



# Newsletter

## *Official Newsletter of the International Federation for Systems Research*

*Editor-in-Chief: Gerhard Chroust*

*Volume 30, no. 1 (December 2013)*



The new web site of the IFSR.

*Dear Members!*

*It is time to take look back at 2013: You are aware that in odd years the IFSR has less external visibility but often more work takes place internally. Our President, Gary Metcalf summarizes, what has been achieved in 2013. For some of the achieved items you can find more information in the articles of this newsletter: The Board Meeting on Saturday April 25, 2014 is of special importance as the election for the Executive Committee of the IFSR is held.*

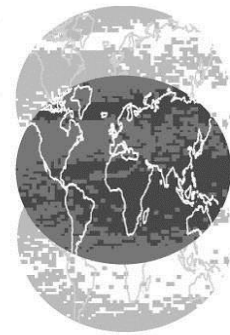
*You also find reports about meetings and activities of our member societies.*

*With the improvement of our web site the Newsletter will not be used for short-lived announcements but rather for archival information which may be of use even years from now. Therefore please be prepared to provide more information for the next Newsletter, scheduled for early summer 2014. It is YOUR Newsletter, so feed it! In that line we are proud to inform you that ALL IFSR Newsletters (started in 1981) and several proceedings from IFSR Conversations are now to be found on the IFSR web site in their full length.*

*Let me convey to you my warm Seasons Greetings and my best Wishes for the upcoming New Year!*

*Yours sincerely*

*Gerhard Chroust*



ISSN 1818-0809 (print)  
ISSN 1818-0817 (electronic)

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## President's Message

This year has been an extremely busy one for the IFSR Executive Committee. Much of the work has been concentrated in redesigning the website, which has driven a great deal of reflection about the role of the IFSR, and the relationships with our members. In July, we participated as part of the annual meeting of the International Society for the Systems Sciences in Haiphong, Vietnam. In August, we actively began planning the 2014 IFSR Conversation, to be held for the second time at the St. Magdalena conference center in Linz, Austria.

Changes to the IFSR constitution, approved at the 2012 board meeting, allowed for electronic voting by member organizations rather than waiting for our in-person meetings every two years in Vienna. Moving to an online format for member interaction, however, proved to be more challenging than anticipated. While many forms of technology are available, only email has been a common means of communication within the IFSR. What we learned about electronic voting was that simple was best. Using Doodle (an online program made for scheduling meetings) got a much better response rate by our members than more elaborate tools which required time and effort to learn. We are thus able consult our members more often during the year.

An awareness of these challenges influenced our thinking about the redesign of the IFSR website. While the previous site allowed for some input by member organizations, it was basically used as a static website. New information, such as upcoming conferences, was sent to Gerhard Chroust to be posted on the site on behalf of members. Very little interactivity took place.

The new site is built in WordPress, which has become a standard platform for personal blogs. While it looks much the same as a static website, its purpose was to allow for more interactivity and use of social media. After many weeks of intensive work, we were able to unveil the site at ISSS conference in

Vietnam. Now it also includes the copies of all IFSR Newsletter from No. 1 in 1981 onwards.

The new site is built to allow for RSS feeds (forwarding of new content) from member organizations' websites. Unfortunately, most of our member organizations do not have websites with that technology enabled. The site was also set up to collect information from users of Twitter accounts at the ISSS conference. Again, very few systems people seem to use social media. All of this caused us to think more about the ways in which we communicate, and the kind of information that we believe is valuable. (This is will be discussed further in the article about the website.) As we continue to evolve our roles within the executive committee, Stefan Blachfellner is the lead person for the website development.

Preparations for the upcoming IFSR conversation in Linz, Austria, have begun in earnest. It will be the most ambitious conversation in recent memory, hosting six teams and over 40 participants (the maximum space we were able to reserve.) Yoshi Horiuchi is being assisted by Mary Edson in planning organizing the event.

After many years of concerns about declining interest in systems theories, and declining memberships in our member organizations, it is possible that we are seeing the beginning of resurgence. "System" has become an increasingly common term to describe large-scale, interconnected problems, often beyond the ability of individual organizations or agencies to resolve.

As a consequence four more systemic societies joined the IFSR:

WCSA (World Complexity Science Academy),

GIROS (Groupe d'Intervention et de Recherche en Organisation des Systèmes),

ISCE (Institute for the Study of Coherence and Emergence), and

S&O (Systèmes & Organisations ASBL),

bringing our number of members to 42. These members also strengthen our connections to some parts of the world: WCSA being headquartered in Italy, GIROS and S&O in Belgium. Following the ISSS conference in Hai Phong in July 2013, a high-ranking delegation from Vietnam paid a visit to Vienna. Shortly after that, a newly formed Vietnamese systems organization expressed their intention to join the IFSR. In addition, Malik Management, Switzerland, the owner of the intellectual property rights to Stafford Beer's Viable Systems work, also is about to join as a new member.

The important link for us is with fields of study focused on those problems, and aware of a need for different approaches to understanding them. Our most direct connections in recent years have been with engineers, as evidenced by ongoing work with INCOSE. The work of

Ockie Bosch and Nam Nguyen, profiled as part of the conference in Vietnam, was recognized through a grant for a new project from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. These are only two examples of encouraging developments and we hope to see many more continuing to evolve. We would like to profile many more examples on the new website, and to get more member organizations involved with these kinds of projects, and with each other.

Finally, we will continue to hold Board Meetings the week following Easter in Vienna (Saturday, April 26, 2014), for all member organizations who can send representatives. I will look forward to seeing as many of you as possible there in April.

