



*Newsletter 23*

December 2009

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## 1. PREFACE FROM THE EDITOR

2009 was a memorable year for RC51 as you can read in Bernard Scott's President's letter. There was the successful conference in Urbino on Modernity in which modern media of communication were fully used (see: <http://larica.uniurb.it/rc51>); we are on our way to the ISA world congress in Gothenburg with Sociocybernetic sessions that attracted more than 100 submissions to review; we have a new RC51 website managed by Barry Gibson (<http://www.unizar.es/sociocybernetics>); there is an European website supervised by our member Michael Paeteau that is dedicated to a Center for Sociocybernetics Studies (<http://www.sociocybernetics.eu>); the Editorial board of our Journal of Sociocybernetics is restructured; RC51 members are publishing their profile on LinkedIn (<http://www.linkedin.com>); and we can find on the Internet lively discussions about Sociocybernetics (and related Systems Theory), and many announcements of new books of our members. Certainly: Sociocybernetics is alive and kicking!

But as the editor of the Newsletter I do have a problem. Again, as was communicated in the last Newsletter, our RC51 members do not submit many articles, notwithstanding the fact that our President emailed requests for submissions. Yes, we are perhaps too busy with (cybernetical) scientific activities elsewhere and do not have the time and energy to contribute to a Newsletter that is perhaps an outdated medium of communication. That is at the moment my preliminary opinion.

Attending the Urbino conference I met enthusiastic old and new colleagues with 'state of the art' contributions to Sociocybernetics. I also observed that those colleagues were deeply involved in all kind of societal and scientific activities. One of them surely is John Raven. I knew him from former conferences as very active in discussions and quite critical on trends in society and science. On the Urbino conference and later on with an email to me he wondered whether RC51 was still on the right track concerning the way they communicate about essential societal and Sociocybernetic topics. To let survive our planet in this disastrous time "an alternative guidance and control system" is needed. To discuss and design this is a "quintessentially tasks for socio-cyberneticians". But he could not discuss this well on our Urbino conference. Perhaps we have "to trawl the web for other possible organizations that might contain people able and willing to contribute to this development". Maybe John Raven is on the right track and it will be helpful to have a look on his website (<http://www.eyesociety.co.uk>).

However this problem has been discussed before in our Newsletter. We made a plea for working together with organizations that are alike in trying to realize the aims and hope of (socio) cybernetics. We allied to the Cybernetic Coalition of our colleague Ranulph Glanville. One of our members Matjaz Mulej who organized in 2005 a successful RC51 conference in Maribor, Slovenia was also aware of the need of such alliances and become president of the International Federation for Systems Research. Like John Raven he is deeply occupied with the societal mission of (socio) cyberneticians. I am glad that he contributed to this Newsletter an extended review of new books related to his participation in three crucial scientific events about the future of our planet.

But there is more for members who have the opinion that sociocyberneticians have to be involved in society and science. That was demonstrated by an old and new generation of 'sociocyberneticians' in Urbino with wonderful presentations. One of them is Sandra Rodriguez. Although she is very busy in NGO's and working hard to finish her PhD she did find at last the time to give you as a reader of the Newsletter a fresh look of our RC51 job. When such representatives of old and new generations work together, RC51 will amaze the sociological community in the future as RC51 did in the past.

In line with this new stage of development of RC51 are the announcements of new books and scientific events. RC51 members perhaps do not have to worry anymore about their scientific impact,

for example about our impact scores of journals they publish articles in. Members of RC51 are maybe writing scientific history with innovative books and articles. The future will learn us.

As our president announced our board will be reelected in 2010. RC51 has to find a new editor of the Newsletter, I guess combined with a discussion about the functioning of a Newsletter in our Internet age. I am looking forward to this discussion and a New Year in which RC51 will do another step ahead in realizing the Sociocybernetic enterprise.

*Cor van Dijkum, Editor, Just In Time to wish You a Happy New Year*

## **2. LETTER OF THE PRESIDENT**

Dear Friends

At the time of writing, Christmas is approaching. I hope you all have a wonderful summer and are looking forward to a productive time between now and the Congress in Gothenburg 2010, details of which can be found on the RC51 website and also on the ISA website.

Our most recent event was the very successful conference in Urbino, Italy. It was one of our best attended conferences, thanks largely to the very topical theme of the conference and also to the hard work of the local organizers led by Fabio Giglietto. I have very many fond memories of the conference. I fell in love with Italy. I fell in love with Urbino and the surrounding countryside. I hope to return again one day.

