IFSR Newsletter

Official Newsletter of the

International Federation for Systems Research

Editor-in-Chief: Gerhard Chroust

Volume 31, no. 1 (August 2014)

Melker Stiftskeller, location of the Information Meeting, April 26, 2014

Dear Members!

Every other year after Easter, two key events in the life of the IFSR take place:

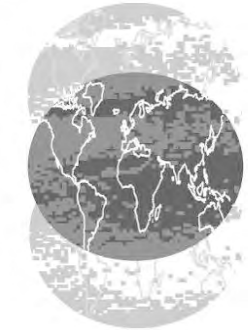
In the Board Meeting the delegates of all IFSR members receive the Executive Committee's reports, evaluate them, giving further guidelines for the next 2 years. This year several important changes to the Constitution of the IFSR were approved. At the end of the Board Meeting the new Executive Committee was elected. The first messages of the newly elected officers are included in this Newsletter.

The second event is the IFSR Conversation (formerly 'Fuschl Conversation') . It has gained considerable reputation in the Systems Community. The following Newsletter (November 2014) will report on it. To follow this up a proceedings volume will provide detailed information.

And finally you find reports from several of our member societies. So look forward to the new developments in the IFSR and keep contact with us!

Yours sincerely

Gerhard Chroust



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The New Executive Committee (2014-2016)

On Saturday, April 26, 2014 the Board Meeting of the IFSR elected a new Executive Committee:

Dr. Gary S. Metcalf
USA
(President)
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Prof. Dr. Gerhard Chroust
Austria
(Secretary General)
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Mag. Stefan Blachfellner
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Dr. Mary C. Edson,
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Dr. Nam Nguyen
Australia/Viet Nam
(Vice President)
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Gary Metcalf's Message

(IFSR President)

Kurt Lewin is often cited as saying that "you cannot understand a system until you try to change it." That has certainly been my experience over the past four years as president of the IFSR. The IFSR as an organization has been changing – somewhat in relation to its growing membership, and also in response to changes in the world. Some of the changes have purposeful; Others have simply evolved. And in some cases, our intended changes have been overwhelmed by inertia. We (collectively) simply lacked the will or the resources to change "how things are."

Purposeless, random changes are rarely helpful, but lack of adaption to one's environment can be fatal. The question left in the middle is how to know the difference.

We have historically been a federation of organizations, which are wrapped largely around academic work. The majority of our members' activities have consisted of meetings and conferences, at which papers are presented. The individuals involved secured resources through research funding, or through university funds, with the expectation that work would ultimately be published in recognized, professional journals.

A challenge, of course, has been that funding for work in systems largely had to "spill over" from other discipline-related activities. Few people taught in programs specifically devoted to systems, or got academic credit for publishing in systems-related journals. Similarly, the operations of our systems organizations often depended on university departments with clerical assistance and graduate students' time and energy. In the U.S., most certainly, and other places as well, those resources have all but disappeared. Likewise, despite any recognition about current, complex world problems being related to "systems" of one kind or another, very little funding has been devoted systems research, as most of us understand that. (Fortunately, there are a few exceptions.)

I was reading again an article by Peter Checkland, based on his plenary talk in 2012, to the International Society for Systems Sciences meeting at the University of Hull. Here is an excerpt of note:

> *After more than 40 years of active involvement in the field of systems, spent developing soft systems methodology (SSM), I am much dismayed at the preference for the ' grand utterance' rather than seriously examined real-world experience. Given the wealth of writing under the general heading of ' systems thinking', it is disappointing to discover the rarity of detailed work to relate that thinking to 'particular, carefully sustained' work in actual situations and work leading to action 'traceable' back to the thinking. Only such work will, ultimately, demonstrate whether systems thinking is truly worth doing.*

There are good, theoretical reasons for needing to test our theories through practice. There are even more practical reasons, though, for connecting our work to real problems, where attention and resources (including funding) exist.

As systems organizations, I'm afraid that we are finding ourselves pushed closer to the edge all the time. Working our ways back into traditional academia, or traditional academic publishing, are likely to be short-lived at best. Universities, and higher education in general, are facing huge challenges and in need of redesign. Similarly, traditional publications as the sources for knowledge are largely outmoded.

The good news is that the ability to deal with large-scale problems using new ways of understanding is needed more than ever. The challenge is finding ways to connect what we know with the right people and places. There is no "one size fits all" as an answer, however. Connecting in China is different than in the U.S. The European Union has many interesting initiatives at the moment, which differ from the possibilities in Australia or South America or Japan. Collectively, though, we need to learn with and from each other. We need to find the opportunities on which we can capitalize, across organizational or geographic boundaries. We are creating our futures.

Checkland, P. (2012). Four Conditions for Serious Systems Thinking and Action. *Systems Research and Behavioral Science, 29*, 465–469.

Stefan Blachfellner's Message

(IFSR vice president)

When I was elected as Vice President the first time in 2012 I envisioned the re-establishment of the so called systems movement as a social impactful scientific research community. Now two years later I am honored again to hold this position to follow this direction. Since then I gained many valuable insights into the field, met brilliant minds and learned through many stories the history of the systems science communities. I personally got involved in many opportunities that turned out to be successful steps towards this vision and I just wanted to mention some of these wonderful experiences. In 2013 I supported the organization of the 57th World Conference of the International Society for the Systems Sciences, Curating the Conditions for a Thrivable Planet: Systemic Leverage Points for Emerging a Global Eco-Civilization in Hai Phong City, Viet Nam, in which the Executive Committee of the IFSR took part.

We were able to establish a new node supporting the establishment of a new systems science organization in Viet Nam followed up by a meeting in Vienna with representatives from Viet Nam and the Austrian chamber of commerce. I also represented the IFSR in Taiwan fostering the relationship with further nodes in South East Asia.