Gary Metcalf



## IFSR Activities planned for 2014

Find below an overview of our plans for 2014:

- 1) **Saturday, April 26, 2014: probably in the morning: Board Meeting of the IFSR!**  
An invitation will be mailed in January 2014. At this event the officers for the next period will be elected by the IFSR members. So please try to attend!
- 2) April 22 - 25, 2014: Participating and Supporting the EMCSR Conference (April 22-25) by the Ashby lecture: a prominent speaker to address the EMCSR
- 3) Sunday April 27 – Friday May 2, 2014: the IFSR-Conversation
- 4) IASCYS: Perhaps a meeting (general assembly?) of the IASCYS during the EMCSR 2014
- 5) June 2014: Publish the IFSR-Newsletter No. 31 (June 2014) with a short report on items 1 to 4
- 6) August 2014: Publish the Proceedings of the IFSR Conversation
- 7) November/December 2014: Publish the IFSR-Newsletter 32.



## IFSR Conversations Past and Future

In April 2014 we will hold our next IFSR Conversation. We describe the concept in general, give a short overview about their history and discuss the preparations plans for 2014



## What is a conversation?

Conversations were introduced by Bela H. Banathy around 1980 as an alternative to the classical conferences which usually consist only of presentation of streamlined papers and short question slots. In a Conversation a small group of scientists meets for several days to discuss in a self-guided way a topic of scientific and social importance. A Conversation is preceded by an intensive preparation phase and followed by a post-conversation consolidation period. No papers are presented during the conversation; the participants discuss face-to-face their topic, often modifying it in the course of the conversation.

<the next paragraph could be deleted, with respect to Alex's paper!!>

Since 1981 the IFSR has organized one IFSR Conversation every other year, originally in a hotel in Fuschl, near Salzburg (hence they were known as "Fuschl Conversations"). In order to improve the meeting facilities of the Conversations we moved to Pernegg, a small village nearer to Vienna in 2010. In 2012 we chose a seminar hotel in the outskirts of Linz, Austria, resulting in an even better

environment for the conversation. Additional Conversations were organized by IFSR's member organizations in many locations around the world

Most proceedings from these Conversation, starting with 1996, can be found on the IFSR homepage

<http://www.ifsr.org/index.php/category/archive/proceedings-of-ifsr-conversations>

### References:

Fuschl Conversation 1998: IFSR Newsletter, October 1996 vol. 15, no. 3 (No. 42), pp. 1-2

IFSR (ed.) (2010) Why Conversation and what form do they take? IFSR Newsletter, vol. 27 (2010), no. 1, p. 6 IFSR - International Federation for Systems Research, Linz, and [<http://www.ifsr.org/newsletters>].



## **A Brief Background on the Fuschl Conversations**

**Alexander Laszlo**

The International Conversations on the Comprehensive Design of Societal Systems took place every two years at Fuschl-Am-See in Austria from 1982 through 2008 and yearly at Asilomar in California from 1990 through 2006. Originally, these were the Conversations on the Comprehensive Redesign of Educational Systems, but the name was later changed and broadened to reflect the systemic recognition that educational systems cannot be redesigned separately from the rest of the societal systems with which they are intertwined. The Fuschl Conversations were continued in Pernegg, Austria, in 2010 and in Linz, Austria, in 2012 and now in 2014, though they are now known as the IFSR Conversations.

Given the success of the first five Fuschl Conversation events and the initial Asilomar Conversation, Bela H. Banathy established the International Systems Institute (ISI) in 1992 as an umbrella organization under which the Conversation Events could be nurtured and developed. It was Banathy's hope that an official organizational identity would help scholars and academic colleagues – considered Research Fellows of the Institute – to obtain funding and support from their respective institutions for attendance at the Conversation Events.

The ISI was set up as a complementary vehicle to the International Society for the Systems Sciences (ISSS) to carry out the special purpose of serving as a vehicle for conversation based inquiry in the systems sciences – an approach not actively fostered by the ISSS at the time. The association of systems societies to which both the ISI and the ISSS belong is the International Federation for Systems Research (IFSR) – <http://www.ifsr.org/index.php/member-societies/>. The IFSR came into existence 26 years after the founding of the ISSS and 12

years before the ISI. It was in 1980 that the IFSR was proposed under a joint initiative of the Netherlands Society for Systems Research (SN), the International Society for General Systems Research (ISGSR), and the Austrian Society for Cybernetic Studies (ASCS). Between 1962 and 1988, the ISSS was known as the ISGSR and only after that did it become the ISSS. When the ISI was begun in 1982, it did not split off from the ISGSR as some have claimed. In fact, Banathy was President of the ISGSR for the 1984-85 term, which is after he had founded the ISI. While these two organizations developed separately, they were in no way in competition or antagonism with each other. Through the establishment of the ISI, Banathy sought to provide a vehicle for systems thinkers, designers, scholars and practitioners to engage with each other in an interactive and conversational format not then found in the ISGSR. Nevertheless, membership flowed easily through both organizations at the same time.

In their book on Dialogue as a Collective Means of Design Conversation (2008), editors Patrick Jenlink and Bela Banathy provide a brief history of the Conversation Movement.

The first conversation took place at the Fuschl Lake in Austria in April 1982. A group of systems scholars met in a small hotel at the Fuschl Lake, near Salzburg. Participants came from three continents, representing ten cultures. They were invited as leaders of various systems societies. The conversation was organized by the International Systems Institute. The group spent five days in two conversation teams, addressing the question: How can we apply the insights gained from systems thinking and systems practice to promote human betterment and to improve the human condition? By the end of the conversations, the teams defined eighty items to guide the work of the various systems



societies and become an agenda for the conversations that follow. Following the Fuschl Conversation, a group of us — officers of the International Federation of Systems Research (IFSR) — attended the Board Meeting of the Federation, where the Board decided to provide funding for the Fuschl Conversations.