Plans for the ISA Congress are now well underway. Margarita Maass, the RC51 session coordinator, and Michael Paetau, the chair of the RC51 abstracts committee, have both been very busy coordinating the review process. I thank them for that and I also thank the members of the abstracts committee who have carried out the reviews. It looks like we will have a very interesting programme for Gothenburg.

Issues surrounding the RC51 statutes are still unresolved. I will not repeat here what I've said elsewhere except to say I am still awaiting responses from the ISA concerning the status of the controversial statute about board membership and about how the ISA proposes to monitor board elections in 2010. Some revisions of the statutes are necessitated by the new guidelines circulated by the ISA early in 2009. In due course the proposals for revisions will be sent out to the membership for approval and voting.

At the time of writing, a new issue of the Journal of Sociocybernetics is expected. To aid the editor, Karl-Heinz Simon, in his work, we are reconstituting the editorial board of the Journal. By the time you read this, hopefully the new board will be in place with board members each taking their full share of responsibility for the reviewing of papers submitted.

We now have a new RC51 website. This is thanks mainly to the hard work of Barry Gibson with support from Chaime Marcuello and myself. The front page of the website carries announcements and news items. If you have anything of interest that you wish to have posted on the website, please contact Barry at [b.j.gibson@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:b.j.gibson@sheffield.ac.uk).

A new feature of the website is the use of the social networking application, LinkedIn. The idea is that each member of RC51 should use the LinkedIn site to post their profile and contact details. Members are also invited to join an RC51 discussion group. Please join in!

To end on a personal note, I am in the final year of my Presidency and will be doing all I can to ensure that there is a smooth transition to the takeover by the next President and the Board that will be incoming in 2010. In case I do not have the opportunity to do so in the meantime, I would like to thank you all for supporting me and my time in office. I thank also the current board members and, in particular, our Vice-President, Eva Buchinger, for her continued hard work and support. I should also make special mention of our Secretary, Chaime Marcuello, who bears the bulk of the somewhat tedious administrative activities which support the functioning of RC51.

Finally, I invite all of you to encourage interested friends and colleagues to become members of the RC51. This is a very good time to do so with the ISA Congress forthcoming. Recall that the size of our membership plays a significant role in affecting how we are supported by the ISA, particularly with respect to session slots at ISA Congresses.

I look forward very much to spending time with those of you who will be at the Congress in Gothenburg next year.

*Best wishes, Bernard Scott*

### **3. SOCIOCYBERNETICS EVENTS**

#### **3.1 A First Look at Sociocyberneticians?**

##### **Getting to know Urbino, RC51 and its diverse members**

*Sandra Rodriguez, Department of Sociology, University of Montreal, Canada*

During my academic rearing, I had the chance to come across theories and theoreticians both in the field of Information and communication studies (as I was doing my bachelor and master's degrees) as well as in Sociology (where I am now completing a PhD). Yet, these scopes – and especially in a French or francophone tradition – did not always shed a similar light on cybernetics.

In the Communication department I attended, although present and frequently referred to for basis conceptualization, cyberneticians appeared to be a different “kind” of thinkers – more related to computer science engineering and tool building, and less concerned with the social dynamics of human relations. In the Sociology departments I attended to, however, cyberneticians looked indeed concerned with human dynamics and behaviors, yet still seemed to concentrate on the development of tools and theories that would either support the analysis, construction or regulation of human systems, at a macro level.

All in all, when I proposed a paper on the values, reasons, and meanings associated with the use of information and communication technologies by a web 2.0 driven generation, to a conference on Sociocybernetics, I realized: what do I really know about Sociocyberneticians? What do I even know about cybernetic theories? Will these RC51 members only discuss systems, their conceptualization and managing through tools or computer driven metaphors? Or will they also be opened to rethinking the concepts, theories and notions sociologists must develop when confronted with a new “Cyber” reality?

Of course, the term Cybernetics here becomes, in a way, quite tricky. Although it is clearly and historically associated with the study of system structure, regulation and control, what should we do of the “Cyber” label used to designate a complex mix of spaces, technologies, practices and tools linked with the development of new networked technologies – and especially the Internet – and the multiple reasons and ways humans choose to use them? Should Sociocybernetics distinctly stick to its initial vocation and examine human group behavior through cyber-lenses and systems theories. Or should this field open up to the sociological analysis of micro levels of cyber-related tools and practices?

