



# *International Federation For Systems Research*

Proceedings of the

## **Thirteenth Fuschl Conversation G. Metcalf, G. Chroust (Editors)**

**April 22-27, 2006  
Fuschl am See (Austria)**

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## Table of Contents

Welcome to the Fuschl Conversation 2006.....	4
Welcome to the Fuschl Conversation 2006.....	5
Fuschl 2006 – Aims and Objectives .....	6
List of Participants .....	9
Conclusions of Fuschl 2006 .....	10
Topic 1: Fuschl Extension: Igniting a new Form of Conversation .....	12
Topic 2: Research and Dissemination and the IFSR .....	24
Topic 3: Infrastructure of the Systems Movement.....	31
Topic 4: The Status and Evolution of Systems Organizations .....	34
Topic 5: “Unity as a Part of Diversity” .....	42
Lessons Learnt - Fuschl 2006 Summary.....	52
Survey of Participants’ Opinions .....	55
Appendix: What is the IFSR? .....	59

# Welcome to the Fuschl Conversation 2006

Matjaz Mulej (Slovenia)

As the newly elected president of the IFSR I would like to welcome you to the 13th Fuschl Conversation. This shows that Fuschl Conversations have a tradition of 25 years! But those of you who have been in Fuschl several times will notice several changes – more details you will find in Gary Metcalf's and Gerhard Chroust's Introduction below.

This was my first time at Fuschl. As the incoming president who knows in more detail the smaller member associations of IFSR rather than the bigger and older ones, I was looking forward to learning what they think of the program concept we have suggested:

1. IFSR should be an umbrella service organization covering topics that the individual member associations have hard times to do;
2. IFSR should sponsor some activities and organizational forms that would help both the systems community at large and all of us promote systemic thinking, observing, decision making, and action rather than the one-sidedness, which prevails in modern times to the detriment of humankind.

These two general aims may include:

- Foundation of an International Academy of Cybernetics and Systems Sciences, to which member associations would suggest their most prominent members;
- An active and interactive homepage with data and information from and for all member associations about their activities that might be of general interest rather than of internal interest only;
- International Encyclopedia of Systems Science and Cybernetics - to continue the work done so far by Charles Francois;
- Activities that have been generally accepted so far as well.

I was very glad to hear a number of additional ideas, suggestions and volunteering voices in the five days at Fuschl. They are visible later on in this volume.

I am very grateful to Gary Metcalf, Vice-president, and to Gerhard Chroust, Secretary General of the IFSR, for working so hard and successfully for the Fuschl Conversation to go over the stage this year again and for these proceedings to be created from contributions of all participants and their summaries by group coordinators. The work of the latter was far from easy and deserves our big thanks.

Looking at these proceedings I am proud that we have shown that IFSR – with the help of the Fuschl Conversation 2006 - will be able to even better serve the systems community and thus promote systems thinking.

Matjaz Mulej  
President of the IFSR 2006-2008

# Welcome to the Fuschl Conversation 2006

Jifa Gu (China)

Fuschl 2006 was the only Conversation I was able to attend. As the president of the IFSR from 2002-2006, I was strongly involved in the planning and the re-direction of this Conversation. Fuschl 2006 gave me a deep impression in several aspects:

- 1) The meeting type attracted me very much; frankly speaking in China I never attended a discussion meeting like it.
  - (1) The meeting lasted five days which gave the full possibility for identifying the topics which we chose in advance;
  - (2) The topics were selected in advance by consulting with many participants and other related persons;
  - (3) The free discussion kept going all the time;
  - (4) I like the method which was used to determine the next topics which were to be discussed the next day by posting the small notes on the flipchart
  - (5) I like also some system methodologies, such as, VSM employed in the discussion to analyze the topic which we had identified.
  
- 2) Concerning the concrete contents of some of the topics I wish mention several points:
  - (1) We discussed the problems on survival of IFSR organization itself by using VSM. This showed IFSR's and the system organizations' has ability for self- criticism
  - (2) We discussed the Systems education problems. Even after Fuschl conversation we intend to keep some contact to discuss this problem, such as exchange the curriculum and program for system education furthermore. When I returned to China and told to my Chinese colleagues about this conversation, our colleagues express their interest also on this problem. Our country, however, is so large it takes a long time to collect more exact information, but we promised to do it.
  - (3) The discussion on establishment of The International Academy of System Science and Cybernetics had got a good start; Matjaz Mulej has prepared some more detail criteria for starting work on this new Academy.
  
- 3) Some words about the organization work:
  - (1) The hotel is quiet enough for us to discuss without interruption from outside
  - (2) I appreciate all participants for their continuous patience for attending the discussion
  - (3) I appreciate very much the nice organization provided by Gary and Gerhard; nearly every early morning and late days they worked for preparation for the next day's discussion, I didn't forgot Gary's help for buying the train tickets for us, also didn't forgot that Gerhard worked hard under the situation of the operation on his back not too long ago.
  - (4) I also wish express my gratitude to the volunteer organizers in different topics teams, they organize the discussion, gave the summary for discussion, take the photo and record for this conversation

Jifa Gu  
IFSR President 2002-2006

## Fuschl 2006 – Aims and Objectives

Gary Metcalf (USA), Gerhard Chroust

Looking back at the past sequence of the biannual Fuschl Conversations one can distinguish several phases:

The initial phase from the start in 1980 until the 1994 could be seen as the *personal experience phase*. Participants attended the conversation without formal notice and without any attempt to disseminate afterwards their results to the outside world in a formal way. Typically there do not even exist reliable lists of the participants. These conversations were driven by the charismatic personality of Bela H. Banathy. The participants profited from Fuschl mostly themselves (Ch. Francois: “*When you leave Fuschl, you are a different person*”).

By 1996 it was decided to give the Fuschl Conversation a little more structure. A formal Call-for-Participation was issued to the members of all member organisations and a participant selection procedure was introduced. A short account of the Conversation was published in the IFSR Newsletter and more detailed reports from the teams were published as proceedings (we may call it the *dissemination phase*). Around 28 participants were accepted to the Conversation, limited by both the hotel facilities and the financial resources of the IFSR which sponsored all Conversations. Traditionally we had 5 to 6 teams discussing different topics. :



Gary Metcalf

When Bela was unable to join us in Fuschl from 1998 onwards, his spirit kept the Conversations going in a sense, but – as things develop – the ideas got gradually somewhat diluted, and we reached a ‘*diversification phase*’. Social Design was not the only focus any more. Also many participants discussed topics which were not really ‘theirs’. At the closing of the Fuschl 2004 Conversation a certain feeling of uneasiness about the validity and the relevance of the Conversation was felt. It became clear that, if we wanted to sustain the Fuschl Conversations, we had to infuse a new spirit into them and that meant a new challenge for IFSR.

This development coincided with another change to the IFSR:

Based on preliminary discussions in 2002 by IFSR’s then President Jifa Gu, the IFSR Board decided to hold its first Congress in Kobe, Japan, in November 2005, together with our new Japanese member, the International Society of Knowledge and Systems Science (ISKSS).

This congress will be remembered as a turning point in the history of the IFSR: For the first time IFSR was willing to really take a lead in the Systems Movement, we entered the *integration phase* for the Fuschl Conversations. This vision of the IFSR’s new role could only be realized by achieving a consensus between our members and by an evaluation of the situation of the systems movement. This gave a new challenging purpose to the Fuschl Conversation: to provide a platform for

representatives of our member societies and other prominent scientists to evaluate the state of affair in systems, make some conclusions for the future and to give guidance and direction to the IFSR and its members.

We decided that the Conversation-style was the right tool and Fuschl the right environment to achieve our goal. For 2006 we choose topics which were relevant to the systems movement at large and to the IFSR in particular. We invited representatives of member organisations to suggest participants. Despite this break in tradition from the previous topic selection process we believe that this approach might even be more in the sense of Bela's original objective to make stakeholders discuss *their* problems and design *their own* system (see section "Topic 1: Fuschl Extension: Igniting a new Form of Conversation).

Given the double task of both evaluating the systems movement in general and IFSR's future role in particular was expected to create some confusion and some friction at the Conversation, and it did.



**(from left) Gerhard Chroust, Doug Walton, Ms. Idinger**

We consider the Fuschl Conversation 2006 is a singular event, a transition event, leading to the new integration goals of the IFSR via the Fuschl Conversations. The future will show whether we were successful.

As envisioned by Bela, preparation for a Conversation ideally begins as an outgrowth of a previous Conversation – or at least with many months of advance thinking and preparation. A topic is chosen by a team and individual input papers are prepared and distributed to allow the team members to further refine questions and to arrive at some shared understanding of the ideas and viewpoints of other team members. By the time the team arrives at the formal, in-person, face-to-face Conversation, a great deal of familiarity and background should already be established and the team simply move into an intensive phase of work that has begun.

In reality, that kind of collaboration between professionals at great geographic dispersion is difficult to achieve. Those difficulties were part of what had brought the Fuschl Conversations to a critical junction, and became magnified in many ways during the 2006 Conversation – a reality that should be instructive for us going into the future.

Preparations for the 2006 Fuschl Conversation were limited significantly by the IFSR Congress 2005 in Japan. (While this ideally might have been anticipated, first attempts at any new venture are difficult to predict.) In addition, having this Conversation coincide with the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration of the IFSR provided an opportunity for a different use of the Conversation, as a way of addressing the future

of the IFSR itself. In that way, it became almost a meta-meta-Conversation – a Conversation about the IFSR (reflecting on itself) and its use of Conversation as an alternative meeting and design space.

This stretch in concepts, along with the shortened time for preparation, created much of the confusion that participants experienced at the beginning of the Conversation. While advance preparation had been attempted through information and dialogue, via a blog site, teams and topics were not set in the traditional way in advance. Part of this was purposeful, in that distinct teams working on separate topics had created at least part of the problems in recent years, in that teams had great difficulty sharing ideas and progress with each other, severely limiting the broader learning that might have occurred.

The initial topics that were proposed prior to the Conversation were:

Topic 1: The future of the Conversation process

Topic 2: Systems research and dissemination (e.g. publications, Internet access, alternative channels, access for students, etc.)

Topic 3: Systems and technology (e.g. what technologies should we be incorporating into Systems work, and how should we be affecting the development of technologies?)

Topic 4: The status and evolution of Systems organizations (e.g. what kind of Systems organization(s) are needed for the future?)

Topic 5: Systems and resources (e.g. how should Systems organizations access the necessary resources to survive and thrive into the future?)

The final topics were only decided in the first hours at Fuschl, by consensus of the participants. Topic 2 became a team which explored the identity and role of the IFSR, and ultimately the question of whether or not such an organization was needed. Topic 3 was explored only briefly, then incorporated into the work of other teams. Topic 5 became a team on Unity and Diversity, which explored many of the theoretical perspectives within systems work, and the resources that were available for working across some of the theoretical divides that have developed. In addition, an ad hoc team was developed to investigate work in systems education, including an informal analysis of what kinds of systems courses were being delivered, in what places around the world.

A number of participants strongly reacted to the idea of being limited to one topic, and wanted the flexibility of working across various teams, which was also accommodated. (In the end, most participants chose to stay with their teams the entire time, though.)

What actually occurred at the 2006 Conversation were many of the same dynamics that occur in most meetings that people experience. Some people were more familiar with the process than others, and those who were familiar felt some frustration with changes and lack of preparation. People who were unfamiliar tended to feel frustration with the lack of clarity, since Conversation is an unfamiliar, and not always specific, process. Different people also came with very different agendas and expectations about what should, or might, be accomplished during the week.

Because there had been an attempt to draw broad representation both from IFSR member organizations, and from systems organizations more globally, and because the Conversation followed the semi-annual meeting of the IFSR Board of Directors, several people believed the larger agenda to be about the identity and purpose of the IFSR as it existed. Others understood that it could be about the role of a unique organization like the IFSR (an organization of systems organizations) and how that might be more ideally designed for the future. Still others were interested primarily in specific topics addressed by individual teams, and had only limited interest in the larger topic of the Conversation as a whole. In the end, the Conversation gravitated between these various agendas, depending upon whose needs were being addressed at the time.

In the end, what resulted was actually very typical of a Conversation process. Some participants made tangible progress around specific topics – outcomes that could be used or even implemented after the Conversation. Other participants chose to explore more theoretical lines of exploration. Some people felt frustration with the lack of consensus or clear outcomes, but most everyone seemed to find the overall experience valuable, often in ways that were not easily captured. The most

common thread there seemed to be the very unique opportunity in today's world to have the luxury of time for thoughtful reflection with others.

With these proceedings we try to convey a realistic and largely un-edited record of the Fuschl Conversation 2006. The style and the level of detail differ depending on the reporter and the type of group. The reports in these proceedings should be considered as 'work-in-progress'.



(from left) **Allena Leonard, Jeniifer Wilby, Jifa Gu, G. A. Swanson, Magdalena Kalaidieva, Doug Walton, David Ing, Gordon Rowland**

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## Conclusions of Fuschl 2006

Matjaz Mulej (Slovenia), Jifa Gu (China), Gary Metcalf (USA),  
Gerhard Chroust (Austria)

The 2006 Fuschl conversation was unique in several ways. It was essentially a meta-conversation in that it used the conversation setting to talk about conversation as a process. At the same time it allowed representatives of the member associations to consider the future of the IFSR and its role in the future of systems sciences. Discussions at such a level can be confusing if people gravitate to proposing and defending theories which may not be familiar to others. This is a key reason for having five-day, small-group meetings, which are a considerable exception to most other professional meetings now. It takes time for people learn to understand each other, especially when topics are large and abstract. Though the effort required was taxing at times, we can be proud of the number of additional ideas, suggestions and volunteering voices which surfaced during these five days at Fuschl.

General consensus seems to be achieved on the following conclusions:

Conclusion 1: The IFSR should be careful not to compete with its member organizations in any of its activities. The IFSR should be an umbrella service organization covering topics and activities that the individual member associations find difficult to do individually and consider important to many;

Conclusion 2: The IFSR should support and sponsor activities and organizational forms that would help both the systems community at large and all of us to promote systemic thinking, observing, decision making, and action rather than the one-sidedness, which prevails in modern times to the detriment of humankind.

Conclusion 3: Meetings like Fuschl 2006 are a useful means to bring systems organizations together and foster cooperation and common ideas.

Conclusion 4: Meetings like Fuschl 2006 are also very inspiring to the participants with respect to understanding and insight.

In more detail some of the salient comments/conclusions were (for more details see the proceedings):

- The IFSR can and should provide services to (a) society at-large (i.e. systems thinking, systems science, education), and (b) member organizations. These services should be agreed upon by the members and should not be in competition with the individual members' aspirations. Such services include:
  - Foundation of an International Academy of Cybernetics and Systems Sciences.
  - An active and interactive homepage with data and information from and for all member associations.
  - International Encyclopedia of Systems Science and Cybernetics - to continue the work done so far by Charles Francois;
  - Archiving Services, preserving, structuring and making available the legacy of system thinkers and the foundations of Systems Sciences.
- The IFSR should serve as an umbrella organization by
  - coordination and supporting cooperation in the area of System Science and Systems Education, in view of professionalism and curriculum development and
  - establishing contacts and cooperation and support with Asian associations, as well as Latin-American and African.
  - Providing a Web-Site which provides strategic support for IFSR's objectives.
- The Fuschl Conversation should serve as a platform to both establish consensus between systems organization and serve as a guiding tool for IFSR's next future activities.
  - There should be a Fuschl 2008 Conversation as a support for strategic decisions beyond the relative short board meetings of the IFSR.
  - Representatives of member organizations should be invited to the Fuschl Conversations.

- Essentially the Fuschl Conversations should be continued in the same form with improvements in the preparation and post-evolution, including selection process for topics and participants.
  - The IFSR-oriented view of Fuschl should be reduced.
- The IFSR should initiate projects together with its members,
  - They should be approved by the Board
  - They should be useful for society at large and for the systems science field.
  - Projects should be of a kind which is outside the scope or means of the member organizations.



**Seehotel Schlick, Fuschl**



## Topic 1: Fuschl Extension: Igniting a new Form of Conversation

Doug Walton (USA)  
Yoshi Horiuchi (Japan)  
Urban Kordes (Slovenia)

Christian Fuchs (Austria)  
Barbara Rivera (USA)  
Gordon Rowland (USA)

### Abstract

Group innovation and collaboration can be fostered by the application of social systems design and dialogue methods. The conversation is then a journey of mutual inquiry that broadly follows a direction but never the exact same path. Along the way, a common base of shared meanings and social cohesion is developed. If enough energy is present, this momentum may inspire further advancement of the ideas and cohesion. This article describes the journey of the conversation at Fuschl 2006 that resulted in the conceptualization of a new evolution of the conversation itself, including a proposal to continue a new mini-conference at the fall Asilomar Conversation.

### Conversation is Journey

In the lobby of a cozy lakeside hotel (Seehotel Schlick in Fuschl) in Austria, five of us stood with our luggage around an old stone hearth and wondered if the lit twigs would be enough to catch a much larger, older log on fire.