The various conversations that followed the first Fuschl event, have been organized and coordinated by the International Systems Institute, in cooperation with International Federation of Systems Research, and with several member organizations of the Federation. By now we [the ISI] have held thirty conversations; ten Conversations in Fuschl, Austria; eight regional conversations: two in Crete; one each in England, Finland, Greece, Hungary; and three in Spain. Since 1989, we have held twelve international Conversations at the Asilomar Conference Center in California and established the Asilomar Conversation Community (ACC) as a conversation community of the International Systems Institute.

This section comes from Banathy's chapter titled "The Conversation Movement", on pages 25-38. He always considered conversation as a "future creating disciplined inquiry" (Banathy, 1996, p. 45) when engaged with in the spirit of social systems design (SSD). According to Banathy, two complementary modes of dialogue comprise design conversation: generative dialogue and strategic dialogue (ibid., p. 218, following the work of David Bohm *On Dialogue* (1996)). One provides a process through which individuals become friends and partners in learning/designing and a community generates common meaning. The other focuses on particular tasks in the creation of solutions for a specific social circumstance. The complementary dynamic between generative and strategic dialogue echoes M. Scott Peck's (1987, p. 104) exhortation: "community-building first, problem-solving second."

Under Bela's Presidency (1994-1998), the IFSR gradually began taking on the administrative and logistical aspects of the Fuschl Conversations. This made sense from a variety of organizational standpoints given that both the Secretariat of the IFSR, and the Fuschl Conversation events (and all the subsequent conversations that continue its

legacy) are located in Austria. In addition, IFSR's Secretary General, Gerhard Chroust, has been a key player in the Fuschl Conversations from the time of Bela's Presidency of the IFSR on through the Pernegg Conversation in 2010 and in the Linz Conversations in 2012 and now in 2014, as well. Chroust continues to be an important figure in the IFSR, particularly as concerns the organization of what now seem to have settled as the Linz Conversation events every two years.

Although Banathy did not attend the Fuschl Conversations after 1996, when he passed away in 2003 the ISI effectively ceased to operate as the primary holding container of the Conversation Events, and the IFSR took over all aspects of the sponsorship and running of the Fuschl meetings. This was a natural transition since the IFSR had been providing sponsorship of these events since early on<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless, numerous other Conversation Events inspired by the Fuschl and Asilomar Conversations of the ISI continue to be held in other parts of the world, such as the *Conversaciones del Extremo Sur* which began in 2012 in the southern most city of the world, Ushuaia, Argentina, where two successful international Conversation Events have been held since then.

#### Recommended Reading and References:

Banathy, Bela H. *Designing Social Systems in a Changing World*. Plenum, 1996.

Bohm, David. *On Dialogue*. New York: Routledge, 1996.

François, Charles. *International Encyclopedia of Systems and Cybernetics*. K. G. Saur, 1997.

Hammond, Debora. *The Science of Synthesis: Exploring the Social Implications of General Systems Theory*. University Press of Colorado, 2010.

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<sup>1</sup> The proceedings of the Fuschl/IFSR Conversations from 1996 onward can be found on the IFSR website at <http://www.ifsr.org/index.php/category/archives/proceedings-of-ifsr-conversations/>.

The International Systems Institute – ISI  
<http://www.systemsinstitute.com/about-2>  
<http://www.systemsinstitute.com/about-2/the-isi-story>

Jenlink, Patrick and Banathy, Bela H. Dialogue as a Collective Means of Design Conversation (volume 2). Springer, 2008.

Laszlo, Alexander and Krippner, Stanley. Systems Theories: Their origins, foundations, and development. In Jordan, J.S. (ed.) Systems Theories and A Priori Aspects of Perception. Elsevier, 1996.

Laszlo, Alexander and Laszlo, Kathia Castro. The making of a new culture: Learning conversations and design conversations in social evolution. In P.M. Jenlink & B.H.

Banathy (Eds.), Dialogue as a Collective Means of Design Conversation. Springer, 2008.

Laszlo, Alexander and Laszlo, Kathia Castro. The evolution of evolutionary systems design. World Futures, 2002, Vol. 58, No. 6-7.

Laszlo, Kathia Castro and Laszlo, Alexander. The conditions for thriving conversations. In B.H. Banathy & P.M. Jenlink (Eds.), Dialogue as a Means for Collective Communication. Kluwer, 2001.

Peck, M. Scott. The Different Drum: Community building and peace. Simon and Schuster, 1987.



## **The IFSR Conversation 2014**

**Mary Edson**

Plans are well underway for the 2014 IFSR Conversation to take place at Sankt Magdalena near Linz, Austria, from April 27th to May 2nd. The Executive Committee has finalized the topics for the Conversation. The six team topics and team leaders are:

1. Systems Engineering and Systems Science – Janet Singer
2. The Artsience of Curating the Conditions for the Emergence of Thrivable Systems – Alexander Laszlo
3. How to Advance Cybernetics in the Current Environment – Michael Lissack
4. The Foundations and Future of Bela Banathy's Conversation – Gordon Rowland
5. Philosophical Foundation for the Modern Systems Movement – Jennifer Wilby
6. Approaches to Conducting Systems Research – Mary Edson

Invitations have been sent to approximately 36 team participants in addition to the Executive Committee. As in years past, we have had many enthusiastic responses. Registrations are due by December 27th. While we expect that the team members already invited will confirm their attendance, there is always a chance that a participant or two will be unable to attend. Should that occur, the Executive Committee has compiled a list of alternates who have expressed strong interest in participating in this Conversation. If you would like to be added to the list of alternatives, please send your contact information (name, email, and phone number) along with a description of your interests to [IFSR.org@gmail.com](mailto:IFSR.org@gmail.com). We are looking forward to an engaging Conversation next spring. Be sure to watch for the proceedings.