What I found at the RC51 conference held in Urbino, on July 2009, was a little mix of both approaches. On one side, there was obvious debate among the RC51 members on whether Sociocybernetics should focus on tools construction and systems analysis – to the point where one could “forget about the humans” – and other members who insisted on the sociological part of this field of study, focusing on how individuals relate, network and share through systems. Yet, on the other hand, the conference also led to the presentations of researchers – coincidentally, generally PhD students or younger theoreticians – who rather chose to focus, as the conference theme suggested, on emerging social media and their social impact. In other words, they focused on what I would sketchily call a sociology of “cyberworlds” or “cybertools” use.

From Danah Boyd’s keynote speech on an ethnographic analysis of teens’ use of social network sites, to a diversity of communications focusing on social memory in the web 2.0 era, blogging practices, community building around media audiences, the notion of trust in peer-to-peer networks, and political and civic use of ICTs by a younger generation, the conference made clear that the research committee on Sociocybernetics can – and does – leaves space for a new line of thought. One that takes into account the incursion and appropriation of new social network technologies in everyday activities and experiences, and thus, tries to explain social reality by concentrating on micro levels of human agency, as well as the motivations, values and goals that lie behind specific uses of mobile and networked technologies.

As I understood from RC51 members’ thoughts and considerations, they are well aware that we are at a time of significant change. And profound changes in the way people interact with each other demand a fresh look at what constitutes participation in social, civic, cultural and political life and its relation to web 2.0 developments – not just from a system perspective or technological conception, but also from reflexive thought on the reasons why actors choose to use new social media technologies, the networks they rely on and the type of social change they imply.

*Oh. And Urbino’s enchanting scenery, history, food and wine were also quite enjoyable.*

### **3.2 Coming Sociocybernetic Events**

#### **Great Expectations Conference**

*International Conference*

*03-05 february 2010*

*at the Danish school of Education,*

*Aarhus University, Copenhagen*

The expectations placed upon the neuroscientific mapping of the human brain are enormous. Some scientists claim that they will be able to scan the true nature of man, others claim that they will localize life-threatening diseases in the brain. Reports say that learning can be optimized for an entire lifetime,

that the brain is a highly plastic organ, and a number of performance-enhancing brain drugs will soon be available in the marketplace.

15 national and international scientists, such as Douglas Hofstadter, Roy Bhaskar and our RC51 member Søren Brier will give talks during the three days of this interdisciplinary conference. The conference will be a public event open to non-experts as well as scholars and scientists.

[Go to website for more information](#)

#### 4. BOOK ANNOUNCEMENTS AND BOOK REVIEWS

##### 4.1 Book Announcements



##### **Harmonious Civilization. Global Harmony Association Innovative Projects (2009)**

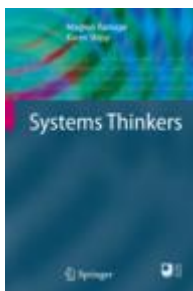
Leo Semashko and 119 participants from 34 countries.

Published by : LITA

[Go to website for more information](#)

This book is the first example of the four-dimensional network of harmonious thinking at all levels of world harmony, primarily that of a harmonious civilization. The GHA projects illustrate that the most difficult global problems, which have been created by and irresolvable through one-dimensional industrial thinking, are being solved through harmonious thinking. Therefore these GHA projects pave a conscious path for a harmonious civilization to solve its basic current problems: nuclear armament, reserve currency, lack of global education, and other social maladies.

The Harmonious Civilization Universal Declaration is our key project that most fully expresses culture, thinking and ideology of this civilization on this stage. We present this Declaration as a positive alternative to the bankrupt industrial ideology, which is the cause of all modern crises.



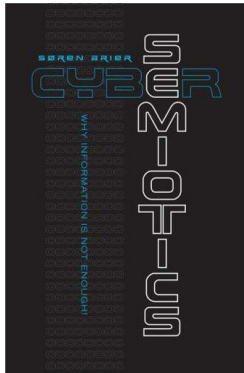
##### **Systems Thinkers (2009)**

Ramage, Magnus, Shipp, Karen Published

Published by: Springer: Behavioral Sciences

[Go to website for more information](#)

The book (the product of more than seven years of research) presents a biographical history of the field of systems thinking, by examining the life and work of thirty of its major thinkers. It discusses each thinker's key contributions, the way this contribution was expressed in practice and the relationship between their life and ideas. This discussion is supported by an extract from the thinker's own writing, to give a flavour of their work and to give readers a sense of which thinkers are most relevant to their own interests.