In Europe I was appointed as the Managing Director of the Bertalanffy Center for the Systems Science (BCSSS), which since than underwent some important changes. The BCSSS evolved into an Austrian independent research institute, accredited by the European Union, internationally acknowledged as one of the ambassadors for the systems science heritage and present state-of-the-art applied systems research.

Together with the leading organization in systems research we have organized the 22nd European Meetings on Cybernetics and Systems Research, Civilisation at the Crossroads: Response and Responsibility of the Systems Sciences, which took place from April 22nd to 25th, 2014 at the University of Vienna. In 2012 the BCSSS set the goal to co-create a strong European hub for the international system sciences in Vienna under the umbrella of the International Federation for Systems Research and for all its members, building on the EMCSR 40 years of tradition. Two years later this objective has been achieved with over 200 attendees and the representation of all local universities of Vienna, Medical University of Vienna, University of Applied Arts Vienna, University of Natural Resources and

Life Sciences (BOKU) Vienna, University of Vienna, Vienna University of Economics and Business (WU) and Vienna University of Technology (TU Wien).

I truly believe that there are many more opportunities in the upcoming next years towards the vision of systems research as a social impactful scientific trajectory. But I believe we need to transform the Federation itself from a community that was once established for its members to get to know and engage with each other into a Federation that advocates the response and responsibilities of the systems movement. It is not as much about us than it is about others. Quoting from the message by Gary Metcalf, “The good news is that the ability to deal with large-scale problems using new ways of understanding is needed more than ever. The challenge is finding ways to connect what we know with the right people and places”, we need to establish these connections by seriously examining real-world experiences and problems providing our abilities towards solutions. Many professions as well as academics from various disciplines are currently actively requesting these connections, from my experience especially in Europe. But we must be aware that we too have created silos as an adaptation strategy while other academic disciplines got more and more specialized. Our own communities were becoming more and more closed. If we create attractive contact points that meet present and future needs, the fear to be pushed at the edge rooted in past experiences will disappear.

From an academic perspective we must create publishing and conference venues that are academic rigor and in today´s academic world highly rated. We also need to curate the conditions for scientific funding. Governmental and foundation´s research agendas are not based on coincidence, but on active political lobbying. Furthermore we also need to re-establish international recognized systems education in diverse academic disciplines and professional trainings. Single organizations might be successful, but as members of a Federation we should be more successful. We must overcome our own competitions and look into the opportunities of coopetition. The International Federation with its members could be an impactful leverage. But the leverage point is not the Federation as an organizational body itself, the leverage point is the joined effort of the member organizations that could be channelled through the Federation. This is the challenge I want to meet in the upcoming two years together with you.

Mary Edson’s Message

(IFSR Vice president)

I am honored to have been elected Vice President of the IFSR. Since the fall of 2013, I have worked with the Executive Committee to plan the 2014 IFSR Conversation in St. Magdalena, Linz. I acted as Project Manager of the event handling submissions of topics and position papers, tracking decisions concerning topic selection, invitation of participants, team arrangements, accommodations, communications with team leaders and participants, and evaluation of the Conversation. I participated in the Conversation as Team Leader for Systems Research (Team Six). On behalf of the IFSR, I led the Systems Review Team’s plenary at the 58th Meeting of the International Society for the Systems Sciences in Washington, DC, this past July. I will also assist in producing the proceedings of the Conversation 2014.

In my role as Vice President, I am dedicated to developing knowledge and educational programs about Systems Research for the IFSR through articulation with the IFSR’s member organizations like the International Society for the Systems Sciences (ISSS), the Bertalanffy Center for the Study of Systems Science (BCSSS), the American Society for Cybernetics (ASC), and others. I will also continue to lead the Systems Research Team as

their projects develop. Soon, the Executive Committee will begin preparations for the 2016 Conversation and I expect to continue as Project Manager. Beyond Systems Research, which focuses on the inquiry, "What distinguishes Systems Research from other forms of research," and planning for the Conversation, my interests include development of team systems theory, specifically adaptive capacity, leadership competencies, and organizational resilience.

I am looking forward to working with the IFSR Executive Committee, to serving the constituents of the IFSR in a leadership capacity, and to advocating for systemic and integrative approaches to tackling wicked problems beyond the boundaries of the systems community.

Nam Nguyen's Message

(IFSR Vice president)

What I intend to do for the International Federation for Systems Research (IFSR):

- To conduct a project on "Improving the service quality of the IFSR for its member societies";
- To make the necessary contacts with other member organizations of the IFSR and understand their operations and needs;
- To work with the EC and member organizations to formulate the strategic plans for the IFSR for 2014 to 2018;
- To attend (when possible in person or through Video link) and contribute to the annual meeting of the IFSR Executive Committee (EC);
- To do other tasks and duties as required by the EC;

My motives to become a Vice President of the IFSR:

- To enhance the important cooperation between the IFSR, the International Society for Systems Sciences (ISSS) and the systems societies in Australia and South East Asia;
- To make further contributions to the systems societies and systems research (refer to Appendix 1);
- To develop guidelines and 'open' the world for systems scientists who often find it difficult to obtain funding for development work (see Appendix 2);
- To be a new VP for "greater involvement";
- To explore the synergies between the systems-based Evolutionary Learning Laboratory (ELLab) framework (and its recent development into the web-based *Think2Impact* platform) and the World Evolutionary Learning Tribe (WELT) platform in order to identify how these two initiatives can mutually benefit and enrich each other;

A brief summary of my contribution to the systems societies and systems research

My contribution to the systems societies and systems research has been evident so far through my VP role in the ISSS, participation in the IFSR Conversations and various research papers published in the official journal of the IFSR (e.g. Nguyen, Bosch et al. 2011; Nguyen, Graham et al. 2012; Bosch, Nguyen et al. 2013; Nguyen and Bosch 2013; Banson, Nguyen et al. 2014). Recently, Dr. Gary Metcalf, President of the IFSR mentioned in his President's Message that: '… The work of Ockie

Bosch and Nam Nguyen, profiled as part of the 57th World Conference of the International Society for the Systems Sciences in Vietnam, was recognized through a grant for a new project from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (Bosch and Nguyen 2014; Bosch, Nguyen et al. 2014; Ha, Bosch et al. 2014). These are only two examples of encouraging developments and we hope to see many more continuing to evolve….' (Chroust 2013, p.4).