## The location



We are staying at the seminary hotel Sankt Magdalena on the outskirts of Linz, Austria. Linz is the third largest city in Austria and the capital of the province of Upper Austria. The population reaches approximately 191,000. The city is situated on both banks of the Danube, which serves its transportation and its tourist industry.



## A short History of Linz

Gerhard Chroust



Linz (Lentia) was founded by the Romans as a 'castellum' in 2nd century AD. In 799 AD the name 'Linze' is mentioned with respect to a church and a castle. It was a provincial and local government city of the Holy Roman Empire, as it connected several trade routes on either side of the river Danube from the East to West, as well as Poland and Bohemia from the north to the Balkans and Italy in the south.

During the reign of the House of Babenberg (976 to 1246) Linz became a town and was thus at the center of Austria to the west of the river Enns.

The House of Babenberg was followed by the House of Habsburg (1270 – 1918). The House of Habsburg (also spelled Hapsburg) was one of the most important royal houses of Europe.

The Habsburgs went on to take possession of countries surrounding their territory, herewith gaining land and influence for what was to become in 1867 the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy with an area of approximately 676.000 km<sup>2</sup> and 52,8 million inhabitants.

From 1438 onward the throne of the Holy Roman Empire was continuously occupied by the Habsburgs until its dissolution in 1806. In 1804 the sovereigns of Austria were given the

title "Emperor" (Kaiser). Friedrich III even chose Linz as his residential town and Linz became the center of the Holy Roman Empire between 1489 and 1493.

In March 1497 Linz was granted permission to build a bridge over the Danube. It was the third bridge over the Danube in Austria, following Vienna and Krems. It also proved to be an excellent source of income.

From the second half of the 19th century traffic on the Danube was served by steam ships. The first railway on the continent, drawn by horses, started to run between Linz and Budweis, Czech Republic, in 1832. The railway up the Pöstling mountain, the steepest adhesion railway in the world, began running in 1898.

From the middle of the 19th century on industrialization reached Linz. The shipyard of Linz was the first large industrial complex in the area of metal processing. The textile industry also played a significant part.

In March 1938 German troops marched into Austria, making Austria into part of the German

Reich, lasting until 1945. Hitler turned Linz into a major industrial center both for metallurgical and also chemical industries. Linz was heavily bombed between July 1944 and April 1945..

Between May 1945 and the end of foreign occupation in 1955 Linz was divided along the Danube. The North (Urfahr) with St. Magdalena was occupied by the Soviets, the South was American.

At the end of the seventies Linz tried to free itself from the "steel-town"-image of a grey and dirty industrial town. Modern industries, especially ICT came to Linz. Environmental measures besides regulations for industrial companies in order to improve the quality of air have resulted in Linz being one of the cleanest cities in Austria.

New cultural centers have also been opened, the Ars Electronica Center, an opera, and an art museum. In 1966 a university project was launched resulting in 1975 in the Johannes Kepler University Linz.

Gerhard Chroust



## Conference Reports



### Mayor of Hai Phong visits Vienna and the IFSR

Vienna, Austria, Sept 2 -3 , 2013

The contacts made by three officers of the IFSR (Gary Metcalf, Stefan Blachfellner, and Gerhard Chroust) at the 57th ISSS Congress in Hai Phong allowed IFSR to establish contact with Dr. Nguyen van Thanh, Governor of Haiphongcity of Vietnam.

As a consequence Dr. Thanh and a delegation of 9 high-ranking officials from the government of Hai Phong visited Vienna on Sept 2 to 4, 2013 to talk to the IFSR, to the Austrian

Chamber of Commerce and to Austrian business men concerning cooperation between Vietnam and Austria.

During a two day workshop we presented a short introduction into the culture and history of Vienna, the role of the IFSR, and initiated contacts with several scientific societies



The People's Committee  
of Haiphong City

located in Vienna (IFSR, IASCYS, OCG, OSGK, and BCSSS).



Dr. Nguyen Van Thanh, Gerhard Chroust

In talks with 3 representatives of the Austrian Chamber of Commerce (Mag. H-J.Hörtnagl, Dipl.-Ing. A. Höller, Dr. H.F. Kacher ) possibilities for intensified commercial cooperation were discussed. Two representatives of the Vienna branch office of Malik Management (Mag. H. Timischl, MSc , O. Wichtl), presented their highly systemic approach to city management.

Additionally the founding of a systems society in Hai Phong (ISSHP) is under way and the IFSR is looking forward to welcome a new member.



## 2nd Conversation of the Extreme South

Ushuaia, Argentina, April 8 – 12, 2013



The second Conversation of the Extreme South took place from 8th to 12th of April 2013 in the City of Ushuaia (Argentina), the southernmost city of the world, with participants from San Francisco (USA), Santiago de Chile (Chile), Montevideo and La Paloma (Uruguay), Santiago del Estero, Rosario, Puerto Madryn, Ushuaia and Buenos Aires (Argentina), as well as contributions from Brazil, Mexico and Colombia.