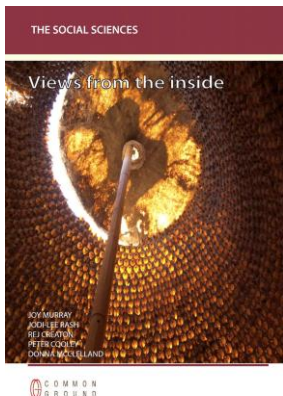
**Cybersemiotics: Why Information is Not Enough (2007)**

Søren Brier  
Published by: Springer: University of Toronto Press

[Go to website for more information](#)

A growing field of inquiry, biosemiotics is a theory of cognition and communication that unites the living and the cultural world. What is missing from this theory, however, is the unification of the information and computational realms of the non-living natural and technical world. *Cybersemiotics* provides such a framework.

By integrating cybernetic information theory into the unique semiotic framework of C. S. Peirce, Søren Brier attempts to find a unified conceptual frame work encompassing the complex area of information, cognition, and communication science. The integration is performed through Niklas Luhmann's autopoietic systems theory of social communication. The link between cybernetics and semiotics is further an ethological and evolutionary theory of embodiment combined with Lakoff and Johnson's philosophy in the flesh? This demands the development of a transdisciplinary philosophy of knowledge: as common sense as well as it is cultured in the humanities and the sciences. Such an epistemological and ontological frame work is also developed in the book.



**Views from the Inside (2009)**

Joy Murray, Jodi-Lee Rash, Rej Creaton, Peter Cooley and Donna McClelland

Published by: Kathryn

[Go to website for more information](#)

This book tells five stories of a three-year leadership capacity building program designed for residents of government housing estates in Sydney's Eastern suburbs. It tells its stories through the voices of the



project leader and four participants. In so doing the book explores the relationship between: one person's theory; a community development program in practice; and real life experience.



**Sociology and Complexity Science (2009)**

Castellani, Brian, Hafferty, Frederic William

Published by: Springer

[Go to website for more information](#)

This book is the first to identify and review the new field of study, sociology and complexity science—or SACS for short. SACS is comprised of five cutting-edge areas of research: computational sociology, the British-based School of Complexity (BBC), complex social network analysis (CSNA), Sociocybernetics and the Luhmann School of Complexity (LSC). Together, these five areas represent the latest development in complexity science and sociological systems thinking, offering researchers a powerful, new set of tools for addressing the growing complexity of sociological inquiry.

This book also showcases a new method for modeling social systems, called the SACS Toolkit. The SACS Toolkit comes with a theoretical framework (social complexity theory), procedural algorithm (assemblage) and recommended toolset for modeling social systems (qualitatively, historically or numerically) from the ground-up. In fact, this book uses the SACS Toolkit to review the new field of SACS.



**The Black Boox (2009)**

Ranulph Glanville

Published by: *Edition Echoraum*

[Go to website for more information](#)

This book, the third volume of the selected papers collection being published under the title "The Black Boox" is the first volume published. The others are due to be published by 2011. It consists of the columns and other writings Ranulph Glanville has published in the Journal "Cybernetics and Human Knowing".

Like Bernard Scott, Ranulph Glanville was a student of Gordon Pask's at the time that second order cybernetics was coming into being, and he made a major (but still scarcely known) contribution to the early development of second order cybernetics. This collection reflects second order cybernetics

throughout. Its style, however, is not the learned paper, but less formal presentation. This does not mean it lacks rigour, or new points, but rather that it revels in the observers' presence—where observer is both author and reader. Although the columns were never intended as a text book (their content reflects the author's interests, rather than attempting to cover the whole subject), the book can function as a helpful introduction to many of the notions and practices of second order cybernetics.