Development of guidelines for systems scientists – seeking funding for development work

To develop guidelines for the most effective ways to communicate the results of the systems studies within the Evolutionary Learning Labs around the world to serve as mechanisms to endorse and demonstrate the value and importance of systems approaches to Foundations, donors and other funding bodies in determining where and when their funding would have the highest and lasting impacts. The outcomes could potentially open the world for systems scientists who often find it difficult to obtain funding for development work.

Our systems approaches are not always attractive to donors for funding, because they (and the world) cannot immediately see concrete, physical outputs such as a bridge, a hospital or a piece of sealed road. Linear thinking that leads to quick fixes remain the most preferred way for funding bodies to invest their money. As systems scientists the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation project we are currently working on provides an opportunity to demonstrate the importance of sustainable systemically determined solutions required for long term success, which often consists of processes for behavioral change, social improvements and balancing economic, environmental and social components of the complex issues or systems that people have to deal with. Of critical importance is the way in which we can convey this message.

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Bosch, O. J. H. and N. C. Nguyen (2014). Establishing systems-based Evolutionary Learning Laboratories for Labor Saving Innovations for Women Smallholder Farmers. Poster presented at the Business Systems Laboratory 2nd International Symposium "SYSTEMS THINKING FOR A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY: Advancements in Economic and Managerial Theory and Practice" January 23-24, 2014, Universitas Mercatorum, Roma, Italy.

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Nguyen, N. C., D. Graham, H. Ross, K. Maani and O. J. H. Bosch (2012). "Educating Systems Thinking for Sustainability: Experience with a Developing Country." Systems Research and Behavioral Science **39**(1): 14-29.

Gerhard Chroust's Message

(IFSR Secretary General)

I am proud to have been able to serve the IFSR since 1993 in the function of the Secretary General. During these years the IFSR has undergone many important changes.

- In 1997 Michael C Jackson, then editor of the Journal of Systems Research; Jim Miller, then editor of the Journal of Behavioral Science; and Bela H Banathy, then President of the IFSR agreed to merge the two journals to become the Journal of Systems Research and Behavioral Science under the editorship of Michael C Jackson. We have to thank theses 3 persons for this future oriented and very successful initiative.
- Another important innovation has been leverage of the organization and the external visibility of the Fuschl Conversations (now called IFSR Conversations), which I started in 1996 in 1996. This included proceedings which enabled us to convey our findings to the outside world. We are pleased to have noted a growing interest (and thus more application each year).

- In 1996 we established the first home-page for the IFSR thanks to the efforts of Magdalena Kalaidjieva from the Bulgarian Society for Systems Research. The home page has undergone considerable changes since in 2007 by changing from a hand-crafted system to a contents management system (DRUPAL). In 2013 a further re-organization became necessary – we migrated to WORDPRESS – Stefan Blachfellner is in charge of this.

- We also accepted an offer from one of our members, the International Society of Knowledge and Systems Science (ISKSS) under the leadership of Prof. Yoshiteru Nakamori, to hold an IFSR-Congress in Kobe, Japan, in 2005. It was for the first time that IFSR itself took the lead in organizing a congress of this kind. I served as Programme Chair and it was a very successful event.

Continuing on this path I see my major tasks in the IFSR in guaranteeing a smooth and user-friendly operation of the IFSR. This includes

- Membership administration including the (awkward) job of trying to follow up membership payments,

- Production of one or two Newsletters in order to provide our members (and the public at large) with essential information from the IFSR:

- Production of the the Proceedings of the IFSR Conversation in order to show the outcome of the Conversation.

- Organizing of the IFSR Board meetings and to some extent the (optional) Reflection Meetings

- Start of initial steps for the IFSR Conversation 2016.

- Continuity of individual contact with our member societies.

- Maintaining a friendly cooperation with other federations, especially with UES-EUS and WOCS.

On the strategic side I will offer assistance on improving the IFSR home page, especially towards seamless and user-friendly means of electronic communication between the members and the IFSR and among the members themselves.

Changes to the Constitution approved by the Board on April 26, 2014

Please note that at the Board Meeting (April 26, 2014) several changes to the constitution were adopted:

1) The EC may change the status of a member from Full Members to Affiliate Members in case the member did not fulfill its financial obligations (e.g. fee!) for 2 years.

2) The rules for e-voting as accepted by the Board in April 2012 were integrated into the Constitution.

3) Members of the Executive Committee have ONE vote both in the Board and in e-Voting.

4) Changing the title 'Secretary/Treasurer' to 'Secretary General' as it was already a custom since 2010.

5) The title 'Representative' will be used only for IFSR's official contact point with respect to a member society. Persons representing the member society at the Board Meeting are call 'Delegates'.

6) Several minor editorial changes in the text.

