences.

To initiate this group, Bernd Hornung and John Raven will act as a preliminary founding committee to get activities started. It is expected, however, to establish a more permanent coordinating group of three or four colleagues, as John Raven and Bernd Hornung will not be available for organizational tasks at long term.

To Participate Please Contact:

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Get your paper submitted to the XVIII ISA Congress of Sociology...!

Now we are back from the highly successful 12th RC51 conference in Merida/Mexico, we would like to remind you that the abstract submission for the XVIII ISA World Congress of Sociology in Yokohama/Japan, July 13-19, 2014 is open (deadline September 30, 2013). We invite you to send your abstracts and share your ideas and research issues with all the others. RC51 Sessions (in alphabetical order) are:

- **A More Equal World: A Systemic Perspective to Think the Relation between Knowledge Construction and Cultural Management Development**
- **Complejidad, intervención social y trabajo comunitario. Complexity, Social Intervention and Community Work**
- **Developments in Systems and/or Cybernetic Approaches: Asian and European and American Perspectives. Part I**
- **Developments in Systems and/or Cybernetic Approaches: Asian and European and American Perspectives. Part II**
- Gender Based Violence, Consequences and Public Policies: Sociocybernetic Approaches
- Interpersonal Violence as a Complex Issue: Research through Advanced Techniques Using Discourse Analysis, Video and Micro Methods of Data Analysis
- Observing Social Systems in the Era of Big Data
- Recalibrating the Social
- Social Networks, Digital Generation and Democratization Processes
- Sociocybernetic Theories and Conceptualizations of Social Change and Transformations
- Sociocybernetics of Innovation: Drivers, Barriers and Stabilizers of Innovation in Different Theoretical Contexts
- Special Sessions in Cooperation with the Japanese Systems Theory Societies. Part II: Dialogue on Niklas Luhmann’s Sociological Systems Theory
- The Management of Complex Organizations and Firms: A Sociocybernetic Challenge
- The Sociocybernetics of “Cybernation” and the Emerging “Cyber-Nation”

Please consider the deadline for the on-line abstracts submission:
September 30, 2013, 24.00 GMT.

online abstract submission:
https://isaconf.confex.com/isaconf/wc2014/cfp.cgi
What just happened? A report of the American Society for Cybernetics Conference, 2013, University of Bolton, UK, July 30th - August 1st

By Bernard Scott, Centre for Sociocybernetic Studies (UK/Germany)

The theme of the conference was acting, learning, understanding. This is from the conference website ([http://asc-cybernetics.org/2013/?page_id=403](http://asc-cybernetics.org/2013/?page_id=403)): “In our conference we will consider the conference theme “Acting—Learning—Understanding” through both the way that action leads to understanding (sub-theme 1), and understanding leads to action (sub-theme 2), bringing the two together in a circular form where each can be seen to cause the other. We will do this through talking and through acting together.”

I sometimes refer to the ASC as RC51’s sister organisation, because of the shared concerns with second order cybernetics. It was no surprise then that I found the conference to be similar in spirit to RC51 conferences, with an ethos that encouraged people to interact and get to know each other. However, the conference was designed somewhat differently. Apart from one evening when eight papers were presented in two parallel sessions, the conference consisted of working on tasks in small groups and coming together in plenaries to present outcomes.

Before the conference, participants were advised thus: “The conference will be conducted in a conversational style. We will work together (collaborate) in small groups and through plenary sessions, to improve understanding and acting, explored together. This conference is not about paper presentations but about conversations. Participants should share an interest to listen and to converse. The premise is not to listen to known answers, but to become involved in developing new questions” ([http://asc-cybernetics.org/2013/?page_id=5](http://asc-cybernetics.org/2013/?page_id=5)).

As pre-conference activities, on the day before the conference began, participants could attend introductory workshops. Ranulph Glanville gave an all day Master Class entitled “An introduction to Cybernetics”; Stuart Umpleby presented a two and a half hour tutorial on “Second Order Cybernetics and Reflexivity”. I gave a two and a half hour tutorial entitled “Cybernetics and Learning”.

The conference proper began with a “warm-up” plenary session, which served both as an “icebreaker” and as an introduction to the conference theme. Prior to the conference, all participants were invited to construct a musical instrument of some kind out of household items. Somewhat unoriginally, my instrument consisted of three wineglasses, partly filled with water, played by being tapped with teaspoons. At the session, all participants, some 50 in total, gathered together to present and explain
orchestrated and conducted by one of the conference facilitators, Mark Johnson. Following this, the participants were divided into small groups. Each group had approximately six members. Each group was then asked to compose its own musical performance. In my group, we took it in turns to try out each other’s instruments. Interestingly, one of the group members showed me a better way to play my own instrument. The session worked well as an icebreakers and it gave each of us some concrete and shared experiences of acting, learning and understanding. In the following sessions, the groups were asked to discuss the two subthemes and to present findings to the rest of the participants at plenary sessions. The membership of the groups was changed for the second sub-theme. Interestingly, the group I was with decided to stay together; this was permitted by the facilitators. Discussions in the small groups were rich and diverse, certainly so in the case of the group of which I was a member. I got to know and make friends with some very interesting individuals, including, a management consultant, an academic interested in systems and power, an artist and designer working with leading edge “embedded” interactive technologies, a philosopher/systems theorist, a professor of business systems and economics, a PhD student studying architecture and design and a researcher involved with learning technologies.