Mary Catherine Bateson writes:

*The collection of columns written for the journal Cybernetics and Human Knowing provides a particularly strong picture of Ranulph Glanville's range and role in cybernetics. They are reminiscent of the essays and columns of Peter Medawar and G. Evelyn Hutchinson.*

*Should any reader object that many of these texts deviate stylistically from typical scholarly papers, I would refer him to Ranulph Glanville's papers on education, which focus on learning rather than on instruction, often in very specific ways such as the design of computer interfaces and programs. These papers not only reflect internal conversation, they invite it, respecting the autonomy of the reader's processes of interpretation and assimilation. Ranulph Glanville does not display knowledge but elicits knowing, exemplifying an educational practice directly reflective of his psychological and epistemological premises. This is a rare quality in scientific writing and teaching.*

Joy Murray writes:

*Through his uncluttered and beautiful writing Ranulph Glanville, cybernetician and regular columnist in the journal Cybernetics and Human Knowing, has given me access to the central ideas of cybernetics. He is a writer, architect, designer and musician who never ceases to surprise me. In his discussions of cybernetics and its many and various applications to life, be they useful, beautiful or both, he has led me to the discovery of my own theory of living and provided me with a language by which I can hold onto it.*

#### **A preliminary announcement from our Australian Member Bob Hodge**



#### **Chaos theory and the larrikin principle: working with organisations in a Neo-Liberal world (March 2010)**

By: *Bob Hodge, Gabriela Coronado, Fernanda Duarte and Greg Teal*, in the series *Advances in Organisation Studie*

[Go to website for more information](#)

This lively, accessible book applies ideas from chaos and complexity theory to core issues in organization studies. It develops a new critique of Managerialism and its global god-father, Neo-Liberalism, still dominant ideologies in management today. It complements theoretical critique with stories and voices from the front line of organizational life, in Australia, Mexico and Brazil. It argues that Managerialism is not only unjust. Linearity, rigidity and will to control produce dysfunctional organizations which require alternative practices in order to survive. Managerialism's efforts to ignore these basic facts of organizational life leave it enmeshed in unacknowledged contradictions, unable to understand itself or develop new strategies. The book gathers these alternative practices under the rubric of the Larrikin Principle. The Larrikin is known in Australian popular culture as a carrier of a distinctive Australian identity, egalitarian improviser, rule-bender, relentless foe of managerial double-speak. This book takes the Larrikin figure back to its archetypal origins which have similar manifestations across the globe, in Australia and Latin America. The transcultural, postmodern larrikin principle carries principles and strategies of critical management and chaos theories into academic management studies and contemporary organizational life. It is a breath of fresh air that will be appreciated by students, practioners and victims of managerialism today.

## **4.2 Book Reviews**

### **4.2.1 STOP CAUSING HUMANKIND'S SUICIDE, PLEASE !**

**Five good cases of systemic thinking about crucial issues put in synergy for solution to the global crises.**

***Review by Matjaz Mulej.***

#### **Introduction**

In the first three weeks of July 2009 I joined three crucial scientific events in Nainital, India and Brisbane, Australia. Along with some 200 interesting contributions, I read five books. I found them interrelated and worth a shared presentation putting them in synergy. They made me both very worried (as the title says) and hopeful (as the subtitle says). They provide insight in the current situation of humankind of our current civilization and the way out from its blind alley. But they do so much more in synergy suggested here than individually. People have tended and still tend to forget about the facts that:

- Economy is a part of nature rather than vice-versa, throughout the industrial 2-3 centuries;
- Humankind and its consumption of natural resources have grown far beyond the planet earth's natural capacity, thus ruining our un-renewable natural capital, not only income;
- This process leads to humankind's suicide that may occur very soon.

This means that the currently prevailing industrial paradigm is too one-sided, biased and short-term oriented and needs to be replaced by systemic/holistic thinking/behavior. It is time to either add sufficiency to efficiency or to die out as humankind; need must replace greed and suicide.

Bertalanffy was right when advocating that we dare to broaden our loyalty from nation to globe..., that we become patriots of the planet, endeavoring to think and act primarily as members of humanity..., that we must begin protecting the individual and cultural identity of others. He advocated a new global morality: »an ethos, which does not center on individual goods and individual value alone,

but on the adaptation of Humankind, as a global system, to its new environment«. The need for this new morality, he said, was imperative:

*We are dealing with emergent realities; no longer with isolated groups of men, but with a systematically interdependent global community: it is this level of □reality□ which we must keep before our eyes if we are able to inspire larger-scale action, designed to assure our collective and hence our individual survival*

(Davidson, 1983, quoted from: Elohim, 1999).

I was in several teams publishing books on these topics over years, although we were not the only or the first ones voicing the necessary warnings and suggestions for innovative changes. I am not going to talk about our books except in a single sentence. The one by Dyck, Mulej and co-authors (1998) was used at universities in several countries, but it received a single review that said: ‘The 30 cases and multidisciplinary comments about them showed that the World Bank was using a very wrong approach in developing countries.’ The one by Ećimović, Mulej and Mayur with co-authors (2002) was called in François’s (2004) Encyclopedia an example of good application of systemic thinking to complex problems. Then we authored a next one (Božičnik, Ećimović, Mulej, with co-authors, 2008) that was soon out of stock with no real publicity.