It was held with the support of the National University of Tierra del Fuego, Antarctica and

South Atlantic Islands (UNTDF); the effort of the Faculty of Economic Sciences of the University of Patagonia San Juan Bosco (UNPSJB), and the help of the Patagonic Center of Systemic Strategies for Development (CESDES), the Argentine Foundation for Talent and Ingenuity (FundArIngenio) of Santiago del Estero, the Institute of Complex Systems of Valparaíso and the Study Group for Integrated Systems (GESI) of Buenos Aires, that is issuing the present Report.

This activity followed the First Conversation of the Extreme South, which took place in Ushuaia as well one year prior, and was inspired by the more than thirty year long tradition of these “Conversations”, that have been taking place in the villages of Fuschl, Pernegg and Linz, Austria, organized by the IFSR.

Following that tradition originated with and encouraged by Bela Banathy, the most important characteristic of this activity was to



transcend the concept of “conversation”, through the process of listening, developing mutual understanding and attempting to comprehend the perspective of the counterpart. This happens to be a critical issue in Latin American countries, particularly Argentina. In this part of the world, overcoming confrontative communication, where everyone wants to be right, is most important.

At this occasion, four specific issues were tackled, leading in each case to one short basic conclusion:

a) “What do we understand by conversing and communicating to each other “across disciplines and generations”? How is each of us handling it? In which scope, what for and why?



Basic conclusion:  
Let us acknowledge the existence of different ways of feeling and thinking.

b) “How do we learn, teach, reflect, practice, converse, relearn and renovate ethics in a world where ethics itself is becoming increasingly rare?”

Basic conclusion:  
Let us prioritize mutual respect without damaging other beings.

c) “What are the implications of ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) in transcending disciplines and generations?”

Basic conclusion:  
Let us pursue the creation, ratification and use of ICT in a systemically sustainable world.

d) “How do we face/overcome the challenge posed by the current concepts, organization and structure of our Universities?”

Basic conclusion:  
Let us dream and imagine that the university be generous, humble, learned, and that it establishes a framework for filling gaps of trust by collaborating with other social actors, universities and people, integrated into nature, reconnecting and activating knowledge and potentialities, with, by and for all.

The work started 4 months prior to the event itself, with a “pre-conversation”, which enabled the 27 participants, plus those who couldn’t attend, to write and exchange their initial questions and ideas in reference to the chosen subject. The rector of the UNTDF, Dr. Roberto Domecq contributed to one of the preparatory meetings by fervently expressing his expectations from these conversations.

Throughout the following four days, the participants tackled their respective subjects from a systemic and complexity viewpoint, leading to intense conversations and insightful reflections. Representatives of the community of Ushuaia participated in the final event, which was formally ended by the Governor of the Province of Tierra del Fuego, Antarctica and the South Atlantic Islands, Mrs. Fabiana Ríos with emotional and profound words about the purpose of this activity.



The then president of the International Society for the Systems Sciences (ISSS) on a world scale, Alexander Laszlo, besides fully participating in the activity, offered an insight into what was going to be the 57th Annual Conference of the ISSS in Hai Phong, Vietnam in July 2013 with the title: “Curating the Conditions for a Thrivable Planet: Systemic Leverage Points for Emerging a Global Eco-Civilization”, and invited LA systems researchers to attend (physically or virtually).

Finally, the subject of the “Third Conversation of the Extreme South”, to be held in March/April 2015 (from now on it will take

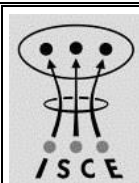
place every two years, always in Ushuaia), was outlined, with the following provisional general topic: ASPECTS OF A REGIONAL PLAN, dealing with the following sub-topics: (a) The integration of nature; (b) The integration of minorities; (c) The respect for identity; and (d) How to attain a sustainable size.

The organizers, in collaboration with the four groups, issued an "Ushuaia Declaration 2013" that was presented to the Latin American community in general and to the community of Tierra del Fuego in particular (and is the basis of the present Report), as well as a final

Report on this activity, which was also made accessible to the entire community.

Coordinators: Ricardo Frías, Silvia Zweifel, José Luis Rocés, Alejandro Fotheringham, Susana Herrera, Ricardo Barrera, Eva Sarka, Pedro Luna and Enrique Herrscher.

Valeria Delgado,  
Translation from Spanish: Hugo Karplus,  
Enrique Herrscher  
.Final revision: Charles François



## Modes of Explanation: Affordance for Action and Prediction

Paris, May 21 – 25 2013

ISCE (Institute for the Study of Coherence and Emergence), a IFSR member held a three day conference on the topic of "explanation" in Paris this past May. More than 65 academics, philosophers, and managers gathered to discuss what it is that makes an explanation a "good explanation" and how that concept may vary across domains of knowledge and the context of both the explainer and the explaine. Much of the discussion centered on differences between the realms of Science I and Science II as initially developed during the Fuschl conversation in Linz in 2012. (Science I is the traditional hard sciences where the goal is reliable prediction. Science II is the "special" and "social" sciences where context matters, emergence is possible, reflective anticipation is the norm preceding actions, and volition often appears.)

Next fall, Palgrave Macmillan will be publishing a book to highlight the learnings from the conference entitled "Modes of Explanation: Affordance for Action and Prediction." The book, edited by Michael Lissack and Abraham Graber, will feature contributions from (in order of appearance): Alicia Juarrero, Zack Kopplin, Kevin Kelly, Stan Salthe, William Wimsatt, Nancy Nersessian, Paul Thagard, Sandra Mitchell, Rukmini Nair, Timothy Allen, David Snowden, Hugo Letiche, Steven Wallis, Jonathan Waskan and Beckett Sterner. Modes will focus on how viewing explanation as an orthogonal commonality allows for a reconciliation between pragmatic versions of scientific realism and constructivism.