“Do you think it will light?” asked Barbara.

“If the twigs can burn long enough,” said Yoshi setting his yellow rain jacket coat atop a huge solid suitcase.

Urban considered this situation and offered, “Well, if nothing else it was a great four days. We have really come up with something.”

Christian nodded, watching the small twigs, which seemed to be burning to no effect. “We built great relationships, had very constructive and envisioning conversations, and co-constructed new ideas and projects that have relevance and could make a difference in the world. We learned from others’ experiences and ideas and experienced a great time with some great people.”

“Yes,” said Yoshi, “although I had hoped it would catch on a little more strongly.”

“Perhaps in time,” suggested Doug.

Outside, taxis and small buses were beginning to load. With brusque shaking of hands, patting of shoulders, and quick hugs, we were off to parts all over the world.

“See you in Tokyo next year!”

“I’ll be there!”

“Bye!”

Meaningful conversation that produces group innovation, cohesion, and collaboration is a journey of interwoven ideas. Ideas emerge and spark others, sometimes combusting, other times dying out, as process and content evolve and mutually affect each other. In a seemingly magical way, the interaction creates a greater idea than would have been possible by one individual.

This article recounts the conversational journey of the “Future of Conversation” team that met as part of the Fuschl Conversation 2006. This team, while engaging in conversation themselves, also explored the future of the conversation conference, both as a concept and as a specific recommendation. The group’s journey, as well as its findings, are covered in this article.

The team’s conversation journey is recounted in a stylized way. This means that the statements and flow are not meant to be strictly literal. Rather, the narrative strives to convey the essential experience of what happened, grounded in the literal occurrences, but thus saving the reader from the frequent awkward, vague, and circular wanderings that dialogue participants go through in attempting to understand each other.

## What is Conversation?

The Fuschl Conversation is a unique kind of conference, often called a “conversation conference.” This extraordinary event has been hosted biannually for more than 20 years at Lake Fuschl, Austria, sponsored by the International Federation of Systems Research. Similarly, a sibling event, the Asilomar Conversation Conference, has been hosted annually for over 17 years in Pacific Grove, California by the International Systems Institute.

Both conferences were started by Bela H. Banathy, who saw them as an anti-conference of sorts. In Banathy’s view, most of learnings and conference value were achieved in the relationship building and through dialogue that people had between lectures and over meals. He was also cognizant that adult learning theory suggests how little of a lecture is retained over time. Thus, Banathy’s experiment was to focus the conference on the high-value learning elements, and he constructed the “conversation conference” with a format comprising several small research teams of approximately 4 to 15 people that conduct a 4-day dialogic exploration of pre-defined topic.

As occurred at Fuschl 2006, the conversation conference traditionally starts the evening before the intensive dialogue begins with an opening session. During this first session, all the teams meet together, and team topics, individuals, logistics, and ground

rules are introduced.

There are typically 6 or 8 teams present, comprising some 20-40 people, who assemble in the large meeting room.

This was where several of the Future of Conversation team members—Urban, Yoshi, and Doug—first chance met as a group in 2006. After introducing themselves, the three looked around without recognizing some additional expected faces.

“I heard Gordon Dyer can’t make it due to sudden illness in his family,” said Yoshi. “But where are Gordon Rowland and Barbara?”

“Don’t know. Haven’t seen either of them,” replied Doug.

It was not until an hour later, just as dinner was being served in a small cozy dining room by the lake that Gordon and Barbara appeared. “Our plane was delayed,” explained Gordon. He described a series of travel disruptions emanating from the delay. Then, he suggested, “Too bad we missed the big meeting—would it be good perhaps for each of us to share a little about why we came here and what we are expecting?”

The team agreed and stories were shared. “This, it seems to me, is often a good way to start,” said Doug. “Gordon and I have been together on these teams many times and it is amazing how just this simple task builds rapport.”

The team seemed to agree. After a while, Urban asked, “So, what is the work here? What is the team to do?”

“What I heard,” said Doug “was a request for us to re-imagine Fuschl, to ask, “How should future conversations be? And even ‘should we have them?’”

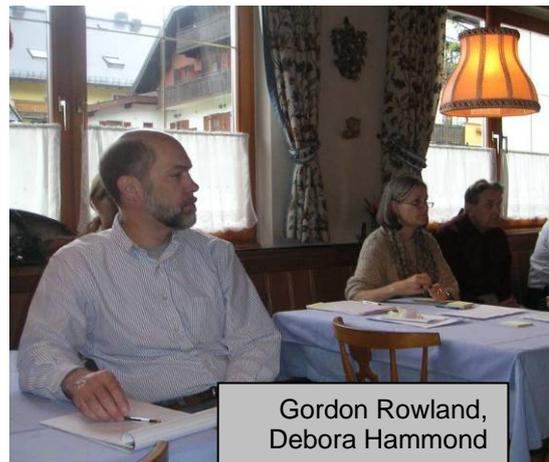
“Why now? Haven’t they been going on for 20 years?” asked Urban.

“In my email conversations with the organizers, there seems to be a sense of decline,” suggested Gordon. “This was the reaction to some difficulties at previous conversations, for example personal agendas conflicting with what others took to be the event’s major purposes. Also, there seemed to be less interest, less enthusiasm for it currently.”

“So do we ask whether it should even continue at all?” queried Barbara.

“Perhaps.”

The next morning, after breakfast, the team gathered in a small room lit by dim lamps. Vestiges of days gone by lurked in the shadows: hickory seating booths had survived the room’s previous life as the primary dining room; stuffed wildlife adorned the walls as trophies of some long forgotten conquests; skis and snowshoes hung on the side wall although no snow was to be found. The team



Gordon Rowland,  
Debora Hammond

sat around a rectangular table on a variety of chairs and benches, most none too comfortable. To the side was a blank flip chart on an easel, waiting like a field of pristine snow for someone to cross.



(from left) **Barbara Rivera, Doug Walton, Gordon Roland, Urban Kordes, Christian Fuchs, Yoshihide Horiuchi**

Also, in one chair, there was a new face: Christian. Following the practice of the previous evening, he was asked to give some background about himself, and the other members of the team did likewise, even if the background was a repeat for most.

After the introduction of Christian, there were a few moments of awkwardness, and silence, followed by some more general comments and small talk, until Barbara asked: "What is this about? Who has been here before? Since I haven't been here before, what has been your experience? What is this conversation?"

"I was here once before and it was positive," said Christian. "My experience was I could develop enthusiasm, commitment, and happiness related to the encounter with new people and the work we jointly accomplish in small conversation groups. It gives you a feeling of community that you often miss in large-scale conferences. The processes and outcomes are valuable and important for me."

Doug concurred: "For me, it is often a 'magical' experience. It might start out wandering and rough. In fact, often on the second day, a lot of people are feeling like it's a pointless waste of time. But then something—though not always—happens where the group coheres with a sense of purpose and clarity."

Yoshi looked in careful thought, then said, "I have also been to conversation conferences many times. But unlike the conversation teams I participated in the past, this time we did not exchange input papers before arriving. It probably would have been better if we had done so, I would think. In most of the past Fuschl Conversations, our team distributed our input papers before the actual conversation took place."

Gordon added: "I have also attended to the Fuschl Conversation several times, and this no doubt affected how I approached coming here. I haven't been entirely at ease. Early on I had offered to facilitate a sort of meta-conversation on the topic of conversation and the future of the Fuschl conversation. But as time passed, it became unclear to me if and how the conversation group would happen in the months prior to the event, so I adopted a wait-and-see attitude. Final notice arrived at the last minute, and that was the first I knew that the conversation group was indeed happening and input papers were expected. I could not respond and that made me uncomfortable, particularly since I was bringing Barbara along and felt like I had not guided her well on this." Everyone nodded understandingly.

"I had a similar confusion," said Doug. "There is so much to do already. Similarly, the historical traditional issue after the conversation has been that we often get together, have a great conversation, agree to action items, and then do nothing. This causes me to wonder: What is it that makes it a conversation? Are we having one now? If we change it, what must stay the same for it to be a conversation in this sense?"

"I think the conversation is about *opening and holding the space* for ideas and stories to unfold," Urban conjectured. "Each person is given respect and an opportunity to speak and be heard, and we witness often the emergence of synergetic concepts in newly created space."

Christian added, "For me I can best describe it by a story. Earlier, I spent some time with friends in Salzburg, which turned out to be a very nice afternoon. We went up to the Salzburg fortress from where there is a beautiful view of the city and its surroundings. We wanted to see the inside of the fortress and some of the rooms. We entered with a group of tourists, and every person received an audio guide. People were then brought into a room and expected to stay there until all had listened to the messages on the audio guides. Then we were brought to the next room. The second room was a former torture chamber; the whole procedure seemed similar to mental and social torture and it is a good example of an extremely bad socio-technological system design. There was no freedom to decide when to enter and leave a room and or whether to listen to a message or not. Besides that, communication between each other wasn't supported; rather, it was inhibited by the usage of the audio tools. We decided to leave the setting after the second room.

"Fuschl-like conversations are the exact opposite of the situation just described: They enable the intensive communication of people who are focused on certain topics and who aim to communicatively develop joint visions for the future. In fact, they are future-generating processes. The essentials are intensive dialog, co-learning, and collaborating."

"So it is a space, but is there also a process or a method?" asked Yoshi. "Or is it completely self-organizing?"

"Too much structure would constrain it," said Barbara.

"Agreed, but I think there is some process," said Doug. "For example, we were careful to exchange personal stories of introduction. This is something that Gordon and Yoshi and I have learned from our past experiences together, it is a good way to start."

"What other elements of method are there? Like now, where do we go?"

"I think there is a logical order of decisions, but it probably doesn't matter where we actually start," said Doug. "I have often started in the middle of the systems design process. Everything is interconnected and eventually comes out, although it is good to have a concept of the overall flow in the back of one's mind. We should just start where there is some passion around a question and then be aware there are answers that come before and after it."

"Then why don't we start with something like 'who is served?'" suggested Gordon. "And who should be included?"

"How should we deal with that?" asked Barbara.

"Here is where an element of process might be useful," said Doug. "One of the things Bela Banathy used to do was to have everyone take a flip chart and think independently for a while, writing ideas on the chart, and eventually reporting back to the group."

The group agreed to try this technique, and, within about fifteen minutes, they reported back, as summarized below.

DOUG:

"My perspective comes from several previous conversations like this one, many in which Bela Banathy was involved, and we called the effort the Agora Project. In that effort, we tried to create a better civil society or a reinvigorated public sphere, by combining technology with social systems design. The idea was to create local Agoras, or conversation communities of citizens, who would envision a better future. Some of them would be stewards, or versed in design and systems thinking and these stewards might also have their own community.

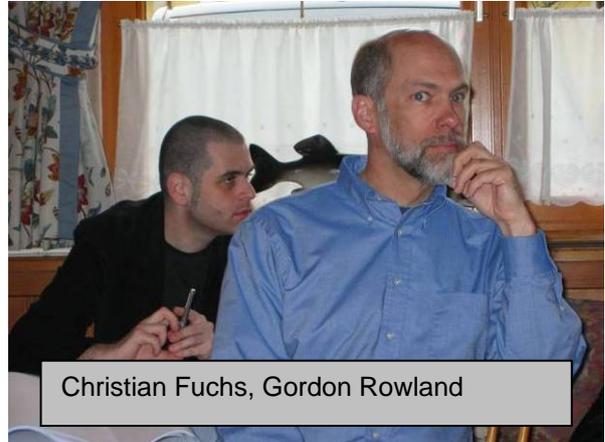
"Traditionally, though, Fuschl and the Asilomar Conversation, have been mainly attended by scholars and academics. So we have to decide if the community served is ourselves as scholars, or, if we want to more directly make a difference in the world by enabling people to have dialogue and do social systems design.

"I can see these possible groups: systems 'experts,' students, and other people who may not be systems-knowledgeable but have a passion to make a difference. So, we have to ask: Is it just

to get together and discuss coordinating between scholars? Is it to create more theory or to apply it? We have to choose whether it is for our own benefit, to come and have community and share ideas with other scientists, or is it to go out and improve civil society directly.”

**CHRISTIAN:**

“I think that contributing to a better society and to the empowerment of civil society are important goals of Fuschl-like processes. This idea is particularly important to me because I have myself gathered different experiences in civil society organizations and have for quite some time actively tried and struggled to contribute to the improvement of society and to the solution of societal problems. From a scientific and philosophical perspective I have been especially impressed by the writings of the Frankfurt School that has tried to find ways of sustaining the improvement of society by critical reflection on grievances. Although I was very critical of Jürgen Habermas for a long time, I think today that communicative action is an important principle for solving problems, sharing ideas, co-constructing society, and for achieving a participatory democracy. For me the work of Bela H. Banathy (1996) is conceptually closely linked to Habermas’ idea of communicative action because Social Systems Design is all about improving society by the power of communication. Social Systems Design for me means the collective construction of visions and practices of overcoming the alienation and the discomfort that many people feel in the social systems they live in by self-organization processes of affected individuals by and for themselves. Such estrangement might frequently be caused (in Habermas’ terms) by the colonization of the life-world by money. Capital. and bureaucratic power (Habermas 1981).



**URBAN:**

“I struggle more with ‘What is bringing people here? What is in it for them?’ They must come voluntarily and have shared intentions. There are concepts and then there are real-world applications. Is it about advancing theories and publishing papers or doing something? I think we must consider whether to leave the systems community and to connect Fuschl-like conversations to real-world problems and local communities.”



(from left): **Barbara Rivera, Yoshihide Horiuchi, Maria Mercedes Clusella Cornejo**

YOSHI:

"But, shouldn't we still create knowledge to share with our colleagues? The teams I was on have always published papers. This has been a good outcome of the Conversation before. It allows us to share our findings with students and the academic community."

GORDON:

"I go back to what Urban was saying. If we are serving citizens, then they must be included in the process. We cannot design for them. Perhaps what the conversation offers is easing of conflicts—transforming conflict to co-creation—and our conversations are not only about the future of conversation but also how society designs its own future."

BARBARA:

"This has been quite interesting for me. I didn't know what to expect—I thought this was going to be about systems theory—and now there is a long-range thought about society. The terms are even new. I thought at first 'civil society' was well-behaved society, but now I see we are using it in a special way. This presents quite a challenge if we include those 'outside' the systems community...how do they learn this special language?"

"Thus, do they have to have qualifications?" asked Doug.

"Part of our process could be educating people, building the stewards who learn new concepts and take them back," suggested Gordon.

"So there would always have to be a track for new people?"

"But how would 'everyone' be invited? Isn't there a limit to the size of a team and how many people can be involved, even with technology?" asked Yoshi.

"I think there can only be small teams," said Doug, "although they can intermix in different conversations. But, rather than everyone meeting at once to agree on everything, it is more like an ongoing practice that tends to create greater alignment and shared meaning across the community—a 'magnetic' field by analogy."

"Do they have to come prepared?"

"We should encourage it; we all agree it makes a better conversation."

"Will people really want to put this much time in?"

"If they don't, then their lives will be designed for them."

"Perhaps, they should have the freedom to participate, whether they want to or not."

"Well I guess they do have the choice in a free society," said Doug. "But on the other hand, don't people have to take responsibility to be involved? How can democracy work without that?"

There was a pause. Then Yoshi said, "I think maybe this discussion leans toward a very Western point of view."

"How?"

"We are assuming that people will want to speak out, but, in Japan and other Eastern cultures, speaking out may be impolite. People in some other cultures prefer to keep their opinions to themselves."

"Will dialogue not work then? Doesn't dialogue require speaking out?"

"We must ensure that the expectation is set up front and that we are aware of the cultural dynamics."

Gordon said: "Another issue I see concerns consensus. We believe in consensus, yet others may not. For example, my friend, who is a very nice and smart man, believes that the best approach is to debate and critique issues. He believes such an approach produces the best results by exposing the idea to testing, and he believes that consensus just builds a 'group think.'"

"But with all of this, why come for the conversation? What are we offering people through this process? A better way of decision making? A way to remove conflicts?" asked Urban.

"Group polarity research has shown groups make better decisions if process and equality are followed," suggested Doug.

Everyone seemed quite puzzled. Then Urban stood up.

"I guess I missed something," said Urban. He walked to the flip chart where he had drawn some ovals of intention, concept, and space. After studying it for moment, he wrote JOY in red and drew an arrow into the intention circle, saying:

"It may be those things that you mention, but it is about what each of us is in it for. It is about the passion for dialogue—the joy of the conversation itself. That is something we can share and also serve others with."

## The Flame Ignites

The next day, although aligned around the idea of conversation and joy, the group seemed to briefly struggle, confused and overwhelmed. A lot of questions had been raised, and only a few were satisfactorily answered. Urban then asked, "Would you come back? Perhaps we take each of our personal reasons. Why are you here? What would bring you back?" This question resonated with the group and there was general agreement to pursue that direction.

## The Horizontal Flip Chart Method

"Shall we do it the same way? Have everybody think independently and then go around and discuss?"

"What if we all write our ideas on the same flip chart?"

"We could divide it into sections for each?"