The five books to be briefly presented here received a better publicity, which is great, but individually rather than as a set of interdependent books. They deserve to be considered as a dialectical system, i.e. covering interdependent and interacting viewpoints in consideration of the same problem – survival of humankind in the current dangerous combination of climate change, running out of the natural resources, environmental, economic and social crises. The five books are partly overlapping and mostly complementary in providing crucial information on the real situation concerning both the dangerous given problems and ways to solve them with the currently given, but under-used material and social technologies and means. The missing elements are basically two, but difficult:

1. The political will of the most influential people in governments and the rich few to whom the current profit means more than the future of their own children and grandchildren; thus, they are causing the humankind’s suicide pending to happen soon.
2. The transition from the piecemeal, one-sided, narrow and short-term values of the industrial times – against which the systems theory and cybernetic have been established over sixty years ago – to systemic/holistic values, that enable synergies of many narrow specialists co-working in interdisciplinary creative teams and human behavior at large..

These five books are also complementary to another crucial book of 2008: Goerner, Dyck, and Langeroos (2008), that will not be presented here. The books at stake are:

1. Graeme Taylor: *Evolution’s Edge: The Coming Collapse and Transformation of our World*; ISBN 978-0-86571-608-7; Copyright © 2008 by Graeme Taylor; Published by New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, Canada
2. David. S. Korten: *AGENDA FOR A NEW ECONOMY; From Phantom Wealth to Real Wealth*; ISBN 978-1-60509-289-8 (pbk.); ISBN 978-1-60509-2904 (PDF e-book); Copyright © 2009 by ‘The People-Centered Development Forum’; Publisher: Berrett-Koehler Publ., Inc., San Francisco, Ca., USA
3. Lester R. Brown: *PLAN B 3.0; Mobilizing to Save Civilization*; ISBN 978-0-393-06589-3 (cloth); 978-0-393-33087-8 (pbk); Copyright © 2008 by Earth Policy Institute; Published by Earth Policy Institute, W. W. Norton and Co., New York, London

4. Errol E. Harris: *Twenty-first Century: Democratic Renaissance, From Plato to Neoliberalism to Planetary Democracy*; ISBN 978-1-933567-15-0; Copyright © by Errol E. Harris, 2008; Published by The Institute for Economic Democracy Press, Sun City, AZ., and Fayetteville, PA, In cooperation with Institute on World Problems, and Earth Rights Institute
5. Glenn Martin: *World Revolution through World Law*. ISBN 0-9753555-2-X pbk); ISBN 0-9753555-3-8 (hc); Copyright © 2006 by Glenn Martin; Published by IED Institute for Economic democracy, Sun City, AZ, in cooperation with Institute on World Problems, Radford, Va.

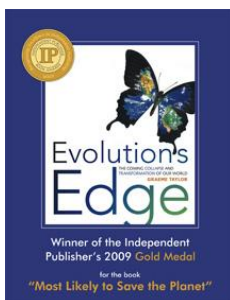
L. R. Brown, D. C. Korten, and G. Taylor are analyzing the current socio-economic processes, while E. E. Harris takes a look at the history of philosophic thought, finishing with ideas about world order of tomorrow, and Glenn Martin adds legal documents supportive of it. All of them make suggestions for the humankind to find its way out from the current blind alley, which is perhaps the most threatening of them all ever in human history. Authors use different collections of data and references to make similar conclusions:

*Humankind does have the knowledge and technology to resolve the problems into which it has brought itself with its concept of sovereign national state and monopolistic capitalism included in international law and socio-economic concept of its industrial and post-industrial age. In it the human impacts are global and long-term, but the humans' selected viewpoints on their/our bases of action are narrow and short-term. Therefore we may not speak of developed and developing countries, but of self-destroying ones. But humankind needs the political will to innovate itself.*

The reason for this dangerous situation and trend can be summarized as the deliberate or non-intentional refusal or disregard of systems and cybernetics theories as theories and world-views of (requisitely) holistic behavior; that refusal causes dangerous oversights in this case, too.