Michael Lissack



## 9th. HSSS National & International Conference

Volos, Greece, 11 - 13 July, 2013,

The 9th National & International Conference of the HSSS was held on 11-13 July 2013, in collaboration with the Department of

Economics of the University of Thessaly. The HSSS's conferences are held annually in different cities in Greece. This year's

conference was held in Volos. Volos is the third biggest commercial port in Greece. Its economy is also supported by manufacturing, trade, services and tourism.



Volos was an ideal place for bringing together colleagues from all over the world to promote and exchange ideas, knowledge and experience for the benefit of both organizations and enterprises in effectively meeting the needs of a challenging international community. The main theme of the Conference was to present the dynamic scientific area of "Systemics for Process Cohesion" with applications in organizations and enterprises across a wide spectrum of both service and production industry sectors.

The goal of the conference was to create a global framework that will bridge the gap between scientific advances and practices in Strategic Management and the needs for decision-makers to better cope with the dynamic complexity of a turbulent world economy.



The prominent speakers, the exciting professional panels, the professional round table, and the Strategic Management workshop, attracted the attention of a large

number of our colleagues from academia as well as professional associations engaged in strategic thinking, planning and action, and eminent consultancy firms of a national and international stature.



Keynote addresses which underlined the core theme of the conference were delivered by distinguished academicians and professionals of international reputation, including Professor Gerald Midgley, Director of the Centre for Systems Studies at the University of Hull, UK., Dr. Alexander Laszlo, ISSS President, Professor Pericles Loucopoulos, University of Manchester Institute of Science & Technology (UMIST), Professor José Pérez Ríos, University of Valladolid, Spain, Professor Bob Cavana, Victoria Business School at the Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, Professor Shang Rong Tsai, Chang Jung Christian University, Taiwan, Professor Timothy K. Shih, National Central University, Taiwan, Professor Nikitas Assimakopoulos, HSSS President, Colonel Georgios N. Kastanis, Director of the Attica Subdivision Narcotics Unit and Dr. Yiannis Laouris, Member of the Board of the Institute for 21st Century Agoras and Senior Scientist and Chair of the Cyprus Neuroscience and Technology Institute (also known as Future Worlds Center).

For details please see: <http://www.2013.hsss.eu>

The 10th International HSSS Conference will be held in Athens, Greece, 29-31 May 2014 and its theme will be "Systemic Entrepreneurship".

Nikitas Assimakopoulos





## 2013 ASC conference: Acting, Learning, Understanding

Bolton, UK, 28 July to 3 August, 2013

Aartje Hulstein, Francesca Deya

*From this conference we received a somewhat different type of reports: The partners of the two co-chairs (Aartje Hulstein and Francesca Deya) reported on their view of the conference. You can visit the conference web site at [www.asc-cybernetics.org/2013](http://www.asc-cybernetics.org/2013) [Ed.]*

The 2013 ASC conference had as its theme “Acting, Learning, Understanding” and was held with the Institute for Educational Cybernetics in Bolton, UK from 28 July to 3 August, 2013 with the main conference between 30 July and 1 August.

This conference is different from most others, giving participants experience of the theme in an environment of conversation, art and some paper presentations. It is a search for new questions, rather than listening to answers to old ones. The participants are from mixed backgrounds. Some have worked with and developed second order cybernetics for a long time, others are new to the field. The conference is given shape and form as it happens.

Pre-conference workshops on cybernetic topics were given by Bernard Scott and Stuart Umpleby for advanced cyberneticians; Ranulph Glanville gave a tutorial for beginners.

The next day the main conference started with a busy program of conversational groups. After each conversational session there were presentations by each group—an opportunity for reflection and sharing of experience.

One evening was filled by participants performing (art) works by conference attendees, the other by paper presentations. Both helped to shape the next day, but in very different ways. At the conference dinner on the final evening, Prof Noam Cook from San José

University gave the John Beishon Lecture, presented by the Open University Systems Group, with the title “Making Distinctions: Reflections On Learning, Knowing And Evaluating.”



By popular request, Ranulph Glanville started the post conference with a lecture about his “Theory of Objects”. You can view this at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tACFIMhjVY> M. Then people had the opportunity to reflect and work on some of the new questions. The work that will develop from here will be published, as well as papers growing out of the conference. Those papers are rigorously reviewed, both before and after the conference and are usually completely rewritten during the process.

Three prizes were awarded for service to cybernetics, the Warren MacCulloch prize was awarded to Bernard Scott, and, for the first time, to a group of people—The Heinz von Foerster Society in Vienna. The Heinz von



Foerster prize for the best young person's contribution went to Chathurika Kannangara.

As the wife of the ASC president, I have lived with the conference, as it developed from an idea to the reality of happening, It is always a

great joy to be part of it taking form and to see how participants change by the experience.

Aartje Hulstein

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I am a body and mind therapist. I have trained in Diafreo, gestalt psychology, and also collaborated extensively with ayurvedic practitioners. While I have heard a lot about cybernetics over the years (Dai Griffiths, one of the Chairs of the conference is my partner), I have not engaged with it in depth. So my report on the conference is inevitably a very personal view. I was delighted to find that despite not having much background in cybernetics, the conference welcomed me to collaborate in "acting, learning, understanding".

Much of the time we worked in small groups in which seemed easy to build new conversations on the issues raised by the conference theme, which all of us had discussed many times before. The fact that the participants came from different backgrounds was important in this. They included computing, teaching, theorists in cybernetics, design, psychology, etc. (but not so many therapists!). The conference created an environment in which differences in backgrounds and practice were a resource rather than a problem.