"But it would be too small and restrictive."

"What about just free form then?"

"What if we tape several sheets together and lay it flat on the table here? Then we can all gather around it."

In this way, a new method was born. Placing the flip chart horizontal on the table seemed to open the interactive systems thinking among the group. The group members could write out their thoughts and draw pictures that others could easily expand upon without getting up and interrupting each other's performances. The emerging set of drawings and notes were intellectually stimulating to look at from various angles. Moreover, the group found that there was no single correct angle to look at a contribution; rather, there were many equally interesting ways to view a contribution.

Barbara would later say, "Once this happened, I found the somewhat intimidating performance aspect of the conversation was gone. The vertical flip chart, which had at once seemed to be associated with control and hierarchy, became a horizontal flip chart more associated with equality and cooperation. Consequently, I was much more comfortable sharing and participating in the group using this arrangement."



(from left) Christian Fuchs, Doug Walton, Barbara Rivera

## Fuschl Extension Emerges

Once the clean pages were laid out, a stream of seemingly unrelated concepts unfolded, each helped by placement and by being viewed from multiple perspectives. Gradually, the pieces fit together as if everyone had been secretly given a different piece of the same puzzle, without knowing it, and then viewed with great surprise as the apparently different pieces began to form a recognizable picture. Gordon was first. At one end of the blank space, he drew a circle labeled "intention" and a half circle outside it called "framework." To this, Barbara added some elements of framework, such as diverse, special, self-reflection, fluidly bonded, transformative, few distractions, connected to beauty of the "natural" world, generative, and joyful.

Doug drew a timeline down the middle of the sheet showing the three phases of the conference: preparation, conference, and post conference. Yoshi added that the post-conference could feed into the preparation of the next conference, thus creating a self-seeding loop and that continuously opened up a new space. The group began to see the Fuschl conversation as more than a 'problem-solving' exercise. It was a way of surfacing assumptions in entrenched positions so new forms of moving forward together, or co-creating and co-learning, could be found.

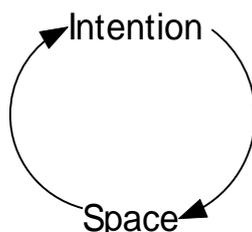
Urban proposed: "It may be better if the conference also had only one main topic, discussed from different perspectives, rather than any suggested topic."

The group indicated consensus.

Christian circled back to the process diagram and added annotations, explaining: "And these pre- and post discussions can be facilitated with technology—mailing lists, web-based discussion boards, wikis, and that."

In this fashion, there was much discussing of the drawings already on the table, annotating and clarifying them. Additional notes were written in different colored pens; lines were drawn across, around, and through objects to connect ideas; sub-drawings were made and inserted. Urban then went to the far end and drew two circles labeled intention and space, which were linked to each other as shown in figure 2. "In all of it, there is the continuous action of intention creating space, which feeds back to intention. They have the intention, and we create the space for communities that want to make changes."

**Figure 1. Interaction of Intention and Space**



"Is it reasonable for the community to come here?" asked Gordon. And then he said "What if we were to take Fuschl to them?"

The team became highly excited, realizing as the pieces came together there was suddenly a fundamental shift. As Urban later explained, "I must admit it is not easy for me to describe the concept. I can feel the idea very strongly, but making it sound reasonable is a big challenge. Why on earth would anybody want to invite a group of people to a conference that doesn't promise results, but just an opportunity to learn together with the hosts? Yet, the basis for this enterprise is the insight that conversation can help a lot in cases where "local" actors are trapped in some kind of vicious circle. In these cases, an additional group of people – who are not involved in the local problem and are willing to learn from hosts – can bring fresh perspectives and detached view. So, a shared conversation between conversation lovers (i.e. Fuschl people) and a local group with specific issues as a with conversation focus – *that is what we labeled 'Fuschl Extension.'*"

### **Detailing the Model**

Once the concept of Fuschl Extension emerged, there was tremendous excitement among the group and a great sense of coherence. The model was quickly sketched out on brand new flipcharts, and they transformed the room from a monument of the past into a 360-degree experience of fresh ideas. The model began to embody the following concepts:

The intent would not be to 'sell' the conversation methodology. Instead, in an ideal circumstance, after hearing a bit about the Fuschl conversations, potential local participants would approach a Fuschl individual and express an interest in trying out conversation methodology.

Once invited, interaction with the local community would involve key stakeholders being joined by Fuschl-trained facilitators who would help establish and maintain the "space" for authentic dialogue. Other Fuschl-experienced participants could also assist and participate peripherally in a virtual way. The Fuschl-extension to local communities and virtual support could help in making Fuschl not an event, but a process that extends in time and space and globalizes itself. Conversations would become permanent processes and would spread and influence each other, as a second-order conversation, a self-referential process in which conversations produce conversations and the conversation process reproduces itself permanently by spreading to other places.

Ultimately, there could be great interpenetration between Fuschl, local, and virtual communities. Systems practitioners could go there, to the local setting, while at the same time, local stakeholders could periodically come to Fuschl. At times, some people may find they are systems theorists at heart and become active in the ongoing Fuschl Extension. Similarly, past participants, even if they couldn't be onsite somewhere, could participate during the conference using technology.

## Presentation of the Model

The decision was then made to try to capture the ideas for presentation back to the plenary for feedback, and the Future of Conversation team consolidated the flip charts to explain the idea. These summary concepts are recreated below using Banathy's three lenses as a framework.

Aspect	Description
Purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inquire into how insights from systems science can be applied to benefit humanity</li> <li>- Inquire into how and where systems and conversation might help communities discover what they themselves can do and become</li> <li>- Develop new methods, even new epistemology</li> </ul>
Who	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fuschl extension team(s)</li> <li>- Other IFSR teams</li> <li>- Experienced systems/conversation teams</li> <li>- Local leaders/stakeholders</li> </ul>
What	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New methods</li> <li>- Local problem area</li> </ul>
Where	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- At Fuschl and alternating with conferences held at local communities</li> </ul>
Success Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learning for us - how to improve the next conversation</li> <li>- People say it was meaningful</li> <li>- Report back in 1 year, whether there was a lasting effect</li> <li>- Joy in the process</li> <li>- Opening of space - something surprising happens</li> <li>- Individual and collective energy is built</li> </ul>
Success factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Must choose opportunities where there are good conditions for success</li> <li>- Language—there must be enough ability to speak to each other</li> <li>- Appropriate parties can be involved—decision makers, key stakeholders</li> <li>- Openness to dialogue</li> <li>- Appropriate scope and scale of problem—not too big</li> </ul>
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Papers</li> <li>- Shifting of deadlocked positions</li> <li>- Co-learning</li> </ul>
Guiding Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To work with and develop the local community's capability as the only moral way, consistent with Banathy's public philosophy</li> <li>- Hold a qualitatively different conversation that seeks common ground before trying to create action</li> <li>- Use systems thinking</li> </ul>
Key open questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How to locate and select local community</li> <li>- Who is invited</li> <li>- Details of process</li> <li>- Logistics</li> <li>- Expectations, language, measures of success</li> <li>- Funding</li> </ul>

**Table 1. General Description (Systems-Environment Lens)**

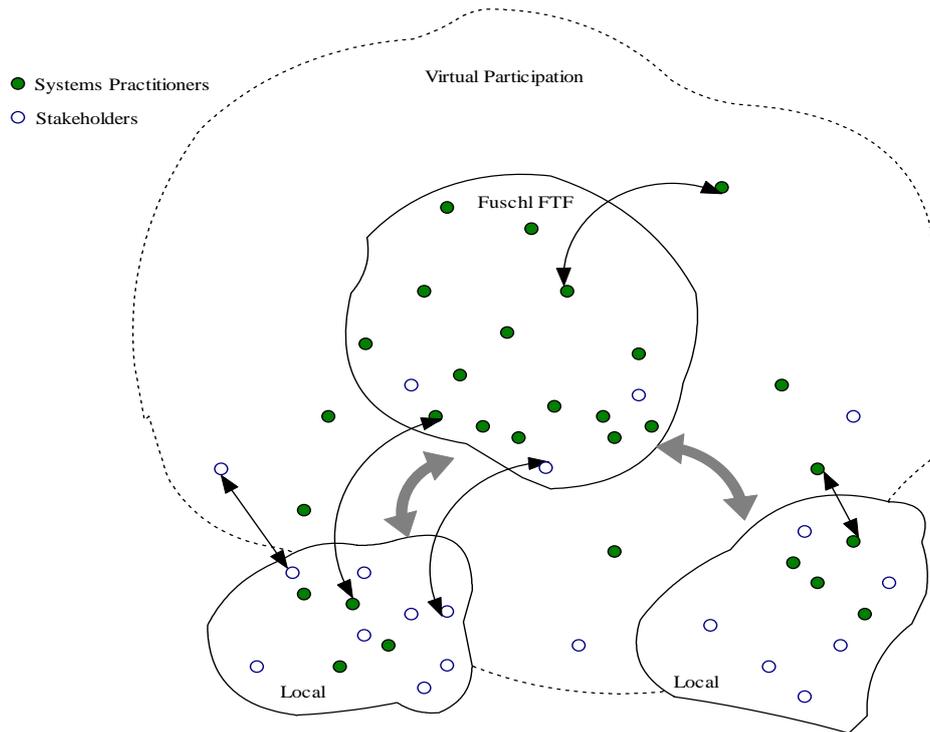


Figure 2. Fuschl Extension Functions-Structure Lens

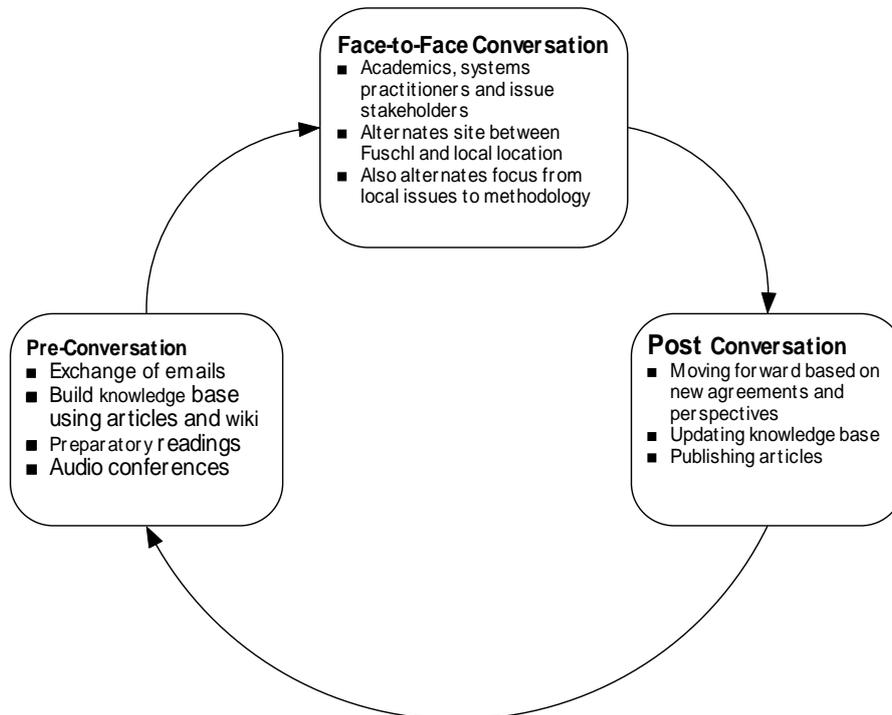


Figure 3. Core Process Flow (Process-Behaviour Lens)

## Concluding With a Challenge

The presentation of Fuschl Extension went exactly as planned. At the end of it, the Future of Conversation team asked the plenary: "What do you think? Any questions?"

From the larger group listening, there was mainly silence. A few clarifications were requested. Some heads nodded. Then without any formal statement or acknowledgement of an ending, a decision, or a transition, someone raised a new topic and the plenary vociferously took up discussion on the divergent topic. After a few attempts to redirect the conversation to discussion of the Fuschl Extension idea, the team gave up.



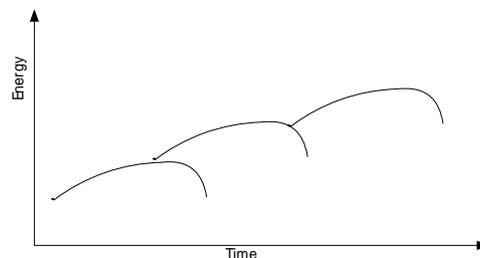
**Doug Walton**

After the meeting, the conversation team retired together and they reflected in the dim light of the old dining area. The once fresh ideas on flip charts that covered the walls now threatened to be consumed into the dusty history of short-lived past glory. Each team member was silent, deep in his or her own thought. A light flickered, almost extinguished, then returned again.

"I don't think they really got it," said Urban finally. "It takes a while to absorb."

"It is difficult to pack four days of conversation into a fifteen minute presentation," said Doug. "But this is the dilemma faced by those who desire to create change. Perhaps we were too optimistic to think the fire would just catch and they would run off with it. We may need to start smaller."

"I am reminded of Gordon Dyer's metaphor for increasing energy in a conversation," offered Gordon. He draws a figure of three overlapping curves, shown in Figure 4. "The match lights the paper, which lights the twigs, which light the wood, and so on. The energy of each diminishes but serves to light the next wave, thus producing a higher level of energy in the system, that is, the conversation."



**Figure 4. Flame Metaphor**

“Even if nothing else,” Barbara said, “We come out of this conversation energized and motivated. I am amazed at how the proposed process that has emerged from the group addresses the many differing concerns and perspectives that we all brought to the conversation. For me, what we have developed is clearly better than a process that any one of us could have come up with on our own. It underscores for me the value of conversation methodology. I am surprised about the commitment to the group that I have developed over such a short time; I am also surprised to discover how our discussions of systems thinking and conversation methodology have tapped into many of my deeply-held values of inclusion, equality, and connection. And also, I have developed a new appreciation of the great importance of promoting systems thinking in educational settings and in the world at large.”

“Perhaps we can find a way to pilot it, to show how it will work and to work out the details,” suggested Yoshi. “We could try a small group at the Asilomar Conversation.”

The group discussed forming a dialogue team for the fall Asilomar Conversation. The resulting plan included offering a 2-track format. One track would be shorter and offer an educational focus—seminars on dialogue and systems design. The other track would be similar to the traditional 5-day dialogue, except that experienced systems practitioners would be combined with invited stakeholders who bring their own local issue for discussion. In this way, a test could be conducted around the idea, learning obtained, and a case study developed.

Finally, Christian offered: “We might compare the conversation process to the communication strategies of the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) in Mexico who continue to struggle for land, democracy, liberty, justice, and dignity. They have engaged in global communication (supported by the Internet) to invite civil society representatives from all over the world to conversations in the Lacanian jungle in Chiapas and to tour of all 31 Mexican states in order to establish conversations with Mexican citizens. The EZLN for me is an example of what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000, 2005) have termed *multitudes* – decentered, self-organizing, co-operative networks that aim at the establishment of a global democracy. Similarly, in a Fuschl-like conversation there is no hierarchical center, it is based on joint deliberation and envisioning and on inclusive communication, it grows from the bottom instead of exerting control from above and forms a polyphonic dialogue. Conversation is a method for making a difference by speaking and listening. Speaking and listening to words is how we know who we are, where we come from, and where our steps are going. Also it's how we know about others, their steps, and their world. Speaking and listening to words is like listening to life.”

With these metaphors in mind, the group spirit again lifted. Next meeting times were plotted. Action steps were defined. Then, it was time to pack up, and each did so wondering if six people could concentrate enough flame to sustain the fire once they returned to the even larger arena of their regular lives.

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## Topic 2: Research and Dissemination and the IFSR

**Reporter:**  
Frank Stowell (UK)  
Ranulph Glanville (UK)

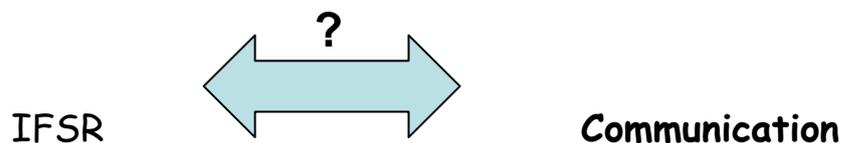
Amanda Gregory (UK)  
Günther Ossimitz (Austria)



(from left) **Frank Stowell, Ranulph Glanville, Amanda Gregory, Günthter Ossimitz**

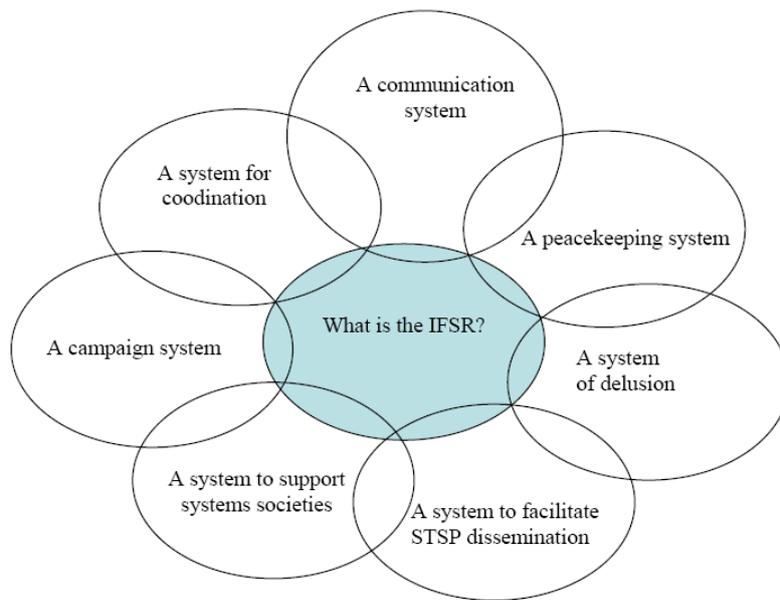
Starting from a preliminary understanding of the group's topic the members of the group came to understand that the other groups were interested in what could/should be done with the IFSR and how to manage its future. This group felt it important to try to distill what the IFSR actually was: to know what it was the other groups were working with.