Suggestions by Brown, Harris, Korten, Martin and Taylor, can be called informal systemic concepts: they do not use the formal language of either systems theory (except Taylor) or cybernetics, but they have collected and put in synergy many crucial viewpoints and data. Thus, they attained the requisite holism of approach and requisite wholeness of outcomes. The latter holds even more, if we put all five books in synergy of them-selves and other books referenced here (and several more). These five books, in synergy, provide a far better response to the current crises than any of those we have analyzed recently, including the famous ones (Božičnik, 2007; Božičnik, Mulej, 2009; Ećimović et al, 2007; Hrast et al, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009; Knez Riedl et al, 2001; knez Riedl et al, 2006; Mulej, 2007; Mulej, ed., 2009; Mulej et al, 2008; Prosenak et al, 2008; Šarotar Žižek and Mulej, 2009; etc).

### Taylor's book



#### **Evolution's Edge: The Coming Collapse and Transformation of our World**

Published by:

*New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, Canada*

[Go to website for more information](#)

Taylor uses evolutionary systems theory and very many data providing an impressive insight on this basis. In 2009 he won a prestigious reward and comment that this book might show humans the way out from the current blind alley. I agree, but I add that this book may do this better in synergy with other books mentioned here.

Taylor begins with a crucial sentence ascribed to Albert Einstein: “Problems cannot be solved at the same level of awareness that created them.” The industrial socio-economic system caused the current problems of humankind and is unable to solve them. The alternative is a new type of planetary civilization with different views, values and social institutions. Societal evolution is the process by which societies reorganize themselves in more complex forms with new capabilities. It shows that the next level of civilization – to replace the industrial one – has already begun to emerge. Given the pressing problems resulting from the industrial society the actual issue reads: will this replacement occur before:

- The climate change (compared with the nuclear war in terms of its threatening impact in his book),
  - Running-out of the natural resources and of unavoidable bio-diversity of the planet Earth, and
  - Related pending wars for them,
- ruin the current civilization, or can it no longer be saved.

The limitless expansion with which the industrial period has started a few centuries ago is no longer possible. Then the number of people on Earth and their consumption was a tiny fragment of the current figures. For most people this crucial change of conditions is a hardly visible process. Taylor explains it with comparing the growth of humankind and its consumption of natural resources with the exponential growth of number of bacteria in a bottle. The bottle has its limits like the planet Earth. The number of bacteria/humans doubles every minute of one hour. Thus, five minutes before the end of this hour, only three percents of the available room are taken; a minute before the hour room is still 50% empty. Thus, humans have three choices:

1. To go on acting in the same way as so far, although the last minute has come close. The suicide of humankind is becoming unavoidable.
2. To introduce some minor changes (similar to the governmental and market actions in 2009), which will have the effect of a short postponing of the unavoidable end. It is like moving around chairs on the deck of Titanic going to crash the iceberg.
3. To innovate the paradigm, thus solving the problem. Two cases: If USA used the money for its war for oil in Iraq to invest in the available technologies for alternative sources of energy, USA would no longer need any import of energy. European Union demonstrates that a supra-national body and nation-states can co-exist well, while EU has authorities beyond international law limiting the impact of United Nations etc.

Taylor summarizes it all neatly at the beginning (and elaborates very well later on). Some citations from his text:

*Humanity has no choice: if global civilization is to survive, it must evolve into a completely new type of social system. A consumer society cannot be transformed into a conserver society without structural change.*

*In front of us are both an immense challenge and a wonderful opportunity. The challenge is to avoid the catastrophic collapse of our natural and social worlds. The opportunity is to finally end humanity's ancient addiction to war and greed and to create a peaceful and*

*healthy civilization. This is possible because the same forces that are driving us to self-destruction are creating the conditions for constructive change.*

*Human societies have been evolving for more than 200,000 years. Nomadic families of hunter-gatherers armed with stone spears have developed into industrialized nations armed with nuclear missiles. In the process, occasional contacts between isolated bands have developed into constant exchanges between international networks. Globalization marks the beginning of a tremendous shift past tribal and national boundaries towards a planetary civilization. But it also marks the end of unexplored frontiers and the end of major resource discoveries. With the shrinking of time and space, our species has begun to realize that it lives on a finite planet with limited resources.*

*Globalization is triggering a profound shift in human consciousness. On one hand we are being forced to realize that we cannot do anything we want – the price of continuing to exploit nature and each other will be our own destruction. On the other hand, we are learning that our differences are less important than our commonalities – because we are all humans; if our species succeeds, our children and grandchildren will lead happy lives; if it fails, they will inhabit a dying world.*