In my practice I see human beings as a whole entity, but composed of different anatomical, mental and psychological subsystems, constantly in movement. Even though we weren't discussing this topic directly, I found the discussion of systems in the small groups was very valuable in providing new perspectives on my practice. In particular, the I was fascinated by the depth of discussion about the observer inside the system, and the implications of this for the practice of a

therapist observing themselves observing a client who is also observing themselves. I have also found myself applying these insights in my meditation practice and teaching.

For the first session of the conference everyone was invited to bring a home-made musical instrument. We were all invited to talk about them, and led through a spontaneous performance. This set the tone for the whole conference, and I think helped the small groups to feel permitted to make some very entertaining, and sometimes moving, plenary presentations. It was one of these presentations which led to Chathurika Kannangara winning the Heinz von Foerster Award, which I was delighted to see. This atmosphere broke away from the formality and rigidity of a typical conference, and made it truly conversational.

To me and other newcomers the pre-conference tutorials were very useful, giving an overview of how cybernetics thinks about learning, humans and closed and open systems. Many of the ideas were familiar, but the tutorials helped to put them in context for the discussions which followed in the conference itself. Following my experience at the conference I have renewed curiosity in authors whose work I only knew superficially, especially Humberto Maturana and Stafford Beer.

Francesca Deya



## ISSS57 Viet Nam, ISEE-U Taiwan and the launch of WELTribe

Hai Phong, Vietnam, July 14-19, 2013 and Taipei, Taiwan July 21-22, 2013

During the Summer of 2013, two international systems conferences were organized with linked themes and venues in the hope of generating a new global initiative to address issues of systemic sustainability. Out of this experience emerged the first World Evolutionary Learning Tribe.



From 14-19 July 2013, systems scientists from around the world gathered on the north coast of Viet Nam in the wonderful city of Hai Phong and on the enchanting islands of Cat Ba for the 57<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting and Conference of the International Society for the Systems Sciences [http://iss.org/world/Hai\\_Phong\\_City\\_2013](http://iss.org/world/Hai_Phong_City_2013).

The theme was *Curating the Conditions for a Thrivable Planet: Systemic Leverage Points for Emerging a Global Eco-Civilization*. This event was among the first in the world to showcase systemic sustainability initiatives, both locally in Hai Phong and outlying areas, as well as through the participation of Plenary Speakers who came from all around the world and live links with Planetary Speakers located in different parts of the world. By focusing on the systemic interdependence at the intra-personal, the inter-personal, the trans-species and the trans-generational levels of change in each systemic sustainability initiative, the discourse at the conference shifted from identifying the leverage points for sustainability planning and design to curating the emergence of nurturance spaces that foster thriving and abundance.

Three days later, the international conference on *Social Environmental Education for an Emerging Eco-Civilization* took place in Taipei, Taiwan, with many of the same delegates from the ISSS Conference in attendance <http://2013iseeu.blogspot.tw/p/homepage.html>.

This event brought forward the insights and lessons gleaned from the ISSS conference and engaged participants in an interactive future creating conversation on green social innovation for thrivable glocal communities. As part of the action orientation of these conversations, a series of post conference visits to eco-villages and local thriving initiatives in the interior of Taiwan brought the theoretical perspectives down to earth and suggested a way to bring them into practice.

Out of these intertwined events came the WELTribe initiative <http://cielcolab.com/the-weltoc/>. The idea behind the World Evolutionary Learning Tribe is to create a glocal platform for the mutual empowerment of emerging thriving initiatives from around the world. Organized in fractal layers that emerge communities of community engaged in synergetic and interpenetrating thriving efforts, the WELTribe is essentially an autopoietic catalyzer of glocal thriving. Although the initiative is essentially self-generating, it is being actively promoted at events such as the National Systems Conference of the Indian Institute of Technology in Jodhpur from 5-7 December 2013; the EMCSR Conference in Vienna, Austria, from 22-25 April 2014; and the IFSR Conversation Event in Linz, Austria, from 27 April through 2 May. The WELTribe is well on its way to taking on a life of its own.

Alexander Laszlo, ISSS President 2012-2013



## **UES/EUS Seminar: The post-industrial societies dealing with complexity**

Charleroi, Belgium, September 20, 2013

The European Union for Systemics (EUS) aims at disseminating research results and practitioners' experiences, as well as promoting international collaborations in the multidisciplinary field of systemics. In addition to the tri-annual congress of the EUS that is being held across Europe since 1989, the Union has launched a new initiative: the European Systemics Seminars; a cycle of seminars that focus on leading edge topics, investigating the possible and necessary relationships between systems thinking in the broadest sense and the exponentially growing complexity of our modern societies.

The first seminar focused on *"The post-industrial societies dealing with complexity: knowledge to manage the knowledge society"*. It was held in Charleroi, Belgium on September

20, 2013 and was hosted by S&O, the Belgian Society for Systemics. We have been very proud and pleased to welcome more than thirty participants from all over the world with contributions in various fields. These contributions have given rise to lively and enriching exchanges.

More information on these seminars, as well as the presentation slides of the first seminar can be found on the dedicated web site (<http://ess.ues-eus.eu>). This is also the place to check for the two forthcoming seminars that are planned, both to be held in Belgium in the coming months.