To that end, a series of flip charts were produced, which provided insight into our investigations of this question. Although it was never explicitly discussed, the group acted by using systems/cybernetics techniques and ideas in their analysis and development of their understanding. The diagram (below) contains the essence of our uncertainty and of what we were trying to unravel:



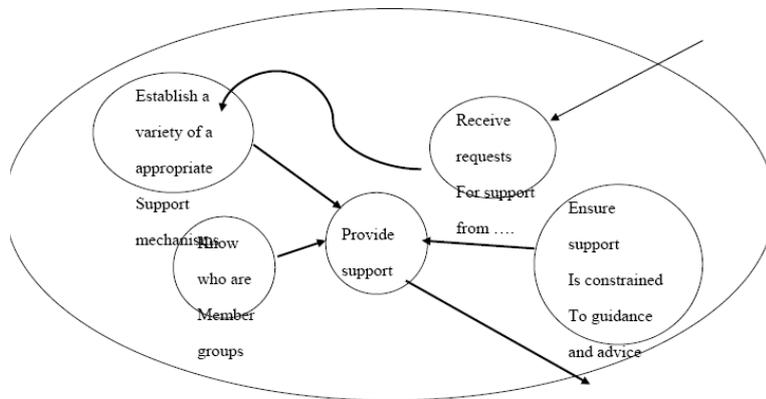
**Diagram 1**

Through discussion and collaborative working, this was expanded and developed as below:



**Diagram 2**

This diagram was subjected to a PEARL analysis ( see the discussion starting with 'evolving the question') in order to make explicit thoughts about each of the elements in this diagram. This analysis was extended by using Appreciative Inquiry Method to investigate root definitions leading to conceptual models.



**Diagram 3**

The diagram was then re-structured to arrive at 'a system of delusion'. That is:  
 A system to provide those that enquire with a vision of the system as whatever they want it to be. The system to provide the semblance of credibility [eg Board meetings and Fuschl] whilst in practice working within a vague perception of role, resources and sphere of influence:

T = enquiry            T        the vision embedded in enquiry  
 W =        that by reacting in accordance to any inquiry the system will be perceived as being one worth being a part (system acts like a mirror)

At this point, the direction and structure of the conversation was changed. This is not a usually recommended tactic in such investigations, but the conditions of the Fuschl meeting were such that it was unavoidable.

## Evolving the question

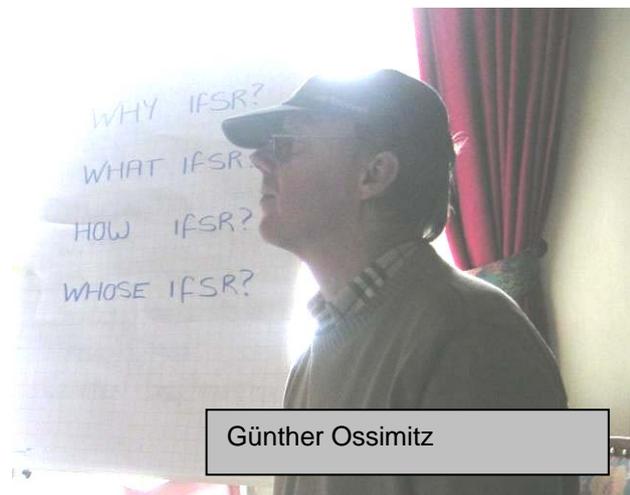
Following discussions within the assembled members of the “conversations” a small number of its members gravitated together to form a sub-group of those who wished to consider the IFSR’s role in ‘Research and Dissemination’. Discussions about the process of research and dissemination within the ‘R&D’ group soon revealed concerns about the role of the IFSR itself as an enabler or sponsor of such a responsibility. As discussion progressed it became apparent that the first task of the group was to agree the role of the IFSR within the systems community. It was clear that there was not a universal agreement about its identity. For some “conversationalists” it seemed that the IFSR was itself a “society” with functions similar to those of a learned society and with responsibilities for organizing conferences and activities, further, assuming a governance role for the many Systems groups/societies that it claimed to represent. For others it was seen as an umbrella under which systems societies voluntarily gathered to share ideas, collaborate and seek support and advice. The R&D group realized that their first task was to clarify (for themselves if for no other reason) what was the nature and role of the IFSR.

The R&D group decided that to facilitate the process of learning they each should put “himself into the place of everyone else in discussing whether a proposed norm is fair at all - and this must be done publicly – arguments played out in the individual consciousness or in the theoretician’s mind are no substitutes for real discourse” [Scott, 2001] in the R&D groups belief that it is possible to reach ‘Verständigung’ –understanding with others [Gadamer, 2004]. To do this they adopted a variety of Systems tools which helped them articulate their vision of the IFSR. The arrival at this point of view involved swapping of ideas and the production of a number of flip chart diagrams and sketches. The R&D group decided that it would be useful to discover what others in the ‘conversation’ community felt and rather than present an elaborate (and somewhat reductionist) list of points decided that they would present a simple diagram (diagram 1) and invite others to add to the ideas presented in plenary by Günther: It was felt that if there was collaboration then the end result would represent a genuine attempt to arrive at some form of consensus.

## Taken as given?

Following presentations of the various sub-groups in plenary it became apparent that many within the conversations community were unquestioning about the IFSR and took its role as a given. For the R&D group no such assumptions were made and it was felt to do so would create difficulties for the tasks other groups had already taken on. Not the least of these problems being that the assumptions themselves were not made explicit. There was every chance that to go undefined it would allow everyone to unconsciously sign up to (effectively) their own vision. Because of this the R&D group added an additional thought to their flip chart called “delusion”. This element was meant as a serious contribution to the discussion highlighting the oddity that the IFSR would then become anything that its participants felt it to be. This seemed to be a dangerous situation to allow to develop and this thought acted as a spur for the group to clarify their thinking about the IFSR as an entity.

Eschewing the production of lists as a means of communicating ideas (and the relative constraints to thinking that this method carries with it) the R&D group opted for various forms of systems diagrams. The group were anxious that to understand and define the system of interest as



richly and accurately as possible a deeper shared appreciation would be gained from a full and frank discussion "Understanding is first of all agreement. So human beings usually understand one another immediately or they communicate until they reach an agreement" [Gadamer, 2004]. This took time! But the diagramming approach assisted them in sharing concerns and ordering their thoughts about the various aspects of the situation of interest.

The lengthy discussions were enriched by the arrival of Ken Bausch who it was discovered might easily have been incorporated under the "delusion" circle as he, like some others, appeared to feel the IFSR was inconsequential to his Systems interests. Ken's input helped the R&D group to develop their thinking (and hopefully reduce Ken's ambivalence). The arrival of the facilitator Gary Metcalf resulted in a deeper discussion about the functional role of the IFSR. These included the frequency of IFSR meetings, the assumed "mandates" that the executive believe it to have, the real and imagined membership of the IFSR, financial implications and the whole democratic processes that it may or may not be signed up to. If anything these discussions worked to increase the R&D groups desire to arrive at an agreement about "what the IFSR can be taken to be". Whilst this evolution of topic seemed to have moved away from the R&D question assigned to it the group felt that unless this was clarified then this particular activity could not be properly developed.

## Using Systems ideas

The tools used were various but the diagram below represent a version of Soft Systems called the Appreciative Inquiry Method (AIM) [Stowell and West, 1991] which provides an opportunity to concentrate on an agreed issue but still using systems thinking to consider implications. To assist in thinking about each element of the diagram the group employed PEARL [Champion and Stowell, 2001] as a means of making explicit their thoughts about each of the elements. PEARL can be summarised as follows:

### **P-participants,**

- who are involved
- why are they involved
- what is their role in the study
- who has been excluded and why
- Are there transitory participants, if so why.

### **Engagement**

- How will 'P' engage,
- can you identify the boundary between 'P' and 'non P'
- describe the environmental influences in which the engagement takes place.

### **Authority**

- Formal authority associated with role -assess strength (e.g. control of resources).
- Influences from the environment (e.g. policies).
- What embedded authority do the tools for engagement have – describe why were they chosen and how might they influence the outcome.

### **r – relationships**

- insights into the commodity of power and the control strategies that are used and managed within the participant group(s) as a sort of disclosure (alethia) uncovering some aspect of behaviour.

### **L - Learning.**

- Theoretical and Practical outcomes.
- Judgement about how this was achieved and assessment about the ownership of outcome.

As an example of its use take the IFSR activity "to support systems societies" could be considered as follows;

- P- the participants are the member societies who are involved because they wish to gain benefit from the community and the contribute ideas and offer support themselves. Those that are excluded would be for a variety (yet to be defined) good reasons e.g. financial. Transitory participant are those curious about systems ideas
- E – This is an interesting aspect and goes to the heart of the role of the IFSR. How should they engage? The group felt that engagement should be at the request of a particular group or individual and be one of making connections and indicating where specific advice might be found. The group felt that there should be a clarification and transparency of the IFSR policies, developed from an agreement from the member societies
- r – relationships provided the group with some interesting observations which, simply stated, came back to the interpretation of what the IFSR is. For some it seemed to offer a degree of formal power to implement decisions, for others an informal level where the “commodity” of power as mandate provided the “moral” authority to carry forward actions. There were examples where such an assumption carried weight (enough to circulate a paper which gave the impression of a done deal on future actions) but to the R&D group such assumptions were put into the delusions system.
- L – learning, the process of thinking about each activity in this way helped to clarify thinking about the role, responsibility and authority of the IFSR for this activity. It helped the group to formulate a picture of ownership of the IFSR. It was pretty clear to them that the IFSR was owned by its membership and it was important that the membership was confirmed not just for the IFSR but for those that the IFSR considered to be its members and how that membership participated. There was a whole issue of the democratic process raised here.

## The end?

The next phase (of AIM) would have been the production of Root Definitions and then conceptual models. Some examples of which are shown in diagrams 3&4. Perhaps in the tradition of Fuschl conversations the group as a whole then redirected its energies (on Monday afternoon), to new set of topics and developed topics which broke up the R&D group and effectively drew to a close any further work on the question “what is the IFSR”. Systems practitioners might find such a decision to alter the focus of the group onto new topics odd at this juncture since many of the topics now taking up the time of the group seemed to be “Hows” of an undeclared “What”.



(from left) Frank Stowell, Amanda Gregory, Ranulph Glanville

## Reflection on the importance (or otherwise) of addressing the question

Is it important to agree the “What” in *what* is the IFSR? As a simplification of Gadamer’s notion of game playing. Knowing *what* something is enables the identification of the “*how*” it might be achieved. How ‘things’ are done provides the modus operandi, or maybe rules (either formal or informal) of doing them. The situation of interest then becomes the arena in which those that occupy

make it up operate. The actions and aspirations of the actors within then become reactions to the activities that the 'rules' impose upon the actors "the actual subject of the game is not the player but the game itself" [Gadamer, 1975 p95, 2004]. Being a part of the situation means submitting to its normative authority. In Gadamer's terms the game has authority over its players and specifies a range of appropriate attitudes and responses [Warnke, 1987]. Yet, the situation also has a dependence upon the way that the actors interpret the 'rules' but none the less the rules of the 'system' have primacy over the actors as they require them to give up their aspirations in favour of the rules that the system requires. It is true that the operation of a system is only the system when the participants operate the rules but they could not operate them if there were no accepted ways of achieving its ends.

## Reaching accommodation.

So given that it did not happen is such a debate arising from the issues above appropriate for such a meeting as this or is it an unnecessary exercise in self conscious pedantry? Our answer to this is 'yes the debate is worthwhile and for three good reasons'.

- (i) the event is called the Fuschl *conversations*
- (ii) the focus is upon the next 10 years (or so) of the IFSR and debating what IFSR is seems fundamental to that consideration and
- (iii) we are a group united by the Systems epistemology and such a complex question (given its history) is ideal to bring to bear systems ideas as a means of gaining some understanding, both of the question and the systems ideas themselves.

Attempting to reach an accommodation of ideas about what IFSR is, and what it ought to be is a debate worth having. It seems likely that many conversationalists (including the author of this short paper) will have arrived at the conversations with their own perception of what IFSR is. Perception involves projected meaning and interpretation and denies the 'truth' of that which it seeks to describe. A debate such as one that this question might promote may help in arriving at a better understanding. We can describe understanding what is heard, what is said or what is written in terms of the hermeneutic circle through which we gain understanding from the object of interest through a never ending process of learning (fig 5).

The question what is IFSR? Like other topics, provides an opportunity to learn about the use of systems tools to help in the process of learning and understanding. To have had such a debate would about the central question might have served to reminded us that we must be aware of what Heidegger referred as fore-structures (fore-having, fore-sight, fore-conceptions) and for Vickers readiesses [Vickers, 1983, p48]. As we are all well aware these apparent human intellectual 'traps' contribute to shaping understanding and may translate what *is* into one which fits into our particular view of the world. Moran and Mooney [2004] make a nice point when they say "All correct interpretations must be on guard against arbitrary fancies and the limitations imposed by imperceptible habits of thought and it must direct its gaze "on the things themselves [pp314-315]. And Warnke [1987]. "...even before I begin consciously to interpret a text or grasp the meaning of an object, I have already placed it within a certain context, approached it from a certain perspective and conceived of it in a certain way". The Hermeneutic position "becomes itself a questioning of things" (ibid)

It seems fundamental to understanding that we should face our prejudices and that means we should be prepared to interact with others. Within the small R&D group the IFSR topic created considerable debate which no doubt would have been magnified in a wider audience -"We ought to give up our the attempt to justify our beliefs and instead enter into dialogue with others in which we explore other options try out new modes of self description and discover the parochial nature of our own assumptions" [Warnke,1987 p150]. Our thoughts should be communicated and it is here at gatherings such as at Fuschl opportunities exist for using systems ideas as a means of communicating and learning so we feel that such a debate may have been helpful rather than it becoming intellectual grandstanding - "Existenz itself is never essentially isolated; it exists only in communication and the knowledge of the Existenz of others... Existenz can develop only in the togetherness of men in the common given world" [Arendt, 2002].

It would seem fundamental that to gain knowledge it must be possible to question ideas and we do this only an immersion in the debate. Gadamer reminds us that there is no such thing as *learning* how to question but acknowledges that knowledge comes from questions. Knowledge comes from what we do not know and not from what we think we know and conversation is a route that enables us to recognise our limitations and seek to gain greater understanding.

The conversations group at Fuschl who were, as a body, originally asked to think about the future of the IFSR, might have taken this subject and turned it into an opportunity not just to exchange

ideas about the question but also about systems tools that might be useful in addressing this complex issue. It seems important that an international community such as the Fuschl conversations group exchange ideas, ask questions and debate. Debates certainly went on but the topics seem to change at intervals too short to go much beyond initial exposure of prejudices. Moreover, as a systems conversations group it would seem axiomatic that systems ideas and tools would be evident as part of communication and as instruments of Socratic dialectic ["which leads, through its art of confusing the interlocutor, to this knowledge – creates the condition for the question" [Gadamer, 2004. pp359].] But although reference was made to "systems" as being a useful idea there seemed to be little evidence of any systems tools being used, let alone debated, with most groups ending with lists (it is not possible to say if the route they took which created the lists would be recoverable [Checkland and Holwell,1997], for a third party), Maybe there was a lot of internalised Systems thinking however

On being drawn together as a group to make some final presentation, a new diagram emerged that was presented as a summary of at least some of the findings of the R and D group. The version given here is the final version, from which much may be learnt about the ways diagrams form our understanding, sometimes adding quite unintended elements to what was intended.