IFSR Activities in Spring 2014

Historically in every even year the two weeks after Easter are eventful and stressful:. IN 2014 the following events occurred:

1) **Tuesday April 22 – Friday April 25: EMCSR-Conference** in Vienna. Many members of our member societies were active in this conference:

2) **Wednesday April 234, morning: Ross Ashby Memorial lecture** during EMCSR. This lecture was sponsored by the IFSR. It was given by Markus Schwanninger, University St. Gallen, Switzerland with the title "Organizing for Sustainability". It was very well received b y the audience.. We will try to publish it on the IFSR website.
In the introduction Gary Metcalf also gave

a short description of the IFSR.

3) **Thursday April 25, afternoon: General Assembly of the IASCYS** (International Academy for Systems and Cybernetic Sciences)

4) **Saturday, April 26, 2014: Board Meeting of the IFSR** : The official meeting of the IFSR (see later in this Newsletter)

5) Saturday, April 26, afternoon: Reflective Meeting: The IFSR invited "everybody interested in the promotion of Systems Sciences" to take part and to join the discussion (see later in this Newsletter)

6) **Saturday April 26, evening: Informal Meeting** with IFSR Officers. (see later in this Newsletter)

7) Sunday April 27 – Friday May 2: IFSR-Conversation: A very special type of a face to face conference. A short summary can be found later in this Newsletter)

IFSR Board Meeting, April 26, 2014

The full minutes from the IFSR Board Meeting can be found on IFSR's homepage (www.ifsr.org)

Here only a few key reports or decisions are described. The numbers in front of the heading refer to the numbering of the full minutes

2. Report from the President Gary Metcalf

In some ways, we have not achieved as much as I had hoped since 2012. There is a need to expand the participation of our member organizations, beyond those who can attend in-person in Vienna. While there are many tools for online interaction, finding the ones which best match the needs and familiarity of our members has been more challenging than expected. I greatly appreciate the efforts of all of those who took the time and expense to join us for the board meeting in April of 2014.

Beyond the challenges, there are increasing opportunities. The general recognition of "systems related" problems and the growing complexity of social and technical systems have raised awareness of the need for better answers. More discipline-specific organizations have engaged with our members, including systems engineers, professionals in complex project management, and those interested in service science. Additionally, systems-based projects connecting universities and organizations are growing in prevalence and recognition. Opportunities for publication are increasing through new book series, and new journals.

All of this is reflected in the growth and diversity of our IFSR membership, and in the growth of the IFSR Conversations. I look forward to the next two years of expanding our connections with each other, and the impact that we might have together on important issues in the world.

3. Report from the Secretary General (Gerhard Chroust)

3.1 Membership status - Overview and new members As of April 12, 2014 the IFSR has 42 members, of which 38 are Full Members (for a listing see below)

3.2 Election of Fellows On Jan. 10, 2014 the EC appointed Prof. Robert Trappl as a 'Fellow' of the IFSR. Robert Trappl was Founding Vice President 1980, President 1984-1988, and Editor of the IFSR Newsletter 1985-1986. He is currently also the President of the IASCYS.

3.5 Electronic Voting Electronic voting was introduced into the Constitution by the Board Meeting of April 2012 (see section 9 of the new constitution) and subsequently successfully used. A simple technology via a variation of the software product DOODLE is sufficient for our purposes. One problem is the rather reluctant response by members usually making several reminders necessary to achieve a quorum.

3.6 Membership fee 2015 and 2016 The membership fee for Full Members is € 120.-

4. The International Academy of Systems and Cybernetic Sciences (IASCYS)

(see later in this Newsletter)

5.1 The IFSR Conversation Linz 2012 The 16th Fuschl Conversation was held from Saturday, April 14 -Thursday April 19, 2012 in St. Magdalena, Linz, some 190 km west of Vienna.

31 scientists participated and the whole Conversation was very successful. Especially Team 3 and Team 4 showed sustainability:

Reports about the Conversation appeared in [Chroust-12r] and [Chroust-12za], the detailed results can be found in [Chroust-12e] and [Chroust-12f].

The EC thanked especially Gary Metcalf and all Team Leaders and Editors for their excellent work: Stefan Blachfellner, Gerhard Chroust, David Ing, Alexander Laszlo, James Martin, Gary Metcalf, Minna Takala, Stuart Umpleby.

5.2 EMCSR 2014 - Ross Ashby Memorial Lecture: On Wednesday April 24, morning, the traditional Ross Ashby Memorial lecture was held at EMCSR 2014.

5.3 IFSR-Reflective Meeting April 26, 2014 A long and fruitful discussion led to exchange ideas and suggestions with IFSR officers and the audience.

5.4 IFSR Conversation, April 27 to May 2, 2014 The same location as in 2012, the Seminar Hotel St. Magdalena, Linz, was chosen. Gary Metcalf reported on the preparations. The response to the call for participation was very successful. We received more suggestions for topics and also more applications for participation than we could accommodate
The results of the Conversations will be documented in short reports in the IFSR Newsletter and later in the form of proceedings (editors: Gary Metcalf, Mary Edson, Gerhard Chroust). Gerhard Chroust will produce, distribute and archive the proceedings.
The Board thanked especially Mary Edson, Gary Metcalf and Gerhard Chroust for their effects to organize the Conversation and, the team leaders Janet Singer, Alexander Laszlo, Michael Lissack, Gordon Rowland, Jennifer Wilby, Mary Edson for their efforts in selecting their team members and preparing their team discussions.

5.5 IFSR Conversation 2016 The extraordinary success of the Conversations in 2012 and 2014 encourage the IFSR to plan the next Conversation for 2016 at the same location in Linz again.

6.2 Journal of Systems Research and Behavioral Science (JSRBS) Amanda Gregory presented the situation of the JSRBS. Financially the Journal is very healthy and the revenues of it are the major

income of the IFSR. A lengthy discussion resulted on subjects like Editorial Board and review process, impact factor, potential authors and subscribers.