Stefan Eppe



## **KSS2013: Knowledge and Systems Sciences,**

Ningbo October 25-27, 2013

The annual event of the International Society for Knowledge and Systems Sciences (ISKSS, one IFSR member organization), the 14th International Symposium on Knowledge and Systems Sciences, was held in Ningbo during October 25-26, 2013. The theme of KSS2013 is "Knowledge Creation for Emergency Management". Professor Simon French (Warwick University) presented the invited plenary talk titled "Cynefin, Decision Analysis and Emergency Management" in the morning of October 25, 2013. Other keynote speakers include 2 current ISKSS vice presidents, Professor Kyoichi Kijima (Tokyo Institute of Technology) and Professor Jian Chen (Tsinghua University). Besides 3 main stream plenary talks and 6 parallel sessions, a Data

Science Forum with one feature talk given by Professor Ramamohanarao (Rao) Kotagiri from University of Melbourne, is designed to meet the Big Data trend.

To celebrate the 10th anniversary of ISKSS founded in Guangzhou in November of 2003, 1-day KSS Intensive School was held also based on the success of the 1st KSS school for young professionals, mainly graduate students at KSS2012. Main lectures come from old professors who had contributed much to KSS development, Jifa Gu (ISS-CAS), Yoshiteru Nakamori (JAIST) and Yanzhong Dang (Dalian University of Technology). The venue of KSS2013 is located in the campus of the Ningbo Institute of Technology, Zhejiang University, Ningbo, China.



Around 80 participants attended KSS various academic activities., Professor Shouyang Wang (AMSS-CAS, ISKSS president), Professor Y. Nakamori (the founding ISKSS president) and Professor Weiliang Jin (NIT president) are KSS2013 presidents. Professor Wang also chaired the annual ISKSS council meeting for issues including host of KSS2014 and publication status of the ISKSS official

journal, International Journal of Knowledge and Systems Science in the evening of October 24, 2013. More details are posted at <http://www.iskss.org/conference/kss2013/>

Xijin Tang, ISKSS secretary general





## Reports from IFSR member societies



### International Institute Galileo Galilei

The International Institute Galileo Galilei, was set up in 2005, is a non-formal higher-education research unit in permanent connection with universities and other educational institutions in the world. It belongs to the Argentine Foundation for Talent and Ingenuity (AFTI; [www.fundaringenio.org.ar](http://www.fundaringenio.org.ar)), a non profit organization composed of a group of academic people sharing the aim of looking beyond the horizon. Our main objective is to discuss and propound new paradigms and trans-paradigmatic processes. We focus on studies, development and application of Systems Science, Cybernetics, and related fields of study. Since 2006 we are member of IFSR (member 42).



From left to right: María Gabriela Mitre, María Mercedes Clusella Cirnejo, Susana Usabel Herrera, Pedro Antonio Luna Vélez. October 2013

All the researches are published in National and International Conferences. They are oriented to systemic modelization, models and sub-models oriented to "E-CULTURE" SYSTEM. The incorporation of multidisciplinary members interested in complex problems research from transdisciplinary methodologies

has allowed the evolution of the group and the followings most important products:

- The publication of a transmedia book, ideo- audio-visual named **"Santiagoñidad siglo XXI; Retroprospectivación sistémica de la Cultura de Santiago del Estero (RA),"** (written in Spanish and English) . Reference: 'Santiagoñidad, XXI Century'. *Systemic Retroprospectivation of Santiago del Estero's Culture (Argentine)* ISBN 978-987 - 1754-81-6. We are academic and universal, and as such we need to witness the inheritance civilization message in order to increase, refresh and launch it into the future with creativity, innovation and on an ethical basis.
- **Thesaurus book: 2004-2013** record of the most important publications made by the International Institute Galileo Galilei.
- **Chapter 43** ( pages 479-491) in *Advanced Research and Trends in New Technologies, software, Human-Interaction, and Communicability-* Clusella Maria Mercedes and Mitre, Maria Gabriela: *"e-culture systems" to new symbionomic infonomic and technical resource to serve the intercultural communication "* A volume in the *Advances in Human and Social Aspects of Technology (AHSAT)- Book Series- IGI-GLOBAL-2013.* ISBN 978-146-664-490-8, 2013.
- We spread the methodology of the "Conversation" as transdisciplinary dialogues performing different activities- from 2004 to 2012 - that we called "Conversation in Café Xpert". Its members had participated in Fuschl Conversation in 2006, 2008, and in conversation in St Magdalena in 2010.
- From our recognized experience we are members of the Organising Committee of the **"Conversaciones del Extremo Sur**

en Ushuaia (Argentina) from 2012. In 2013 nine members of the IIGG participated. The next Conversation in Ushuaia was convoked for 2015.

- As part of our collaborative contributions with other systemic Institutions our mentor / consultant Mr. Pedro Antonio Luna Velez was invited to open the conference at 4<sup>a</sup> ADNTIIC 2013 and 2nd IPC TIIC 2013, in Huerta Grande Córdoba (ARG) ([www.alaiipo.com](http://www.alaiipo.com)) and to opening the next 10th Conference of CBS, Federal University of Sao Paulo, Brazil, October 2014.

- Members of the International Institute Galileo Galilei are committed to disseminate the Systems Science at universities through the professorship, through the design of researchers meetings from systemic epistemic frames that allow to implementing the transdisciplinary dialogue, research, etc. Witnessing to disseminate systems science at educational institutions is our main purpose.

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IMPRESSUM: Mediuminhaber, Herausgeber, Satz und Layout: Int. Federation for Systems Research., Wien  
f. d. Inhalt verantwortlich: Prof. G. Chroust, Johannes Kepler Universität Linz, 4040 Linz, Druck: WLK Druck, A-2340 Mödling,  
Austria, version 1.0