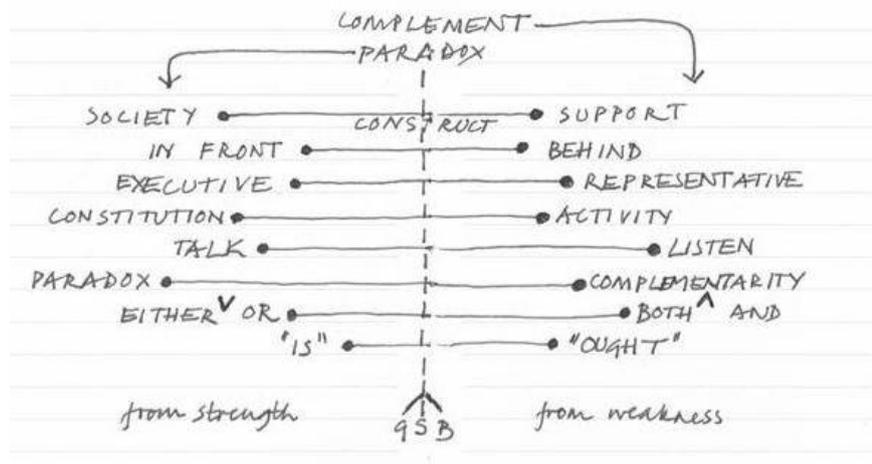


Diagram 4

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## Topic 3: Infrastructure of the Systems Movement

**Reporter :**  
David Ing (Canada)

Ken Bausch (USA)  
Gerhard Chroust (Austria)  
Magdalena Kalaidjieva (Bulgaria)  
Gary Metcalf (USA)

The triggering question was: “Systems and technology (e.g. what technologies should we be incorporating into Systems work, and how should we be affecting the development of technologies?)”. On Wednesday, April 26, half a day was devoted to this discussion and it was felt that this essentially covered the topic and that these issues were not of prime concern to the participants. Other topics seemed to have higher priority.

Technology was the object and the target of the discussion as instrument to make the infrastructure functioning better. The infrastructure of the systems movement cannot be separated from its human potential component. It was implicitly put in the question ‘How to evaluate and design information and technical components of the infrastructure under the present modern conditions, given the very different equipment in different parts of the world, as well as the global development of the Systems Movement?’.

This group discussed overall infrastructure, and then emphasized web presence.



(from left) G.A. Swanson, Allena Leonard, Jifa Gu, Magdalena Kalaidjieva, Ken Bausch

### **The infrastructure of the systems movement has undergone great change over the past few years**

The infrastructure may be represented as an input/output model which incorporates information flows, knowledge transfer, people, sources, flows and means of funding, etc.

Inputs include:

- Information on systems (and cybernetics). Scientific knowledge has to be considered from the viewpoint of colleagues demands and modern technological supply resources, e.g. education has to be considered throughout all segments of age, as it can be taught and then applied as life long learning,

- Information on how to get this knowledge and how to find it,
- Educational and research infrastructures to carry, transmit and generate new knowledge, Organisational infrastructures to carry and transmit all the previous: both interconnecting humans and interconnecting technical communication and memory devices. (*This topic finds special treatment in Team 4 and was rather overlapping with Team 3.*)
- university funding, that continues to fall;
- public and government funding, that has been reduced;
- corporate funding, that is potentially possible, but doesn't come without strings; and
- volunteerism that remains strong.

The legacy of the systems movement is strong, and continues to provide a foundation.

Outputs include:

- traditional knowledge dissemination channels, such as journals newsletters, scientific literature on physical long lasting media to be kept over generations, popular oriented knowledge dissemination
- periodical personal meetings, e.g. annual meetings;
- a web/Internet presence. This raises a question "If you're not on the Internet, do you really exist"
- New types of web/Internet presence for scientific literature and popular oriented knowledge dissemination (in full text and image) is the modern trend in information infrastructures.
- This put on the agenda the question of modernising the IFSR webpage and its provider's equipment with hard and software in such a way that it can support continuous distributed information pools and flows both for:
  - a) The IFSR representing web site, links and org-announcements, and
  - b) The knowledge dissemination "in full text and image". Magdalena noted that her team has made several offers starting with EMCSR 2002. which were postponed by the IFSR Board and the EC.

## **The systems movement is continuing to deal with societal and productivity issues associated with web presence**

Individual/personal web presence is a potentially growing trend, but the focus in the near term will remain on organizational issues.

The digital divide can be seen along multiple dimensions:

- Technological/social issues divide the "haves" and "have nots".
  - Much of the world still relies on dial-up, while modern urban centres offer broadband.
  - E-mail remains a reliable option, but young people are increasingly moving to Instant Messaging (or SMS).
  - Power outages can encourage online-offline switching, while the first world is "always on".
- Demographic issues shape the way the web is viewed.
  - The older generation thinks in terms of books, while the younger generation thinks in terms of net and web.
  - The older generation presumes static content, while the younger are always looking for dynamic content.
  - More mature users are more likely to think in single threads, while the young are accustomed to multi-threading (carrying on simultaneous conversations with a dozen IM screen concurrently open).
- Read culture is in contrast to read-write culture.
  - The majority of older people think of the web as static pages, whereas the young expect blogs and wikis.
  - Licensing such as Creative Commons takes some adjustment.
  - Presentation has moved from text to icons to multimedia.
- Technical resource issues must be resolved.

- Platforms are a tradeoff, as the state-of-the-art is currently Unicode enabled (allowing Chinese and Japanese characters on the same screen as Western), but Windows 98 clients require an upgrade to access.
- Skills can be chosen from volunteers, or from for-fee professionals, but quality is difficult to judge.
- Spam and hacking continue to be risks.
- The content on web sites of the systems movement suffers from relevancy and currency issues.
  - Can there be a systemic view (with or without branding)?
  - Systems as science (and not a metaphor) needs to be clarified.
  - The audience needs to look at systems as beyond simple answers.



**In front of Hotel Schlick**



## Topic 4: The Status and Evolution of Systems Organizations

Reporter:  
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Ken Bausch (USA)  
Gerhard Chroust (Austria)  
Maria Mercedes Clusellas Cornejo (Argentina)  
Jifa Gu (China)  
Magdalena Kalaidjieva (Bulgaria)  
Allenna Leonard (Canada)  
G.A. Swanson (USA)  
Jennifer Wilby (UK)

### Triggering Questions

In the first half day, the group coalesced on five triggering questions:

1. What identity/does should the {IFSR, systems organizations} have in the world and in the network of systems organizations?
2. What can the {IFSR, systems organizations} do to encourage and make affordable for {students, new members, fresh blood} to join, participate in, and continue with the systems movement?
3. Where can the {IFSR, systems organizations} get {material, energy, and information} to maintain themselves and the network as viable systems?
4. How does/should the {IFSR, systems organizations} respond to (anticipated) changes in the environment (e.g. globalization, Internet, ethics of inter-relationships at organizational and individual/personal levels)?
5. How does/should the {IFSR, systems organizations} reach out and reflect itself to the world (with emergence), and how we can plan and measure this?



**David Ing**

*In the second half day, the conversation established some assumptions related to the above triggering questions:*

- There is a systems movement. (1) [What are its boundaries?]
- The systems movement has a system of ethics. (4)
- The member organizations of the IFSR are a core group. (1)
- As member organizations, we share (and don't share) capabilities. (3,4)
- What they have to share is of benefit. (1,3)
- Founding individuals coalesced groups in different areas. (1)
- There are outputs, among organizations and to society. (3,4)
- The systems movement has a history, philosophical antecedents and core concepts. (1,4)
- We must have materials, energy and information to survive. (3)
- The systems movement is part of a changing environment. (4)
- The systems movement has the capacity/ability to influence. (4,5)
- We should meet face-to-face. (2,3)
- There is a systems movement in China. Different geographical areas have some overlap and some differences in boundaries. (1,4)
- Differentiations with the system movement are by: geography; interests and emphases (by the founders); language; disciplinary roots; (multi-)national societies/organizations. (1,4)
- The differences between us include: ontology; epistemology; methods, models and procedures; emergent disciplines (e.g. computational biology, systems biology, simulation) and their acceptance as being valid. (1)
- The systems movement features the emergence of new fields that spin off (at a high level, balanced (wholistic/concrete) level and/or concrete level). (1,4)
- Fray-out occurs with (i) some connection and (ii) with some separation. (1,4)
- It's the way we experience the world, and it provides connections with others who share this. (1,2,4,5)



(from left) **Jifa Gu, G.A. Swanson, Maria Mercedes Clusella Cornejo, Doug Walton**

*Discussion on the second half day produced the following description resulting from triggering:*

- The IFSR identity includes (as a unique selling/competitive point):
  - a mission;
  - ethics;
  - services (reframed from activities);
  - limits (that are beyond our business);
  - that it is not a direct membership organization, so that its members are in themselves organizations.
- Systems organizations in the systems movement:
  - have activities;
  - have members (of all types); and
  - have various identities (i.e. disciplines, localities, languages).
- The IFSR seeks and negotiates with organizational members. Other systems organizations generally recruit members directly. [Topics of attraction and affordability were left unanswered].
- Both the IFSR and systems organizations in general conduct activities/services for which they can charge. The IFSR should aim to share, and avoid redundancy or duplication with member

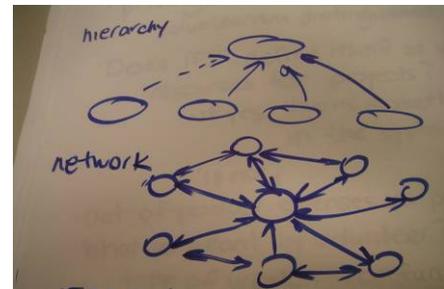
organizations (e.g. the ISSS). A volunteer structure (e.g. ISSS) makes financial requirements less burdensome, but becomes a challenge for human resources.

- Both the IFSR and systems organizations in general should change to adapt to the Internet and services/content. They should maintain probes into the future.
- Both the IFSR and systems organizations in general should develop their adaptiveness to get the criteria for measurement. This creates challenges for creativity and commitment. The evaluation cycle should be shortened and occur more frequently. The IFSR should check in with member organizations with greater frequency.

On the second day, additional impetus to focus on the question "should the IFSR exist?" recentered discussion to seek deeper insight into the future of the IFSR. This resulted in some major themes.

## 1. The IFSR can be considered as akin to a trade organization in a network of system organizations.

- The IFSR should be thought of not so much as a hierarchical level above other systems organizations, but as a gatekeeper – often accelerating the flow of information – between systems organizations that are hubs in a network.
- In a network structure (see Mark Granovetter), the strongest ties between individuals is within each of the organizations (i.e. IFSR member organizations). Weak ties exists between IFSR member organizations. The IFSR can assist in creating new bridges along those weak ties.
- It can operate well in an ecology of systems organizations, in a polyarchical/heterarchical structure with polythematic directions (i.e. without a command hierarchy).
- Within the (single, bilateral) relationship between IFSR and each of its member organizations, there can be varying portfolios of value exchanges. In the *Relationship Alignment* model from IBM, activities can be categorized into one of four types of value exchanges.



<i>Transactional</i> value exchanges: available from any of multiple providers	<i>Value-added</i> value exchanges: custom offers from a small number of providers, as small incremental benefits	<i>Specialized</i> value exchanges: joint engagements with unclear or ambiguous ends	<i>Unique</i> value exchanges: specialized value exchanges with equity and risk sharing
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- Each relationship between the IFSR and a member organization can be represented by different bundles of value exchanges in the above framework. [Greater detail was left as work for the future].
- The IFSR is incorporated under Austrian law.

## 2. The IFSR can provide services (a) to society (i.e. science, education), and (b) to member organizations that are (i) nascent in form (e.g. societies in developing countries) or (ii) mature (e.g. ISSS, ASC).

- The IFSR has a few large member organizations (e.g. China has 10,000 members, the ISSS has hundreds internationally, the RC51 has hundreds), with the rest as relatively small.
- Most IFSR member organizations are national, whereas the IFSR enables supra-national communication.
- The IFSR looks different (e.g. to a member of the ISSS or the ASC, compared to someone in Sri Lanka). Startup societies are more interested in legitimacy, and basic kits to start up a new organization.

- The IFSR can provide linkages in multiple languages.
- Most multi-disciplinary teams operate at a low common denominator of a 7<sup>th</sup> grade level, that the systems movement helps to bridge.
- The systems movement used to be targeted at the informed layman, in the establishing of consensual linguistic domains.



(from left) Ken Bausch, Yoshihide Horiuchi, Barbara Rivera

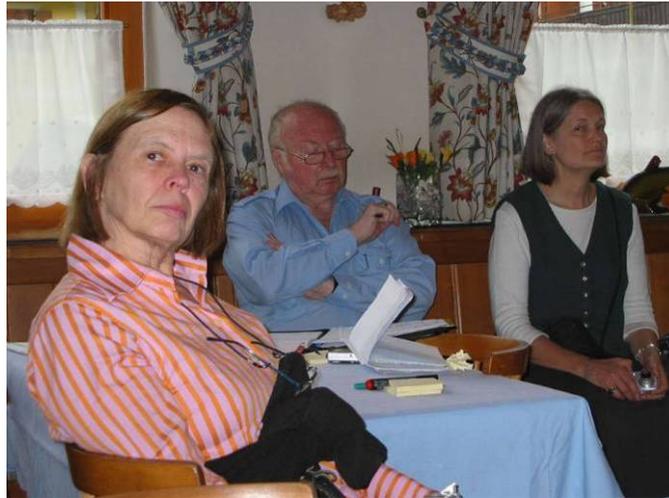
### **3. In the ecology of the systems movement, the IFSR can provide redundant function to ensure robustness (i.e. beyond individual or institutional affiliations).**

- Maximum efficiency in the systems movement may not be the highest priority, as the member organizations of the IFSR don't all have equal resources.
- The IFSR may play a coordinating role across systems organizations.
- The major functions of the IFSR are:
  - connection (e.g. Fuschl, newsletter, web site, journal);
  - legitimacy (e.g. recognition, structural status);
  - preservation of culture and artifacts;
  - translation (core values); and
  - an identity with the systems movement.
- These functions (listed in greater detail in section 5, below) may be devolved to member organizations (e.g. ISSS has its own connections), but coordination is distinct to the IFSR.

### **4. The design of the IFSR can be structured either centered (mostly) as (a) unfunded volunteers or (b) with external support (i.e. government or university).**

- In contrast, the ISSS was reformed (circa 1997-1998) as a volunteer organization. The beginning of the death of the preceding structure was based on who got paid to come to a conference, and who did not. Privilege is at the root of these problems. Thus, the ISSS distinguishes itself by volunteerism.
  - Out-of-pocket expenses can be contrasted to professional fees.
  - Volunteerism means motivations can be different (e.g. for fun, versus for money). There can be a return on the personal investment of time (i.e. non-monetary, recognition).
  - If funds are available, there is a dilemma in giving an honorarium to an overworked volunteer, versus moving the tediousness to a paid contractor not otherwise associated with the society.

- Will the IFSR continue to have means of resources, e.g. from the government and/or universities? Should it plan for a future where these sources discontinue, and move conscientiously towards a volunteer structure?
- Does the IFSR have the resources to carry out the projects put onto its plate? If yes, then it should focus on ends not already produced by other organizations in the systems movement. If not, ... (it needs to find another way).
- In public universities, there may have been some shift from institutions to superstars. Superstars are considered to be rainmakers. In practice, it's often hard to judge whether moneys really flow to the institutions, or only through the institutions. The flow of government money to institutions may be tied to their non-profit, tax-deductible status.



(from left) **Allena Leonard, Gerhard Chroust, Debora Hammond**

## **5. Services are provided both (a) to society at large, and (b) member organizations.**

Services provided to society include:

- archivist services (e.g. a part time person across multiple archives that can't individually afford one);
- expertise location (i.e. connecting someone with a credible expert, beyond simple directory services where the IFSR would lose against Google).
- limited legitimation services, probably not as detailed evaluations and certifications, but instead by sanctioning membership in the IFSR while excluding others.
- the encyclopedia, not as single definitions, but instead collections of definitions from multiple sources

Services provided to member organizations include:

- sourcebooks, e.g. introductory educational materials;
- intermediation between society and the systems movement,
- as particularly important for nascent organizations,
- including translation services (e.g. reviewing/editing/certification of only basic content, since this would be difficult in advanced topics that would require the shared context of collaborators);
- a journal, Systems Research & Behavioral Sciences;
- a book series (often known as G. Klir's series);
- proceedings;
- a newsletter;
- a web site (that could be defined either a push technology or pull technology);
- a journal of abstracts – currently under development
- In the Internet world, this could be effective through the blogging of reviews online, if an appropriate reviewing structure could be established.
- potentially a citation index (or a Body of Knowledge publication, as in software engineering);



moved to systems science (although the society's title hasn't been updated, reflecting the traditional heritage).

- In China, funding is only at the federation level, and not at the society level (as with the ISSS).
- Interests are primarily the promotion of standards in research, and new directions in research.
- In selecting international conferences, Chinese researchers will prefer to join an IFSR-affiliated conference (e.g. over ISSS) because the Chinese are members of the IFSR.
- The Chinese values the IFSR book series, as most can't appreciate the quality (good or bad) without some effort.
- In the Chinese philosophy of harmony, stability is preferred (e.g. over democracy, that may or may not be stable).
- The Chinese systems society currently pays 100 Euros fees annually. To provide greater working capital to the IFSR, fees at the level of 10,000 Euros would be out of the question. Even 1,000 Euros would be a stretch, even though 500 Euros might be a possibility. Extrapolating this level of funding as typical across the multiple IFSR members means continued limited resources for the IFSR to fund additional projects.