7. IFSR Web Site Stefan Blachfellner summarized the status and the plans for the new website, which was inaugurated in July 2013. A major effort was to migrate the website from the the contents management system DRUPAL to the WORDPRESS-system.

10.1 Financial Status and Outlook Gerhard Chroust tabled the financial situation for 2012-2013 and an Outlook on 2014 -2016. The royalties from the Journal "Systems Research and Behavioral Science" (published by Wiley Interscience) and the membership fees are the only two sources of income for the IFSR. At the moment the financial situation is healthy despite a large expenditure for the new website. The financial outlook of the Journal is very healthy, thanks to the great success of the Journal.

The Board thanked Prof. M. C. Jackson for his initiative and efforts and also Amanda Gregory, the Deputy Editor.

12. Changes of Constitution The Board approved the proposed changes to the Constitution.

[Chroust-12e] CHROUST, G. , G. METCALF, (eds.) *Systems and Science at Crossroads - Sixteenth IFSR Conversation* Inst. f. Systems Engineering and Automation, Johannes Kepler University Linz, Austria, SEA-SR- 32, Sept. 2012 and [http://ifsr.ocg.at/world/files/$12e$Magdalena-2012-proc.pdf].

[Chroust-12f] CHROUST, G. , G. METCALF, (eds.) *Systems and Science at Crossroads - Sixteenth IFSR Conversation - Supplement* Inst. f. Systems Engineering and Automation, Johannes Kepler University Linz, Austria, SEA-SR-34, Nov. 2012 and [http://ifsr.ocg.at/world/files/$12f$Magdalena-2012-supp.pdf].

[Chroust-12r] CHROUST, G. (EDITOR) *IFSR Newsletter, vol. 29 (2012), no. 1* IFSR - International Federation for Systems Research, Linz, and [http://www.ifsr.org/newsletters], 2012.

[Chroust-12za] CHROUST, G. (EDITOR) *IFSR Newsletter, vol. 29 (2012), no. 2* IFSR - International Federation for Systems Research, Linz, and [http://www.ifsr.org/newsletters], 2012.

IFSR Reflective Meeting, April 26, 2014

Under the title "*Discovering the relevance of systems science for a new generation"* the IFSR invited "*everybody interested in the promotion of Systems Sciences"* to a so-called Reflective Meeting for Saturday, April 26, 2014, afternoon for a free-wheeling discussion. T

This "reflective session" was held following the IFSR board meeting in Vienna. This was a chance to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing us as a federation of organizations, and the potential for cooperation. Past years have utilized more structured processes of collaboration, but the majority of our member organizations still function largely around presentations of papers at annual meetings. This has limited the potential for our work as a federation.

There are notable exceptions of collaboration, including that of the Systems Science Working Group in INCOSE; new journals and book series being published by the Bertlanffy Center, and through the

Translational Systems Science series from Springer; ongoing systemic projects through the Evolutionary Learning Labs at the University of Adelaide and the New Global projects of Aalto University – only as a small number of examples. Individuals crossing of our member organizations are involved in these, and many, many other efforts related to work in systems. These continue to fall short, though, of the aspirations voiced by those who wish to make a larger impact as systems theorists and practitioners.

Towards the end of the session, an offer was made by Ockie Bosch and Nam Nguyen to utilize the process of issue identification from the Evolutionary Learning Labs, within the IFSR member organization. That offer received strong support and is being planned to being around October of 2014. More information will follow soon.

Meet the IFSR Officers! April 26, 2014

For Saturday, April 26 the IFSR invited "*everybody at the EMCSR"* to an Informal Meeting in a nostalgic, historical (since at least 1629!) restaurant, *the* Melker Stiftskeller .to meet the IFSR officers and discuss everything of interest related to the IFSR (see cover page). It was a very enjoyable evening with good food and beer or wine and it hoped to establish better personal relations between all participants.

Robert Trappl: IFSR Fellow

The International Federation for Systems Research
is proud to nominate

Robert Trappl

as FELLOW of the IFSR

in gratitude for many years of leadership and support as

Founder, Vice President and President in 1980 – 1988
Editor of the IFSR Newsletter 1985 - 1986
President of the IASCYS from 2012 onward

Gary S. Metcalf
President IFSR

Vienna, January 2014

Gerhard Chroust
Secretary General IFSR

On January 10, 2014 the IFSR appointed Prof. Robert Trappl as the first 'Fellow' of the IFSR.
From 1977 till 2007 he was Full Professor of Medical Cybernetics and Artificial Intelligence and Head of a department with the same name at the University of Vienna and later Medical University of Vienna.
He is the founder and President of the Austrian Society for Cybernetic Studies, of its research institute OFAI (Austrian Research Institute for Artificial Intelligence, www.ofai.at) with 22 employed researchers, and currently the President of the IASCYS.
He has published and/or edited numerous books in the field of Cybernetics, Artificial Intelligence, Computer Science, Robotics, and neighboring areas.

IFSR Conversation 2014

Mary C. Edson

2014 IFSR Conversation – Impressions

From April 27 through May 2, 2014, the IFSR Conversation took place at Sankt Magdalena Seminarhaus near Linz, Austria. Six teams comprising a total of 40 participants from around the globe spent an intensive week in focused dialogues about future directions for systems engineering, thrivability – systems thinking in practice, cybernetics, philosophy, systems research, and the Conversation itself.

Overall, the 2014 Conversation was a resounding success. Some prior participants remarked that it was, "the best Conversation I have attended." Feedback from participants covered everything from the venue, food, and service to the content of the team dialogues and the quality of interactions during the week. The environment (location, lodging, and service) and food garnered strong approval. Although, we did have one outsized participant (in height and heart), who needed a longer bed.