The group presentations at the plenaries were varied and entertaining. Rather than give dry, didactic reports, many groups chose to act out their insights and understandings in performance, using drama, dance and mime. Topics covered ranged from the minutiae of learning to type to addressing the “wicked” problems confronting mankind at a global level.

As well as the evening “paper presentation session”, there was an evening session featuring a variety of demonstrations and entertainments, including demonstrations of: musical improvisation; using virtual reality to simulate psychotic states; a “one note” piece of electronic music that induced an ever-changing soundscape in the listener.

At the final plenary, participants were asked to come up with questions, one per person, that they would be taking away with them for further reflection. My own question was “What just happened?” (the title of this report), as I felt I needed time to digest and reflect on my experiences. The full set of questions raised have now been posted on the conference website (http://asc.cybernetics.org/2013/?p=1604).

Also, at the final plenary, Ranulph Glanville announced the ASC awards for 2013. The ASC offers two major awards to cyberneticians of distinction and / or contributions to the field of cybernetics: the Norbert Wiener Gold Medal and the Warren McCulloch Award. More recently, the ASC has begun awarding the Heinz von Foerster Award for young people participating in the ASC annual conferences, The Wiener Gold Medal is awarded to individuals who have made a major and prolonged contribution to Cybernetics through work in the field, in any number of ways: for instance, through original work or through extensive support. There was no award this year.
The McCulloch Award is given to a young academic at or near the beginning of their career for work of distinction and promise. It also recognises substantial work of a cybernetic nature applied outside the field itself. There were two recipients this year: Bernard Scott, “for outstanding and profound lifelong contributions to nurturing cybernetics through the development of both cybernetically based praxis in education, and major theories concerning learning and the learnable” and The Heinz von Foerster Society, “for an extensive, prolonged, deep and successful commitment to the furtherance of the work of Heinz von Foerster and other cyberneticians concerned with second-order cybernetics and related approaches and understandings”.

The von Foerster Award is given to the young person whose contribution to the given year's conference is voted most notable by the ASC Executive Board. The 2013 recipient was Chathurika Kannangara, a PhD student in the Centre for Educational Cybernetics, the University of Bolton.

On the two days immediately following the conference, there were some post-conference activities, with the aim of agreeing ways forward. I was not able to attend these sessions. I look forward to hearing about their outcomes in due course.

It is hard to evaluate the overall achievements of the conference. By its nature, everyone experienced their own learning trajectory and, no doubt, as I am, everyone is constructing their own retrospective narratives, evaluating what happened to them against their own interests. Everyone in some way or another has come away with new understandings. Everyone has fresh questions to pursue. Certainly, everyone will have a better understanding of the complex processes that constitute acting, learning and understanding and which, in turn, constitute the complex circular processes of being human, individually or as part of a collective, a social organisation or institution. For me, being at the conference was a remarkable experience, albeit, somewhat of an endurance test. I suspect I will be revisiting, reflecting on and drawing from my experiences for the rest of my life, as I continue, in a variety of contexts, to act, learn and understand.

This has been a very terse report of a complex, intense and exciting event. More information is available on the conference website. In due course, I understand that a collection of papers will be published in the journal *Kybernetes*, following peer review.

As listed on the conference website, several individuals were involved in the organisation of the conference, not least the local hosts at the University of Bolton. However, without doubt, the eminence grise behind the form and the success of this event was Ranulph Granville, the current President of the ASC.
IFSR and ISA Events information

From INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION FOR SYSTEMS RESEARCH (IFSR) members:

Ludwig von Bertalanffy PhD Scholarship 2013

Call for Ludwig von Bertalanffy PhD Scholarship applications 2013. The Bertalanffy Center for the Study of Systems Science (BCSSS), Vienna, offers a scholarship for the support of work in systems science leading to a PhD-degree at an Austrian university. This call is open until 31st of October 2013. For more information: http://www.bcsss.org/research/grants-and-prizes/ludwig-von-bertalanffy-phd-scholarship/

The 14th International Symposium on Knowledge and Systems Science. October 25-27, 2013
"Knowledge Creation toward Emergency Management", Ningbo, China

The annual international symposium on Knowledge and Systems Sciences aims to promote the exchange and interaction of knowledge across disciplines and borders to explore the new territories and new frontiers. http://www.iskss.org/conference/kss2013/

Conference on Research Integration and Implementation

In Canberra, Australia, the first global conference on Research Integration and Implementation is scheduled for September 8-11, 2013. You can be part of the conference online or at a co-conference in Germany, the Netherlands or Uruguay. Follow that link.

Note from the RC51 Newsletter editor: We hold no responsibility in changes of the information provided about events organized beyond the RC51. Please check directly with the organizers.

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 the broader scientific community interested in Sociocybernetics.

Please contact the Newsletter editor with any information you would like to include or with any further suggestions. Patricia Almaguer-Kalixto endev.research@gmail.com

RC51 website http://sociocybernetics.wordpress.com
ISA website http://www.isa-sociology.org

End of the RC51 newsletter Issue 28