At the ISSS Meeting in Cancun 2005, Jim Spohrer from IBM was a plenary speaker describing the SSME (Systems Science, Management and Engineering) initiative.

- At the grandest level, SSME is impetus from IBM to encourage the movement of university curriculum oriented to a traditional industrial/product-based economy, towards one more appropriate for the services economy. The services economy may also be reflected by as a digital economy, knowledge economy or network economy. This is similar to IBM's push in the 1960s, "inventing" the field of computer science as independent from math departments.
- Services science reflects the desire for a stronger foundation, as systems science might provide. Services management and services engineering reflect a reorientation towards services from product-oriented views.
- Government, students and other employers are likely attracted by the prospects of job creation, and greater productivity.
- Systems thinking is already recognized as a component of SSME. The shift from products to services may be a natural evolution in a systems framework, away from material and more towards energy.
- IBM is encouraging the development of open courseware, which may be threatening to some universities. IBM typically funds professors, not institutions, although a professor could sponsor a master project.

## **9. The International Academy of Systems and Cybernetics Science is still undergoing development.**

- It is currently in a draft proposal stage.
- The drafts were supported by the board in 2004, and in 2006.
- Currently, there are draft statutes.
- The next step is to discuss the draft, and the role of the Academy (if any) to air doubts.
- The Academy has the potential to fortify the movement.
- The idea of the Academy was developed from other professions: one professional (the Academy of Management) and two scientific (from Salzburg and Paris).
- It can help unite the systems movement, internationally.
- There will be a requirement that the individual must be from an IFSR member organization.
- The open questions are not legal, but what is the criteria of membership, and what topics should be covered.
- The idea is for a restricted number of individuals (between 12 to 50?) who demonstrate scientific excellence, in an honour society.
- It can be compared to a national academy, with restricted membership.
- An invitation gives selectivity and an aura.
- In China, there are 10000 researchers across many institutes. In the Chinese Academy of Sciences, there are 800 academicians, from which 100 are selected in honour. The average

- age of an academician is 65 to 70 (compared to institute researchers who may be 30 years old), and there are a few diligent researchers still working at age 80.
- The Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS) has a structure similar to the most (European) Academies, who are established and governed in a certain way by the state. They are non-for-profit organisations, funded wholly or partially by the state budget; who are central for the countries 'grey substance', main intellectual core. BAS has 53 Members and 93 Corresponding Members, who might be engaged outside the BAS, and 3625 researchers in different scientific degrees and positions throughout its institutes. It publishes periodical annals "Comptes rendus de l'Academie bulgare des Sciences" as all similar academies.  
During the reformation period BAS put strong emphasis on postgraduate education and career development for all scientific degrees and positions inside of the Academy, but also providing services of the same level of educated persons in any positions in companies, non-for-profit organisations, state officials, etc., outside of it. For this purpose, a special PhD Career Development Center was founded, represented by a Rector in the Academy's management scheme.
  - The New York Academy of Sciences (NYAS) is a global non-for-profit organisation functioning as a foundation on membership fees, donations, state subsidy, income from selling the Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences. The latter are not really periodical, but theme-oriented collections of survey articles by outstanding (teams of) scholars. As a parallel in the systems movement might be pointed to the Gerald Midgley's 4 volumes on key papers. In this way, NYAS provides its members with well composed brand new popular scientific knowledge, which is very constructive for younger scholars or for to find associations to knowledge domains other than the own one. NYAS is oriented mainly to natural sciences, much less to humanities and social sciences – and it lacks any explicit link to systems and cybernetics.  
It is a good model for a well and long time functioning academy type of organisation: It is a non-for-profit organisation with physical persons as members only. Their number reaches up to 40 000. The membership fee was \$115 during the 5 or 6 years, when I was an active member of it. The prices of the Annals vary from \$ 10 to several hundred, mostly \$100 to \$300.
  - With respect to the International Academy of Systems and Cybernetics Science (IASCS) planned by the IFSR it is still necessary to decide who would/could become a members and what their purpose is. In constructs to IFSR's structure as a Federation of societies the The IASCS as a parallel organisation should be concerned with the individual physical persons as members only.  
Publishing Annals of the IASCS would be a very efficient step to develop the IFSR. However, a great deal of work has to be done, in order to reach a comparable quality of publications. Time has come to make this step in parallel with the efforts of on-line publishing (e.g. of encyclopaedic sources), in parallel with all proceedings of meetings and conferences (which already have the status of paper collections announcing single novelties), in parallel with journals, but with a much higher priority.
  - The current write-up seems to speak to the very accomplished and new researchers, but not to middle practitioners who may become the future accomplished.



## Topic 5: “Unity as a Part of Diversity”

(Including discussions about the Bertalanffy Centre and Swanson’s Education Initiative)

Gabriele Bammer (Australia),  
Maria Mercedes Clusellas Cornejo (from Monday morning),  
Debora Hammond (USA),

Wolfgang Hofkirchner (Austria),  
Matjaz Mulej (Slovenia) (to Wednesday pm),  
Gary Metcalf (USA) (Monday morning only).



(from left) Debora Hammond, Gabriele Bammer, Magdalena Kalaidjieva, Ken Bausch, Amanda Gregory, Jennifer Wilby, Gary Metcalf, Matjaz Mulej, Maria Mercedes Clusella Cornejo

### Summary of Guiding Questions for Discussion

1. Who is working on core concepts for the integration of systems thinking?
2. How can we achieve an integration of different approaches to systems thinking?
3. How can we develop human capacities to accept an integration of different approaches to systems thinking (including worldview, ethics, and acceptance of differences)?
4. Where do we find and how can we put into use a toolbox of system methodologies corresponding to detected/felt problems?
5. How can we work against overspecialization, while still recognizing the importance of specialization, using transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches?
6. Action Plan for further work

### Sunday 23 April morning session

1. Who is working on core concepts for integrating systems thinking?  
(Initial brainstorm, not an exhaustive list)

Len Troncale (natural sciences)  
Jim Simms (living systems theory; quantitative approach to social systems science)  
Allenna Leonard (glossary of 45 key terms)  
Matjaz Mulej (7 principles of thinking opposed to mechanical thinking)  
Wolfgang Hofkirchner (unifying self-organization approaches)  
Charles Francois (encyclopedia of systems and cybernetics)  
Günther Ossimitz (electronic/web-based version of encyclopedia)  
Principia Cybernetica Group (Free University Brussels)  
ISSS Primer Project (Tom Mandel)  
ISSS Luminaries Project (Markus Schwaniger)  
Gerald Midgley (4 volumes on key papers)  
Gerald Midgley and Wendy Gregory (unpublished thinking on core concepts)  
Debora Hammond (historical narrative of founders of ISSS)  
Students from Santa Fe Institute (cataloguing centers of research and other resources on complexity)  
Michael Jackson (system of systems methodologies)  
Systems biology/systems ecology

Additions made to preliminary list in the morning of Thursday April 27:  
(this also included discussion of toolboxes)

Mike Jackson, subsequent work on Total Systems Integration and Critical Systems Practice.  
TSI is a useful toolbox. Critical systems practice includes PANDA by Leroy White and Ann Taket;  
Multimethodology by John Mingers  
UN University Millenium Project piece on systems methodology  
Dallenbach (or Dallanbach) and Flood: systems guide for students in management (encyclopedia).  
Klaus Krippendorff, glossary in ASC records.  
UNESCO's Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems (chapter on cybernetics by RG)  
Cybernetics courses around the world (e.g. Reading and Bradford in the UK and a university in southern California in the US)  
DEMOS think tank in the UK [www.demos.org.uk](http://www.demos.org.uk)  
Jack Chapman paper on systems failure is a useful resource (I think on this site)  
New Economics Foundation in the UK 1999 publications – includes "Participation Works: 21 processes for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century"  
Institute of Systems Science, Chinese Academy of Science

- metasynthesis
- wuli shili renli
- GAE – environment for running conversations.

ASC project, distance learning introductory course to cybernetics, written by MBA students (from Ranulph Glanville)  
Bela Banathy's book "Designing social systems in a changing world"  
Mike Jackson's latest book: "Creative holism"  
Len Troncale's previous attempts to catalogue key concepts, probably published in International Journal of General Systems. [www.orgsoc.org.uk](http://www.orgsoc.org.uk)  
OR Society has good teaching stuff on Checkland and soft systems methodology.  
System Dynamics Society also provides educational resources  
Systems primer [www.systemsprimer](http://www.systemsprimer)  
Laszlo's are working on a glossary  
Robert Horn, historical mural of systems concepts  
(to be exhibited at 2006 ISSS conference)  
Günther Ossimitz, systems thinking and system dynamics mega link list [www.guenther.ossimitz.at](http://www.guenther.ossimitz.at)  
(follow the links)  
Pangaro archive [www.pangaro.com](http://www.pangaro.com)

*End Of Thursday Am Addition*

## Action Plan Items:

1. Web Link
2. Workshop exploring relationships (connectivities and differences) between different approaches – Role for Bertalanffy Center
3. Mind mapping of different schools (G. Ossimitz, C. Francois, etc.)

## Sunday 23 April afternoon session:

2. How can we achieve an integration of different approaches to systems thinking?  
Six Questions to consider:

1. For whom and for what?
2. Of what?
3. By whom?
4. How?
5. In which context?
6. How do we measure success?

How to integrate different approaches?

- Dialogue as a tool to facilitate integration – process vs. content/outcome
- Building models
- Ethics of Interdependence
- Expansion of (dangers of colonization by?) dominant view – inclusive vs. exclusive

In what context?

- Convergence after decades of divergence

Integration of what?

- Of ALL versions of systems thinking & cybernetics, complexity, etc.

By whom?

- Coalition of the willing – hosted by IFSR, Bertalanffy Center, and others

For whom and for what?

- For expanded set of concepts/tools/values for dealing with complex problems

How do we measure success?

- Still largely an open question
- Include case studies
- In an academic context, success would be an integrated view of systems thinking which would be as powerful as the most powerful discipline/field (science and/or business).
- In the world, would measure success/impact of systems thinking:
- in organizational structures would foster management by cooperation rather than subordination to coworkers;
- criteria for success in an academic world would reflect systemic values.

1.																		
2.																		
3.																		

Levels in above diagram (from Matjaz Mulej):

1. uniting
2. dividing in groups
3. nothing in common.

Balancing of all 3 subsystems of attributes.  
Systems thinking inside disciplines is not sufficient!

Define Integration: Accepting common attributes without abolishing diversity

- Different perspectives are accepted
- Shared points are aimed at (they are also not exclusive)
- Mutual understanding as a bridge toward cooperation



(from left): **Amanda Gregory, Wolfgang Hofkirchner, Urban Kordes, Frank Stowell, Matjaz Mulej, Madgalena Kalaidjieva**

## Monday 24 April Morning Session

4. Where do we find and how can we put into use a toolbox of system methodologies corresponding to detected/felt problems?

Set of principles linked to core concepts (from Sunday April 23 morning, i.e. boundaries, levels, emergence, feedback, double-loop learning, etc.).

- Determine system boundary
- Define viewpoint(s) (i.e. what kind of system/problem you are dealing with).

Part I: Principles

Can be divided into:

Ontological = what do real world systems look like (macro and micro)  
Epistemological = how to approach the system  
Praxiological = values

In other words:

Requisite Realism  
Requisite Holism  
Requisite Humanism

Part II: Identify Type of Problem -> leading to choice between several relevant methodologies -> which link back to initial principles

Circular loop between viewpoints in identifying problems and methodologies which provide insights:

Identify type of problem -> Problem -> Methodology -> Insight -> Viewpoints -> Identify type of problem -> etc.

Viewpoints reflect both objective knowledge (starting point w/corresponding needs and possibilities) and subjective values.

Circular loop between values, culture, ethics, norms

Dialectical System (structure/mathematical entity) – network of all and only essential viewpoints (systems as content)

Starting points:

Jackson – system of systems methodologies

System Dynamics Primer – as a specific example of how a toolbox could work

C. Francois – encyclopedia (Cybernetics)

Additions made in the morning of Thursday April 27 (see also discussion on concepts which included toolboxes)

Case studies of application being developed by Bill Christopher in US (New York State or Connecticut??)

## **Monday 24 April Afternoon Session: Bertalanffy Center for the Study of Systems Science**

(including initial group plus: Ken Bausch (USA), Ranulph Glanville (UK), Amanda Gregory (UK), Magdalena Kalaidjieva (Bulgaria), Gary Metcalf (USA), Günther Ossimitz (Austria), Jennifer Wilby (UK))

DH (and GB): To define the structure of the Bertalanffy Center; begin a conversation of points raised regarding both diversity and unity of different schools of systems thinking.

MM: 3 phases:

- everyone presents own thinking
- what is common for groups
- what do we all share

KB: (For workshop) Everyone gives their own picture. Bring our papers and ideas and talk about them. Everyone has something to say. Takes notes and see how it goes.

GO: Invite young assistant scientists and challenge them to present results, but doing it in a way where they are confronted with specialized work and broader systems background. Confront younger scientists with the need to put their work into bigger contexts. Outcome is promotion of broader results.

MC: Try to avoid overspecialization.

AG: Good opportunity. Want conversation to highlight unique selling point that distinguishes from other system centres. Agree with GO regarding focus on younger researchers.

KB: Historical research. Archives. Put these researchers in perspective and look for relevance today and/or go behind that to create new theories, but need to agree to disagree.

RG:

1. Creating an intelligent listener is most important part of any conversation -- need to focus on this (e.g. do not judge before speaker has finished -- or interrupt).
2. Desperately important in area of cybernetics to consider what cybernetics is doing in its own terms and not forcing to respond to outside requirements.

3. to distill what's at the center (therefore start by distilling our understanding of Ludwig von Bertalanffy).

GB: Use this distillation as a conversation starter between different areas.

KB: Use Christakis book to distill.

GB: Suggestion to advocate other points of view from one's own.

MM: Workshop on different approaches (going back to DH and GB initial point).

GO: Hard to teach listening (paradoxical). Good talking supports good listening. (people stop listening when they feel like they are being dominated or manipulated).

DH: importance of mutual respect.

#### Tuesday 25 April Morning Session: Systems and Cybernetics Education

- 1) Identify existing programs. Review contents of programs. "Define" systems science as a "cross discipline." (GA - Council of Deans or other educational leaders). What courses are out there? Intro courses vs. intro books
- 2) Difficulty of giving overview of broad field of systems sciences. i.e. What IS systems sciences (Systems Dynamics defines itself as THE systems science - or that systems thinking is a small part of Systems Dynamics); in German speaking countries Frederick Vester advocates networked thinking. Doerner and the book 'the logic of failure' (people can't cope with complex situations - systems thinking doesn't exist).



(from left) **Wolfgang Hofkichner, Matjaz Mulej, Maria Mercedes Clusella Cornejo, Debora Hammond, Gabriele Bammer**

Günther's presentation:

Systems thinking/learning and Systems representation/modeling - intimately intertwined.  
Can't think and learn unless you can represent.

Four levels of how systems can be represented (going from qualitative to quantitative):

- 1) Verbal
- 2) Causal Loop Diagrams
- 3) Stock-Flow Diagrams
- 4) Equations

Tried to identify important areas necessary to make systems thinking work.

- 1) networks, including vicious and virtuous (self-limiting) cycles
- 2) time: need dynamic not static models
- 3) models: need to understand limitations and assumptions - each technique offers different possibilities
- 4) practical action: when and how and what to do

Hierarchies within and outside of systems, including environment  
 Role of internet in systems education

Magdalena: in Bulgaria systems in Engineering/IT/Economics & Business not related; no overarching connections - need to facilitate coordination

Desire to provide introductory course

- common to different schools
- systematizing kinds of systems
- applications fields and impacts

Matjaz:

Defines systems sciences as being about holism.

Course limited to soft systems - works with engineers who get hard systems anyway, too, but more with business students and M.A. students of sports

Co-authored book as basis for course (in Slovenian), with S. Umpleby, Vallee, Schiemenz, Jackson, Flood, Mingers, and Rosicky; covers GST, cybernetics, dialectical systems theory, living systems theory, critical systems thinking, soft systems methodology, viable systems modeling, and chaos/complexity. Applied to information, decision making, total quality, and innovation. Also works on how this knowledge can be obtained by informal systems thinking.

Define:

- 1) What is introductory level knowledge?
- 2) What constitutes major, Masters and PhD levels?

Supply vs. Demand (of systems thinking/methodologies) in agricultural, industrial, and service societies

Historical vs. ahistorical (organizational) approach to presenting concepts

Within computer context (Gerhard Chroust):

- 1) concepts vs. models (separated in teaching, focus on soft systems)
- 2) transactional analysis
- 3) emergence as key concepts



(from left) **Wolfgang Hofkichner, Gabriele Bammer, Debora Hammond,**

Jifa Gu:

Using book with 8 chapters: intro, various systems modeling (transactional analysis?), hard systems methodology, systems modeling, soft system methodology, oriental system methodology, case studies, experiments or tests (in social context)

Ranulph (Cybernetics): no syllabus -- self-organizing or emergent approach to instruction or learning process. Focus on design through doing, conversational, students encouraged to produce something imaginative or exploratory. Draws on 800 page collection of essays as resource. Embody cybernetics in approach to teaching. Not instruction/student driven.