Most participants expressed appreciation for opportunities to have high quality interaction with one another both in their teams as well as in more informal settings, for example at meals and excursions into Linz and outlying areas. Results from the evaluation showed that many

participants would like more opportunities for informal discussions. There never seems to be sufficient time for connecting with one another!

We also received excellent feedback from participants for planning future Conversations. One of the outstanding recommendations was more in-team preparation in the months leading up to the Conversation, so the time spent on-site could be used to move team progress along more quickly and focus on matters that can only be addressed in person. It also seems that we need to keep you caffeinated and virtually connected (wi-fi) around the clock.

All suggestions made factor into planning the next Conversation. The Executive Committee appreciates the keen participation and feedback by all team members and looks forward to the 2016 Conversation.

The next IFSR Newsletter (vol. 31, no. 2) will contain the short reports of the 6 teams. And a little bit later also the proceedings of the IFSR Conversation 2014 will be published

News from the IFSR-Website

Stefan Blachfellner

The IFSR has been redesigning and newly developing its website in a huge effort. With all these efforts we aim to create a website that represents the International Federation of Systems Research as the umbrella organization for the leading systems research organizations in the field, and thus the one-stop valid information resource for new interested people as well as established professionals searching for information about systems research in the world.

The websites information architecture was redesigned to represent both, an information rich and deep website with the archives of all historic and current IFSR newsletters and activities, and a social engaging website ready for the next developments in web 2.0, to present the IFSR members activities in real time. The websites design, still work in progress, has been redeveloped to fulfil the diverse requirements of the information architecture and to take the next steps towards a modern look and feel of the IFSR and its members.

We have already established the possibility to collect the information of the IFSR members and represent their activities in real time with RSS feeds on our homepage. Thus it is not necessary to duplicate information on the IFSR website anymore. As soon as an IFSR member is publishing content, e.g. news for the member's upcoming event or research news on its own feed enabled website, the IFSR website is publishing the same content on its homepage with a referrer to the member's website quoting the original source.

We have already created a first prototype of the member's area where each organization is represented and visitors are invited to engage with the IFSR members through their own channels set as referrers. We have already published all IFSR historic and current content with an extensive effort in SEO strategies from text to pictures, to PDF documents to boost the search ranking of the IFSR website for all members of the IFSR. We have already established the opportunity to push newly published content to individuals who subscribe with a new IFSR newsletter system.

But the design of the website needs still some more time. If the IFSR and its members want to attract new interested researchers and attract people towards systems science in the future, we all need to develop a timelier or modern visual language. Focusing on the machine to machine communication as well, to create visibility, we must further emphasize search engine optimization strategies with e.g. extensive meta-tags and the opportunity to syndicate content from text to pictures.

Thus the IFSR wants to support its members to establish these capabilities, to create their own websites as attractive sources, feed enabled and visual and social engaging. If members are looking for support, they may contact Stefan Blachfellner, Vice President of the IFSR. At the moment we are also working on an improvement of the member's area on the IFSR website. In the future IFSR members shall have the opportunity to actualize their own representation, advertise their activities and organize their communication to engage in further co-developments of their research interests and research fields.

Building these opportunities together, co-creating this value for each member organization through the umbrella organization is one of the central offers in the upcoming two years of the International Federation for Systems Research to strengthen the global systems movement in co-creating a vivid network hub through the Federation´s website.

List of IFSR Members

As of April 12, 2014 the IFSR had the following members:

Association Francaise des Sciences des Systemes
Asociacion Latinoamericana de Sistemas
Asociacion Mexicana de la Ciencia de Sistemas
Asociacion Mexicana de Sistemas y Cibernetica
Australian and New Zealand Systems Society
American Society for Cybernetics
Bertalanffy Center for the Study of Systems Science
Business Systems Laboratory
Bulgarian Society for Systems Reseach
Centre for Hyperincursion and Anticipation in Ordered Systems
The Cybernetics Society
Asociacion Argentina de Teoria General de Sistemas y Cibernetica
Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Kybernetik
Global Institute of Flexible Systems Management
Groupe d'Intervention et de Recherche en Organisation des SystSmes.
Greek Systems Society
Gesellschaft fuer Wirtschafts- und Sozialkybernetik
Croatian Interdisciplinary Society
Hellenic Society for Systemic Studies
Heinz von Foerster Gesellschaft
Instituto Andino de Sistemas
International Institute Galileo Galilei
International Institute of Informatics and Systemics
International Council on Systems Engineering
Institute for the Study of Coherence and Emergence
International Systems Institute
International Society of Knowledge and Systems Science
International Society for the Systems Sciences
Japan Association for Social and Economic Systems Studies
The Korean Society for Systems Science Research
Metaphorum Group
Management Science Society of Ireland
Oesterreichische Studiengesellschaft fuer Kybernetik
Pentagram Research Centre Private Limited
International Sociological Association, ISA-RC51 on Sociocybernetics
Systemes \& Organisations ASBL
Slovenian Society for Systems Research
Systems Engineering Society of China
Sociedad Espanola de Sistemas Generales
Systeemgroep Nederland
The Learned Society of Praxiology
World Complexity Science Academy

International Academy of Systems and Cybernetic Sciences (IASCYS)

The IASCYS held its second General Assembly on Friday April 26th 2014, 16:00-18:00 in the rooms of the OFAI (Freyung 6, 1010 Wien).

These past 4 years the Academy organized workshops during meetings of the European Union for Systemics (EUS-UES), the European Meetings *on* Cybernetics *and* Systems *Research (E*MCSR) and the World Conference on Complex Systems (WCCS). 20 workshops and sponsoring activities took place in 10 countries. This year the Academy is a sponsor of 8 international meetings.