Saybrook: full curriculum & PhD in systems, recently reduced to fit within organizational systems orientation. Issue of accreditation. How to do systemic research?

Extract levels of knowledge for younger children progressing through high schools & university -- 4 levels

- Impact of religious traditions/schooling (and other cultural influences) on ability to learn systems thinking
- Forrester: K-12 curriculum on web
- Cybernetics course is dependent on students and faculty - can't be systematized

Goals:

- 1) Develop courses for distance learning
- 2) Develop certified courses or certification process for systems field
- 3) Develop program for systems major

Stu Umpleby (GWU): working with grad students to write distance learning course on cybernetics

Allenna: begin with readings and then introduce projects; need guidance about process (for potential instructors)

Topics for further discussion & consideration

- 1) significance of service economy for systems education
- 2) internet/web world
- 3) consumers/end users of systems education
- 4) affinity diagram
- 5) IFSR publication program
- 6) informal or implicit systems thinking
- 7) teaching about hard v soft systems

### **Results of affinity exercise:**

Motivating question: In what ways (if any) does systems education need to change to be relevant in a global/digital/services society?

#### *Instruments and interaction:*

more networked exercises

construction of interactive instruments that help with a pedagogic way to learn the concepts

#### *Body of knowledge:*

It needs to be teachable at multiple levels consistently across students across teachers

broader conception of real-time measures

it must acknowledge post-1980s advances in science

needs to develop "body of knowledge" to draw upon in programs of instruction

needs to create clear enough definition of systems view and its relevance to be recognized and accepted within larger context

#### *Ethical considerations:*

reconceptualize control for non-coercive environment

for worldview of: requisite holism, requisite realism, requisite humanism, based on ethics of interdependence, of humans as narrow specialists needing each other and supported by methods

*Web:*

global through exchanging conversations  
digital through internet  
has to be interactive  
has to be on-line

*Audiences:*

Needs to work on influencing structure of educational system to facilitate greater interaction between educational institutions, business organizations and community.  
Multiple customer/user feedback interactions

*Pull not push:*

Directed to learning not education  
experience based  
must be readily applicable  
direct applications to current issues  
linked to relevance:  
good argument for its job-relevance

*Breadth:*

become a cross-cutting specialization (like statistics, information science, etc.)  
be defined by a conceptual boundary  
emergence of systems education programs at college level

*Structural:*

it must be scalable from small groups to large institutions  
has to be modular

*Scope:*

accessible concepts  
crossing languages and cultures  
basic (essential) systems ideas/concepts for everybody (part of general education)  
it needs to share common concepts yet be flexible to cultural context

*Miscellaneous comments at end of discussion:*

Accommodating change in learning habits  
Life-long learning  
More community based learning and research  
Meta-subject, subject in its own right

## **Wednesday 26 April Morning Session (Action Plan)**



(from left) **Gabriele Bammer** **Debora Hammond**, **Maria Mercedes Clusella Cornejo**,

1. Set up a web page (to be mirrored on several sites) identifying people/organizations working on core concepts, toolboxes and other resources for systems approaches (journals, research centres etc).

Volunteer(s): GB through [www.anu.edu.au/iisn](http://www.anu.edu.au/iisn); GC (input)

2. Link with GA Swanson's education initiative – compiling syllabi from existing courses and developing curriculum for systems education.

Volunteers: MC, DH, GO, MM, GB, DI

3. Supporting efforts at synthesis of core concepts and methodologies (drawing on resources developed in step 1) – in collaboration with encyclopedia project.

Volunteers: GO, MC, DH, WH, CF

4. Bertalanffy Centre to set up infrastructure for synthesis of concepts and methodologies (ie wiki, forum and/or listserv - and newsletter?).  
(At Thursday morning discussion RG suggested that it would be useful to have a restricted-access wiki where people could add and modify concepts.)

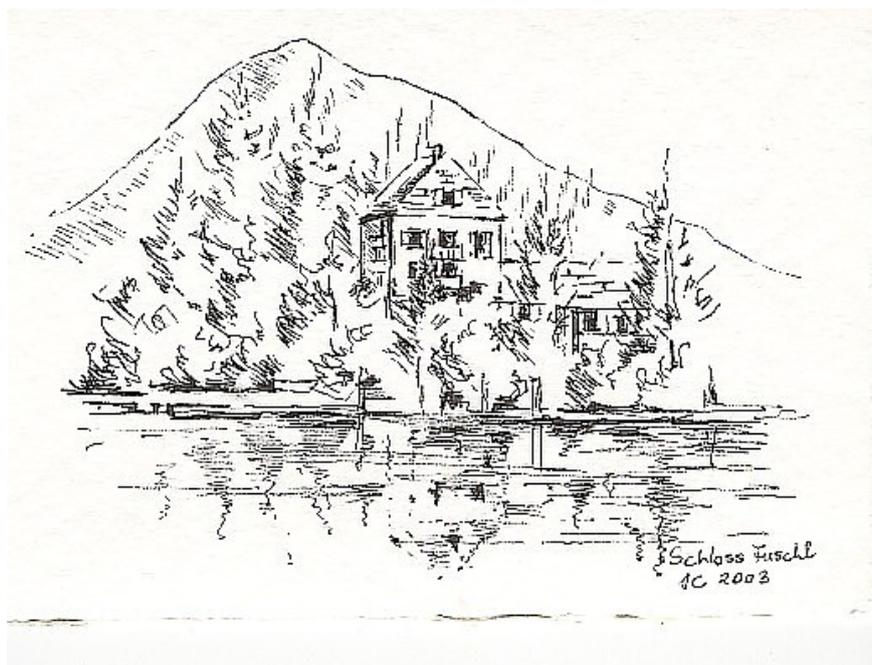
Volunteer(s): WH, GC

5. Networking archives. Develop webpage that will link to archives of leading figures in the systems movement and index what is there.

Volunteers: WH, MK, AL (link Stafford Beer archives), GAS (will help with indexing)

6. Kick-off workshop on quest for unified theory of systems hosted by Bertalanffy Centre  
Use yo-yo method (Stafford Beer) – metaphors, analogy, homomorphism, isomorphism

Volunteers: WH, AL (yo-yo method), JW



Schloß Fuschl



## Lessons Learnt - Fuschl 2006 Summary

**Reporter:**  
David Ing (Canada)

all participants

### What have we, the participants, learnt of value, this week?

- Reinspiration on working together, being able to work with others.
- Good to explicitly invite representatives from member organizations.
- For the first time, the IFSR asked who we are, what are we doing? Coming out of paradise, we realize that we are naked.
- Had a lot of complementary between organization structure, conversation, content community, and a meta-frame that could give deeper understanding.
- A lot of people who often don't meet each other, face-to-face, making connections.
- IFSR board meeting, statement that we are in crisis, this is the first time that we are not in crisis.
- Not quite in crisis, have some leeway to make changes in time. When you go home, we expect you to help. The obligation is also with you.
- IFSR doesn't have to be just a formality.
- There is value in IFSR and conversations, perhaps adapted, but the basic is on the right direction.
- Have to wake up members, before you get feedback. Should read the documentation more intensively.
- Got a better mandate here, than at the board meeting.
- If you want to have an organization that can serve whatever function, it can't do that meeting a few hours every two years. If want to have a service function, and members providing value to each other, need to have people together more frequently.
- Sensing inputs for the next few years.
- Learned some method to run a conversation.
- The way to understand a system is to disturb it.
- Who are we for? Not only for ourselves, but for a larger society.

### Outcome for the Fuschl Conversations

- Should we have a future conversation? The mandate can only come from IFSR's Board. What are the expectation? Who initiates?
- We could export the conversation to others, but doesn't mean that it's part of IFSR. Wouldn't request money from the IFSR.

- Would we have a Fuschl conversation extension (cf. section “Fuschl Extension Emerges”), advertising, that would take away business from member organizations.
- Should we have a Fuschl conversation 2008?

## **IFSR and its member organizations**

- Endorsment of members is necessary for many projects, members might reject project proposals (competitive issue!)
- Under the legal name of the IFSR, what are the legal limitations? Usual issues.
- What are things that the IFSR is allowed to e.g. with respect to competition with member organizations.
- Aims and constitution of some of the member organizations may be more restrictive than allowed by those of the IFSR. IFSR has to be careful.
- Sources for financing will have to be clear, due to money laundering questions in Austria.



(from left) G.A. Swanson, Debora Hammond, Gabriele Bammer, Jennifer Wilby, Wolfgang Hofkirchner, Ranulph Glanville, Amanda Gregory

## **Tasks and Projects for the IFSR**

- Education
- Archives (von Bertalanffy, Beer)
- Services science
- Books and papers, e.g. Churchman's work, Pask reader – early work lost or held in memory of the few people.
- Have books of live investments, e.g. need to reintroduce Pask, since he wrote difficultly.
  - This is revenue neutral. Can be brought as a gift to the IFSR.
- May need translation between languages (with English as the international scientific language, or to other languages).
  - This not revenue neutral.

- Projects
  - Projects can be submitted to the IFSR Board for approval.
  - Could invite other members to join these initiatives.
  - Bertalanffy conference, is really part of the Bertalanffy Centre
  - Clarification between IFSR projects, and those that are supported by IFSR
  - Value exchange through the people that do have funds



- Journal: may have a board level issue in the future, as the university wakes up on resources required
- *Systems Research* was an initiative by the board.
- Encyclopedia project: has scope and finances, as previously discussed.
- Web site: need to upgrade the web site.
  - Trying to monetize the net would be amazingly expensive.
- Newsletter.
- ..Strategy for the future of the IFSR? Not a traditional organizational strategy, but instead projects, and potential coordination between organizations.



**Gerhard Chroust**



## Survey of Participants' Opinions

**Reporter:**

Gordon Rowland (USA)  
Barbara Rivera (USA)  
Gerhard Chroust (Austria)

all participants

On the last day of the Fuschl Conversation Gordon Rowland and Barbara Rivera asked the participants to provide an anonymous feedback on individual pieces of papers. Two questions were as below. The answers to the third question "Suggestions for 2008, Additional Comments" were inserted into the second question ('reconsider'). The received answers were sorted into the subtopics below. No editing or interpretation was performed on the texts.

### What aspects of Fuschl 2006 worked well and should be kept for 2008?

#### Topics

- I really enjoyed the focus on IFSR and the future of the systems field in general, as it seemed to provide greater focus to each team's work, as well as to the reporting back.
- I have only attended the conversation one other time, and it felt somewhat more fragmented to me, since the topics addressed seemed more abstract and there was less opportunity for cross fertilization. There also did not seem to be as much opportunity for on-going work, while this year's topics seemed to lend themselves to further collaboration.



(from left) **Maria Mercedes Clusella Cornejo, Günther Ossimitz**

## Method and Approach

- Keep the Fuschl conversation in the form : preparation → Conversation → post processing
- [keep] Conversation method
- The practice of conversation methodology with the intention of bettering society as the foundation of the event
- Conversation-oriented culture
- Opportunities for contributions for all members.
- Openness of conversation. Capacity to listen to each other.
- Group work and daily reports.
- The discussions – many thoughtful points were made, much about the context of the systems movement became clearer
- Face
- -to-Face (unique selling point, triggers creativity)
- No formal paper (triggers creativity)
- Small groups (Unique selling point)
- No pressure to produce (triggers creativity)
- Free wheeling discussions
- Great facilitation

## Venue and location

- Lovely setting except for the mosquitoes
- Beautiful Fuschl setup
- Ambience of Hotel Schlick
- Most meeting rooms have light & [offer] option to be inside or outside

## Timing and structure

- Good to have afternoon off and lots of options for activities
- Length is about right

## Organization, Participants

- Participation of a small number of early career people
- Gathering leader of IFSR organizations is very valuable because of the mainly informal rapport & possibilities for cooperative action
- [I ] enjoyed meeting new people, getting to know others better by talking and working together
- I enjoyed being with everyone.
- The attempt to get representatives from all of the IFSR member organizations should be continued. Member organizations that do not have a membership process for changing leadership should be offered invitations less frequently. Other institutions such as universities with significant systems programs, systems journals, and systems research centers should be asked to nominate and send participants.
- The efforts to integrate the activities and ideas of the different groups should be continued.
- Cost/subsidy.

## What aspects of Fuschl 2006 might be reconsidered for 2008?

### Topics

- Topic cannot always be so much about IFSR, but every several years, when there is a new team in [the IFSR EC] committee.
- Doing 'the business' of the IFSR might be eliminated because it overpowers the conversation aspect of the Fuschl Conversation
- Reconsider Focus
- Clarification of the relationship between Fuschl and IFSR.
- Rethink: Fragmented topic → one overall umbrella topic

- Rethink: Fuschl as conversation between systems thinkers → connect to civil society and real-world problems
- Reconsider Topic finding process
- A description of the topic(s) and programme in advance and request that some preparation is undertaken in advance.
- Would not recommend a topic on the organization for 2008, however...maybe a mix of applications and tools or a single case that different tools would be applied to, that could become a book
- Add in complexity science

### **Method and Approach**

- Should topics of Fuschl be strategic planning for IFSR or something else?
- Rethink: Conversation stops after event → virtual: discussion boards, wikis
- Reconsider plain Banathy-style conversation and consider more structured approaches
- Some lack of distinction about what would happen with recommendations of different types.
- Need to revive the preparation phase before the conversation. Also, need to add an introductory kit for the newcomers
- For future conversations, it might be helpful to establish/re-state/offer the basic guidelines for successful conversations at the event
- Some tangible outcomes.
  - Reconsider Selection process (participants)
  - Reconsider Pre-conversation preparation process
  - More plenary discussions
  - Carefully design triggering questions to initiate discussions
  - Difficult to say without knowing topic/purpose of meeting
  - If it [2008] would be anything [similar] like this. A group process should be used where everyone knew what the 'container' was and what was expected. Open space might be a good choice as it does not involve a large facilitation team or technology.

### **Venue and location**

- Seating arrangement in the dining room made it difficult to talk to as many people as would have been good
- Location: why Fuschl? It is not easy to reach if one has to fly to Vienna which many did this time.
- Reconsider: Projection facility (better beamer/screen)
- Fuschl is a beautiful place in sunny days. Perhaps a cheaper location must be found given the new financial restrictions of IFSR.

### **Timing and structure**

- If Fuschl is to make a contribution to systems development then an annual event might be worth considering.
- Reconsider : Re-introduce the "singing event"

### **Organization, Participants**

- Good balance between 'old timers' & newcomers & between maintenance of 'tradition' plus not being stifled by traditions
- More geographical diversity. Not more than 2-3 people from any one country
- Some individuals should listen more than talk and be more constructive
- Greater commitment of participants to stay for the whole time. It's not fair on those who plan to stay to the end.
- Clearer expectation (& agreement between different people communicating expectations) of purpose of the meeting
- Some confusion about our remit.

- Technical connections (presumably that would improve by 2008)
- Easy access to Internet.
- Reconsider Email/Web access (is that really good or a distraction?)
- Need a prior HP announcement, a bulletin board for general affairs, such as meal hours, evening activities, etc.
- Reconsider: Collect important book references before the conversation
- Don't really have anything to add here, except that it might be helpful to bring representatives from more of the member groups, although I can appreciate the challenges involved.
- I was generally very happy with the structure and process of this year's conversation.



**Lake Fuschl in the evening**



## Appendix: What is the IFSR?

### The Background

A good half a century ago, right after the end of the dreadful period from 1914 to 1945 comprising World War I, the World Economic crisis, and World War II, scientists such as Ludwig von Bertalanffy, Norbert Wiener and their colleagues found a response to the terrible events that killed tens of millions of people: holistic rather than fragmented thinking, decision-making and acting. They established two sciences to support humankind in the effort of meeting this end, which is a promising alternative to the worldwide and local crises. These sciences were *Systems Theory* and *Cybernetics*. System was and is the word entitled to represent the whole. One fights one-sidedness in order to survive. Nevertheless every human must be specialized in a fragment of the immense huge knowledge humankind possesses today. Thus, one-sidedness is unavoidable and beneficial, too. But networking of many one-sided insights can help all of us overcome the weak sides of a narrow specialization. Thus, we all need a narrow professional capacity and add to it systemic / holistic thinking.

From this combination most modern equipment resulted, most modern knowledge in all spheres of human activity, solutions to environmental problems, etc. Most of the remaining problems can be ascribed to a lack of this combination, and there are many around that can hardly be solved without systems thinking and creative co-operation of diverse specialists.

Our responsibility for the future obliges us to try to improve the current situation and not to leave an excessive burden to future generation. The Founding of the IFSR

Since a system, in its general abstract definition, is more than its parts as well more than the sum of its parts, it was decided to interlink groups of system thinkers around the world and to try to find answers to some of the pressing problems of the world.