The General Assembly re-elected the past Executive Committee for the next 4 years term (2014-2018): Robert Trappl as President, Jifa Gu, Matjaz Mulej and Ranulph Glanville as Vice-Presidents, and Pierre Bricage as Secretary General.

Two new members have been admitted (Prof. Jian Chen and Prof. Hanfu Chen).

Reports from IFSR member societies

Gesi
Grupo de Estudio de Sistemas Integrados

GESI as a synergetic organization

GESI is a non-profit association founded by Prof. Charles François in Buenos Aires, Argentina, with the objective to study and systemically solve the challenges posed by the growing complexity of today's world. Since 1974 GESI offers a space for the study, spreading and application of concepts and models related to systems of any nature, ecological, and social.

Being always engaged in studying and spreading systems approaches, allowed GESI to gather a rich experience of the numerous challenges involved in this attempt. Over the years discussions on how to foster systemic practices more effectively emerged as a habitual subject in GESI's meetings and informal interactions among its members. This naturally led to the idea to apply the systems perspective and methodologies to GESI's own organization.

GESI undertook the challenge to create a synergetic organization in its institutional framework and beyond. The group engaged in clearly assessing the organization's identity which included acknowledging that GESI is built on a legacy with consistent roots in the systemic world. Playing with unity-diversity among member's views and aspirations an

appealing statement aroused: GESI considers itself *a learning community, a laboratory of ideas and a cooperative of knowledge.*

Charles Francois, Eva Sarka, Gloria Nazer

Time and efforts spent on this core step gave new impulse to reactivate regional and global institutional relations, participate actively in inter-institutional projects, redesigning its bylaws, re-creating the "Grupos GESI" as a modality for a more secure and flexible institutional development.

"Grupos GESI " operate as autonomous groups coordinated by GESI members. This favors freedom to liaise, often in joint projects or collaborative activities, with a wide range of actors/ institutions and among different "Grupos GESI" without overcharging internal bureaucracy. At present two of such groups are working actively:

Grupo Economía Amable: Its aim is to favor a multidimensional economy, kind to people and to nature. The group proposes learning contexts and research-action activities. It works by means of metacognition-conversation loops to achieve a renewal of concepts and practices. It uses prospective imagination to envision desirable futures to encourage lighthearted engagement in future co-creation.

Grupo Mar: Intents to foster an eco-systemic approach for a sustainable management of the Argentine waters and coasts. The group addresses this objective through a synergetic learning system which aims at contributing to the decision making process at all levels of action: educational, scientific, technological, economical, social, and political.

More "Grupos GESI" are on the verge to be created. GESI's expectations on this process are high. By the means of this project we hope to achieve a sustainable institution that is able to meet its goals. We also expect plenty of learning opportunities to further nurture our identity.
If you like to stay informed, please visit: www.gesi.org.ar

Silvia Zweifel
revised by Mechthild Adameit

International Society for the Systems Sciences

As the 57th President of the International Society for the Systems Sciences (ISSS - http://isss.org/world/Hai_Phong_City_2013), I designed and organized the 2013 Annual Meeting and Conference of the ISSS that was held in Hai Phong, Viet Nam, as well as a second follow-on conference in Taipei, Taiwan. In Viet Nam, the conference focused on "Curating the Conditions for a Thrivable Planet: Systemic Leverage Points for Emerging a Global Eco-Civilization" (http://isss2013.gov.vn/tabid/177/The-ISSS-Haiphong--2013-as-an-opportunity-to-exchange-scientific-applications-of-systems-thinking-to-the-life.aspx). Iin Taiwan the theme was Social Environmental Education for an Emerging Eco-Civilization (http://2013iseeu.blogspot.tw/p/homepage.html).
Both events have lead to exciting real-world projects as described briefly in http://osr-nw.org/2014/01/09/international-honors-for-alexander-laszlo/, chief among which is the World Evolutionary Learning Tribe (WELTribe - http://weltribe.weebly.com) as presented at the 22nd European Meetings of Cybernetics & Systems Research (EMCSR - http://emcsr.net/programme-2014/world-evolutionary-learning-tribe/)

Alexander Laszlo

RC51 Research Committee 51 on Sociocybernetics
ISA International Sociological Association

RC51 (on Sociocybernetics) at the ISA Congress,

Yokohama, July 11th-18th, 2014,

Some Personal Reflections.

Research Committee 51 (on Sociocybernetics) (RC51) is just one of many groups that make up the International Sociological Association (ISA). Once every four years, the ISA Congress takes place, attracting 4-6000 participants. As part of the 2014 event, RC51 (which has some 120 members) organised a programme of sessions, running most days from early in the morning until late evening. Our sessions proved popular, attracting many speakers and participants who were not (as yet) members of RC51. I enjoyed making new friends and re-acquainting myself with old ones. It was not possible for me to attend all the RC51 sessions. Below, I mention some personal highlights.

RC51 is special for two reasons. First, unlike other ISA groups, which focus on a particular special interest, such as education, immigration, the environment, RC51 members share an interest in applying theories and methods from cybernetics and the systems sciences to the social sciences at large. This encourages a holistic view of what is happening in the world; Second, the influence of second order cybernetics – the cybernetics of cybernetics - on our thinking (see, e.g., von Foerster, 1993) means we encourage non-hierarchical discussion and community building as a collective of mutually respecting "observers". It was no surprise, then, that the RC51 programme included papers on "open-ness", new forms of democracy and the question of how to understand and counter-act domestic violence (indeed, any abuse of other humans). It was no surprise, also, that many papers addressed Internet and ICT related issues, e.g., the use and abuse of personal data, the research opportunities afforded by the availability of "big data" and new forms of political activism.

Opening a Session

On the theoretical front, we continued our ongoing debates concerning the coherence and value of Niklas Luhmann's (1995) theory of "social systems". My impression is that, as a community of scholars, we are deepening our understanding of what the theory offers and recognising more clearly some of its shortcomings. I, myself, was delighted to hear, from our member, Pablo Navarro, a more cybernetically rooted approach to questions of the "social", based on the concept of "social objects" that are co-constructed in the regularities ("eigenbehaviours") of social interactions and some of which may, in turn, impose structure on those interactions. Navarro urged us to be alert to new "social objects" that are arising at the global level, thanks to the Internet. On the methodological front, José Amozurrrutia presented a computer based "Adaptive Support System for Second Order Science" and described how it has been used to process data in a study of violence against women. Margarita Maass described a methodology for "cultural management for development", in which a culture is modelled as an "ethno-ecosystem" and thus becomes a "fundamental component of sustainable development". Other topics addressed in the RC51 sessions included the management of innovation, the management of complex organisations and epistemological issues. The full RC51 programme, with abstracts of presentations can be accessed here: https://isaconf.confex.com/isaconf/wc2014/webprogram/Symposium224.html

A number of sessions were organised in conjunction with colleagues from Japan, thus strengthening our connections with the Asian social systems community. We were gratified to see some younger scholars and researchers participating in the RC51 sessions. We are hopeful that some, a least, will become members of RC51.

In the years between the ISA Congresses, RC51 organises its own international conferences. These offer a more intimate setting for discussion and social interaction. It is likely that our next conference will be hosted by the Humboldt University of Berlin, in August, 2015. Details will be made available on the RC51 website: http://sociocybernetics.wordpress.com/ .

Bernard Scott
Past President, RC51

World Complexity Science Academy

Science relationships develop around the young WCSA

The last conference of the World Complexity Science Academy focused on both the most recent achievements of the theoretical debate on Complexity Theory and Systematic, and the uses of these theories in specific, practical domains. The event titled "Redesigning Worldwide Connections" which was held in Tenerife on December 14th–15th, 2013. The aim of WCSA is to create networks among students and scholars, that deal with systemic and complexity, either as a study object or as epistemic instruments.

Therefore the Academy promotes the meeting and the co-operation among the scholars. Consistently with this purpose, WCSA organizes periodical national and international Conferences and supervises specific and scientific publications. The next conference promises to be intellectual and cosmopolitan, There will be over 30 speakers from fifteen different countries. As we believe in a high added value knowledge sharing on a global scale, Edit Fabó as a member of the Program Chair attended conference of the EMCSR titled "Civilization at the Crossroads" in Vienna on the April 22nd–25th, 2014. Giulia Mancini other member of the leadership joined her on the Board Meeting of the IFSR on 26th. This sharing intends to facilitate the free circulation of intellectual and strategic capitals; in fact we cooperate with entrepreneur, professionals, scholars interesting speakers such as Gerhard Chroust and Alexander Laszlo to share and focus on an interdisciplinary systemic approach to digital capital, global trends and conceptual maps.

WCSA mission involves a strong support to both Italian and foreign scholars' education in very field related to the systemic approach in order to promote the collaboration and exchange among researchers. In fact WCSA is growing as a worldwide network through its bilateral agreements with other major international organizations such as: the Club of Budapest, University Library of Eötvös Loránd University, Hungarian Sociological Association, Library and Information Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and European Academy of Technology and Innovation Assessment. WCSA, founded on December 14th, 2009, has in a short period already achieved important results.

The divulgation of the systemic-scientific knowledge and the scientific information toward educated, but not specialized, targets ("high divulgation") assuming the aim to enrich the personal backgrounds of committed scientists (biotechnologists, engineers, physics, sociologists, economists, etc.) about global challenges of our times through appropriate models and systemic-communicational tools and through high concepts for the diffusion and divulgation of the knowledge.

Edit Fabó consults about partners and necessary steps with Andrea Pitasi (president of the WCSA) and Giulia Mancini (junior vice president of the WCSA). All members of our board work actively to guarantee success and respect the vision of WCSA.

Edit Fabó, Giulia Mancini

Heinz Zemanek 1920 – 2014

On July 16, 2014 Heinz Zemanek, the internationally renowned Austrian computer Pioneer passed away at the age of 94.

He was a person of incredible energy, admirable foresight and creativity.

As Assistant Professor at the Technical University Vienna, he studied beginning in 1947 the theoretical and practical issues of cybernetics, re-building and improving several cybernetic models (Cora, homeostat, and others).

It was as early as 1956-1958 that he and his group designed and constructed the first European fully transistorized computer at the Technical University Vienna. He gave it the modest name "Mailüfterl" ("light spring breeze").

In 1961 he and his group joined IBM and founded there the world–wide known IBM Laboratory Vienna, which soon had 40 employees. Realizing the needs of future information processing, he started a project to formally define the semantics of programming languages, applying this so-called Vienna Definition Language to IBM's new programming language PL/I.

He foresaw the enormous impact computers will have on society and initiated a conference series 'Human Choice and Computers', bringing together computer scientists, union representatives and sociologists.

Other areas in which he was active were abstract architecture of computers, the history of cybernetics and computers, historical contributors to telephony, etc. He was founder of the Austrian Computer Society (OCG) and a key person in the IFIP, the International Federation for Information Processing.

Through his encouragement 17 members of the IBM Laboratory Vienna became University Professors.

In 1976 he was elected 'IBM Fellow' and continued his research activities at the IBM Böblingen Laboratory until his retirement in 1985.

Gerhard Chroust

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