On March 12, 1980 during the 5<sup>th</sup> EMCSR-Congress in Vienna the three important societies in the area of systems research, the *Österreichische Studiengesellschaft für Kybernetik*, the *Systemgroup Nederland*, and the *Society for General System Research* founded the *International Federation for Systems Research*. The key persons were: Robert Trappl, George J. Klir, Gerard de Zeeuw. They became the first officers of the IFSR.

Strong support came from the then Austrian Ministry of Science and Research in the person of Norbert Rozsenich providing some financial support and Paul F. de. P. Hanika, taking the responsibility of Editor in chief of the Newsletter of the IFSR.

### Aims and Goals of the IFSR

The constitution of the Federation states:

The aims of the Federation are to stimulate all activities associated with the scientific study of systems and to co-ordinate such activities at the international level by:

- co-coordinating systems research activities of private persons and/or organizations;
- organizing international meetings, courses, workshops, and the like;
- promoting international publications in the area of systems research;
- promoting systems education;
- maintaining standards and competence in systems research and education; and
- any other means ... [to] serve the aims of the members.

The first Board Meeting (June 1980) defined the Federation's goals:

- **Social Learning Goal:** Strengthen the programs of member societies by their involvement in the program and network of IFSR.
- **Membership Development Goal:** Facilitate (encourage) the development of Systems science in countries in which such programs do not yet exist or are now developing.
- **Synergetic Goal:** Develop – implement – evaluate IFSR-level programs to meet the purposes of

IFSR to advance systems science.

- **Resource Development Goal:** Identify an inventory of system science relevant resources, acquire those and make them accessible to member societies.
- **Global Mission:** Make contribution to the larger (global) scientific community, be of service to improve the (global) human condition, and enrich the quality of life of all. The Growth of the IFSR

Many prominent system scientists have been officers of the IFSR since 1980

<i>starting</i>	<i>President</i>	<i>Vice-President(s)</i>	<i>Secretary/Treasurer</i>
1980	George J. Klir	Robert Trappl	Gerard de Zeeuw
1984	Robert Trappl	Bela H. Banathy	Gerard de Zeeuw
1988	Gerrit Broekstra	Franz Pichler	Bela Banathy
1992	Gerard de Zeeuw	J.D.R. De Raadt	Gerhard Chroust
1994	Bela H. Banathy	Michael C. Jackson	Gerhard Chroust
1998	Michael C. Jackson	Yong Pil Rhee	Gerhard Chroust
2000	Yong Pil Rhee	Michael C. Jackson	Gerhard Chroust
2002	Jifa Gu	Matjaz Mulej, Gary S. Metcalf Jifa Gu	Gerhard Chroust
2006	Matjaz Mulej	Gary S. Metcalf	Gerhard Chroust

In the 25 years of its existence, the IFSR has shown a healthy growth. It now counts 32 members, representing scientists from 25 countries on several continents. They are:

American Society for Cybernetics  
 Asociacion Argentina de Teoria General de Sistemas y Cibernetica  
 Asociacion Latinoamericana de Sistemas  
 Asociacion Mexicana de las Ciencias de Sistemas  
 Asociacion Mexicana de Sistemas y Cibernetica  
 Association Française des Sciences et Technologies de l'information et des Systems  
 Associazione Italiana per la Ricerca Sui Sistemi  
 Australian and New Zealand Systems Group  
 Bertalanffy Center for the Study of Systems Science  
 Bulgarian Society for Systems Research  
 Centre for Hyperincursion and Anticipation in Ordered Systems  
 Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Kybernetik  
 Gesellschaft für Wirtschafts- und Sozialkybernetik  
 Global Institute of Flexible Systems Management  
 Greek Systems Society  
 Hellenic Society for Systemic Studies  
 Instituto Andino de Sistemas (IAS)  
 The International Institute of Informatics and Systemics (IIIS)  
 International Society for the Systems Sciences  
 International Society of Knowledge and Systems Science  
 International Systems Institute  
 Japan Association for Social and Economic Systems Studies  
 Management Science Society of Ireland (MSSI)  
 Österreichische Studiengesellschaft für Kybernetik (ÖSGK)  
 Polish Systems Society  
 RC51 on Sociocybernetics  
 Slovenian Society for Systems Research  
 Sociedad Espanola de Sistemas Generales  
 Systeemgroep Nederland  
 Systems Engineering Society of China  
 The Cybernetics Society  
 The Korean Society for Systems Science Research  
 The Learned Society of Praxiology

## IFSR Activities

The IFSR pursues successfully numerous activities:

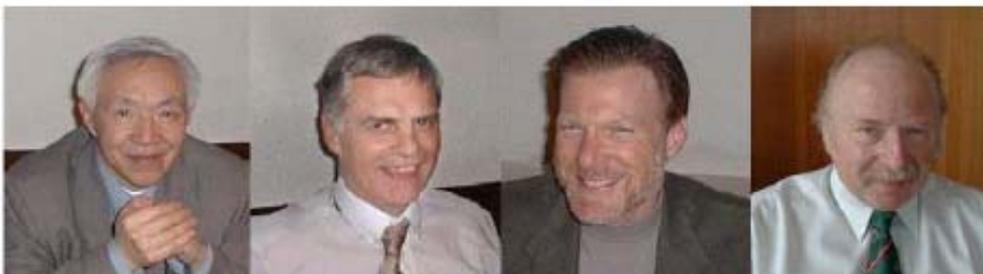
- *Systems Research and Behavioural Science* (ISSN 1092-7026), the official scientific journal of the IFSR, edited by Michael C. Jackson, published since 1984
- *International Series on Systems Science and Engineering*, IFSR's book series, established in 1985, edited by George J. Klir, now published by Springer, New York
- the yearly *IFSR Newsletter*, the informal newsletter of the IFSR (paper : ISSN 1818-0809, online: ISSN 1818-0817), published since 1981, edited by Gerhard Chroust
- The *IFSR* web-site (<http://www.ifsr.org>) informing the world about the Federation's activities
- *the IFSR Fuschl-conversations*, taking place every other year since 1982 in Fuschl near Salzburg, Austria, discussing issues of social learning
- Support for other events (e.g. the EMCSR-conference in Vienna every second year)
- Sponsoring a bi-annual Ashby-lecture at the European Meeting on Cybernetics and Systems Research (EMCSR)
- Organising the First International Congress of IFSR in 2005 in Kobe, Japan, Nov 14-17.

## Future Plans

More than ever Systems Sciences are seen as a basis for balancing the divergent needs and interests between individuals and society worldwide, between ecology and economy, between nations of various levels of development and between differing worldviews.

The IFSR commits itself to increase its contributions answering the needs as expressed in its original aims and goals. Some new activities, in line with the needs and the challenges, have already been started:

- *The Bertalanffy Library*: In cooperation with the Bertalanffy Center for the Study of Systems Science (led by W. Hofkirchner) the IFSR will both help to preserve, revive and disseminate systems concepts and knowledge in general and L. v. Bertalanffy's ideas and work on General Systems Theory in particular.
- *ESCO - The International Encyclopaedia of Systems and Cybernetics* based on Charles Francois' seminal International Encyclopedia of Systems and Cybernetics. This work will be continued, supplemented electronically as an attempt clarify and reduce inconsistent terminology and semantics in the field.
- *The International Academy of Systems and Cybernetics* (led by M. Mulej) as a forum for persons professionally excelling in System and Cybernetics Research
- *The IFSR 200x Congress*: The outstanding success of IFSR 2005 in Kobe, Japan, encourages the IFSR to organise a further IFSR-Congress in cooperation with one or more of its member organisations within the next 2 years.
- Current Officers of the IFSR



Vicepresident  
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Science, China  
[jfgu@amss.ac.cn](mailto:jfgu@amss.ac.cn)

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# IFSR

## International Federation for Systems Research

August 2006 IFSR 1



Founded in 1980

George J. Klir

Robert Trappl

Gerard de Zeeuw



International Federation for Systems Research  
NEWSLETTER

OFFICERS OF THE IFSR

EDITORIAL

August 2006 IFSR



## Purpose

- stimulate all activities ...
- with the scientific study of systems, ... coordinate ... at the international level.
- organize, support and sponsor research and development in systems research
- develop international publications
- define and promote standards of competence
- coordinate programs of members

August 2006 IFSR 2



## Governance

Executive Committee elects BOARD

President  
2 Vicepresidents  
Secretary/Treasurer

Send 2 representatives

- Full Member (organisations in good standing)
- Affiliate (developing organisation)
- 32 members from 25 countries

August 2006 IFSR 3




Matjaz Malej  
President



J. F. G. O. G. O.  
Chairman

## Officers of the IFSR



Gary Mitchell  
August 2006 Vice President



Gerhard Chroust  
Secretary/Treasurer

August 2006 IFSR 4



## Projects

- IFSR Book Series
- IFSR Newsletter
- Web Site
- Journal: Systems Research And Behavioural Science
- Fuchs Conversation April 2006
- IFSR 2005 Kobe, JP 14-19 Nov. 2005
- Support Events EMCSR-Conference April 2006 Ashby lecture, Fee for 10 students

August 2006 IFSR 5

**IFSR**

**Systems Research and Behavioral Science**

Editor in Chief:  
**Michael Jackson**



August 2008

**IFSR**

**International Series  
on Systems Science and Engineering  
(Editor in Chief: George Klir)**

Systemic Intervention: Philosophy, Methodology and Practice  
*Gerald Midgley;*

Systems Approaches to Management  
*Michael C. Jackson;*

Fuzzy Relational Systems: Mathematical Foundations of  
Relational Modeling in the Presence of Vagueness  
*Rudolf Belohlavek;*

August 2008

**IFSR**

**The Fuschl Conversations**

- since 1980
- Main creator: Bela H. Banathy
- since then 45 Fuschl-style conversations world wide
- small teams (5-7 participants)
- Fuschl : 5 teams, 5 days
- [http://www.ifsr.org/activities/fuschl\\_conversation.html](http://www.ifsr.org/activities/fuschl_conversation.html)



Bela H. Banathy +

August 2008

**IFSR**

**What is a Conversation?**

**A Conversation is**

- a collectively guided disciplined inquiry
- an exploration of issues of social/societal significance
- engaged by scholarly practitioners in self-organized teams
- who select a theme for their conversation
- which is initiated in the course of a preparation phase that leads to an intensive learning phase (Bela H. Banathy)

August 2008

**IFSR**

**Ross Ashby Lecture  
sponsoring at the EMCSR**



Wed., Apr. 19  
PRESENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION FOR SYSTEMS RESEARCH (IFSR) (Room 47)  
ROSS ASHBY MEMORIAL LECTURE OF THE IFSR (Room 47)  
**SYSTEMS THEORY - A WORLD VIEW AND/OR A METHODOLOGY**  
Prof. Dr. Matjaž Matej, Vice-president, IFSR

August 2008

**IFSR**

**Supporting students to  
attend EMCSR**



August 2008

**IFSR** Homepage and Newsletter




Official Director of the International Federation of Systems Research  
*Admiral's (Admiral's) values as a (Admiral's) star!*

<http://www.ifsr.org/>

ISSN 1818-0809 (Print)  
 ISSN 1818-0817 (Online)

August 2006

**IFSR 2005**  
 The New Roles of Systems Sciences  
 The First International Congress of the International Federation for Systems Research

November 14-17, 2005  
 International Conference Centre  
 Kobe, Japan

JAIST  
 Systems Engineering Co. city of China  
 甲南大学  
 Kwan University  
 A. Haido  
 University  
 Linz

Call for Papers

November 14-17, 2005  
 Kobe, Japan

August 2006

**IFSR** Project:  
 Ludwig von Bertalanffy Legacy

- Born 1901
- 1934-1948 Ass. Prof / Professor at the Institute of Philosophy und Biology in Vienna, Austria
- 1944 most personal papers lost (bombing in Vienna)
- 1948-1969, London, then Canada
- 1969-1972 Center for Theoretical Biology at the State University of New York in Buffalo.

August 2006

**IFSR** The Bertalanffy Legacy

- March 2004 on Internet:
- „Bertalanffy's Legacy surfaced in Buffalo, NY“
- Hectic activities by IFSR:
  - Exclude competitors
  - Ensure authenticity
  - Guarantee safety
  - Guarantee scientific analysis
- June 2004: whole legacy goes to Vienna

THANKS to sponsors!  
 And to Wolfgang Hofkirchner (Salzburg)

August 2006

**IFSR** The Bertalanffy Legacy

- „Bertalanffy Center for the Study of Systems Science“ (W. Hofkirchner)
- 500 personal letters (to and from), 1946-1972
- 150 monographies (various authors, partially signed)
- 120 memos and books by Bertalanffy

Currently catalogued and archived

Bertalanffy Center for the Study of Systems Science (BCSSS)

August 2006

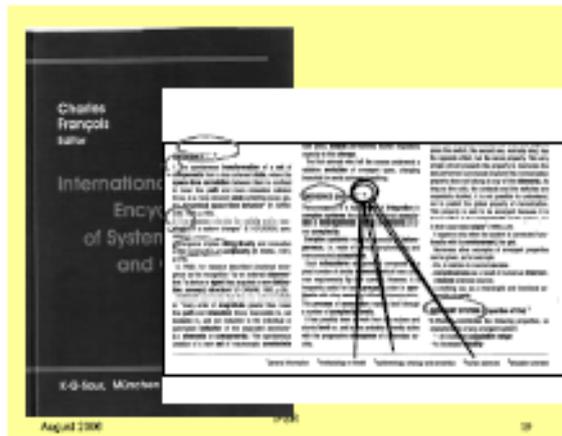
**IFSR** International Encyclopedia of Systems and Cybernetics

- In book form
- Publisher: K.G. Saur, Munich, Germany
- IFSR pledges to continue its maintenance




Göster Goslits, Klagenfurt, Austria

August 2006



## ESCO Encyclopedia of Systems and Cybernetics Online

- online extension of the Encyclopedia
- promote the Encyclopedia
- basic articles, reviews
- Biographies
- Systems Communities
- Include "The next Generation" of systems scientists
- Directory of Systems Scientists
- Systems bibliography

August 2006

IFSR

20



## Supporting our member societies

- Academy of Systems Sciences (planned)
- Web-site (modernization in planning)
- Function as Yellow Pages
- Dissemination of Info
- Coordinate Activities
- Conference Cooperation (no competition!)
- Help with Keynotes
- Organize an IFSR-Congress



**IFSR Congress 2005, Kobe, Japan**  
**IFSR Congress 2009, New Zealand, ???**

August 2006

IFSR

21



## Current members (1)

American Society for Cybernetics  
 Asociación Argentina de Teoría General de Sistemas y Cibernética  
 Asociación Latinoamericana de Sistemas  
 Asociación Mexicana de la Ciencia de Sistemas  
 Asociación Mexicana de Sistemas y Cibernética  
 Association Française des sciences et technologies de l'information et des systèmes  
 Australian and New Zealand Systems Group  
 Austrian Society for Cybernetic Studies  
 Bertalanffy Center for the Study of Systems Science  
 Bulgarian Society for Systems Research  
 Centre for Hyperincursion and Anticipation in Ordered Systems  
 Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Kybernetik  
 Gesellschaft für Wirtschafts- und Sozialkybernetik  
 Global Institute of Flexible Systems Management  
 Greek Systems Society  
 Hellenic Society for Systemic Studies

August 2006

22



## Current Members (2)

Instituto Andino de Sistemas  
 International Institute of Informatics and Systemics  
 International Society for the Systems Sciences  
 International Society of Knowledge and Systems Science  
 International Systems Institute  
 Italian Association for Research on Systems  
 Japan Association for Social and Economic Systems Studies  
 Management Science Society of Ireland  
 Polish Systems Society  
 RC51 on Sociocybernetics  
 Slovenian Society for Systems Research  
 Sociedad Española de Sistemas Generales  
 Systemgroep Nederland  
 Systems Engineering Society of China  
 The Cybernetics Society  
 The Korean Society for Systems Science Research  
 The Learned Society of Praxiology

August 2006

IFSR

23



## WE WANT YOU!

- *If you work in the systems area ...*
- *talk to us!*
- *join us!*



*The*  
**INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION**  
**FOR SYSTEMS RESEARCH**

August 2006

IFSR

24





The aim of the Thirteenth Fuschl Conversation of 2006 was to assess the status of the Systems Sciences in general and based on that draw a road map for the IFSR, the International Federation for Systems Research, providing strategic and tactical guidance.

The Conversations basically followed the scheme used in earlier Fuschl Conversations as devised by Bela H. Banathy.

24 renowned systems scientists and systems practitioners from MM countries took part in that 5-day conversation. Most of the participants were also key officers in the member organisations of the IFSR:

The outcome of the conversation is summarized in 5 group reports and a feed-back report. Pictures also show the social ambience of the Fuschl Conversation.

Institute for Systems Engineering and  
Automation  
[www.sea.uni-linz.ac.at](http://www.sea.uni-linz.ac.at)

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