*This is a time when we can – and must – make a great turning. We believe that the coming global crisis is a critical but inevitable part of the social evolution of our species. Our species has not failed – rather we risk being the victims of our own success. The Industrial Age has not been an evolutionary error, but a necessary stage in human development. It has encouraged the growth of science and technology; it has given most people better and longer lives. However, these benefits have come with enormous environmental and social costs, and the industrial system has now outlived its usefulness.*

*The continuing development of both destructive and constructive capabilities creates two trends:*

*The dominant trend toward collapse – unsustainable consumption and environmental destruction.*

*The emerging trend toward transformation – sustainable ideas, values and technologies.*

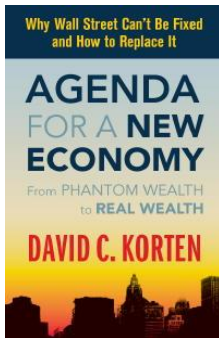
*All of the key social and technological components of a sustainable system will have to be present before it will be possible for our consumer society to transform itself into a conserver society. For this reason we need to actively support their development. In order to do this we need to understand not only the evolutionary process but also the requirements of a sustainable system. The purpose of Evolution's Edge is to help us determine how we can best support the constructive transformation of our world.*

The first part describes in detail the coming collapse of our natural and social worlds. It shows why our current global system is environmentally and culturally unsustainable, why the design of the industrial system is now obsolete, why policy adjustments and new technologies will not be able to prevent its inevitable collapse. A look is provided at why earlier civilizations have failed and how cascading crises can provoke system failure.

The second part describes how a new and very different type of societal system has begun to evolve and how we can support this process. The paradigm changing factors are described that cause societies to evolve into more complex and conscious systems. These factors are now developing and interacting with each other; they provide the potential for rapid social evolution. Emerging technologies, ideas, values and social organizations are examined, and their role in supporting the evolution of a sustainable system is analyzed. So are the major developing global trends and probable future scenarios. Ways to make the necessary change happen are suggested.

*It will require collective wisdom and combined efforts of billions of people to heal our dying planet. The alternative to our cancerous consumer society is not a new dogma and another monoculture, but a critically aware and culturally diverse holistic civilization.*

### Korten's book



#### **For a New Economy; from Phantom Wealth to Real Wealth**

Published by:

*Berrett-Koehler Publ., Inc., San Francisco, Ca., USA*

[Go to website for more information](#)

By education, D. C. Korten is no systems analyst, but by his learned and practiced approach he is a clear systemic thinker on economic and ecological topics: he looks for the big picture and up-stream causes behind the visible surface; he does so with an interdisciplinary approach (and team) in order to suggest a system of measures. This is not his first book demonstrating this. But in the period of the – on surface – financial and economic crisis of 2008- that is actually a crisis of the socio-economic concept and of its prevailing values-culture-ethics-norms, this a crucial book for all who wish to find a – real rather than fictitious – way out of the crisis.

Phantom Wealth – with this notion Korten describes the Wall Street concept, that money is wealth. But Wall Street makes wealth for very few persons at the detriment of a great majority of all others around the world. It is unrelated to the production of anything of real value meeting the real needs of people, their children, families, and communities, including their natural interest in maintaining the health and vitality of their social and natural environments. The Phantom Wealth is opposed to the Adam Smith's true vision of capitalism/market economy with its full transparency and no one-sidedness of monopolies and oligopolies or feudal-times-like differences in wealth. The 2008- crisis shows clearly that it is failing and causing the humankind to face disaster rather than livable future.

The Real Wealth relates, in Korten's words, to happiness and long-term well-being of people. It is measured with the 'Happy Planet Index = (Life Satisfaction x Life Expectancy) / Ecological Footprint', created by the New Economic Foundation in London (p. 99).<sup>1</sup> Its result is an indicator of

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<sup>1</sup> Taylor mentions a number of newly suggested measures and adds that they influence the focus of behavior. Thus, the GDP makes humans think about the entire market flows and cost rather than benefit. The new ones are



the ecological efficiency with which a society produces a given level of physical and emotional well-being. (On this index Zimbabwe is the last of 178, Russia 172, USA 150, and so poorly did also other industrial nations, while Vanuatu is 1.) Ecological efficiency can be attained in a real-market economy much in line with the true vision of Adam Smith. Replacing the Phantom for a new Real-Wealth Economy on the foundation of the Main Street economy, i.e. local production and market, will require far much more than adjustment on the margin. It will need a radical bottom-to-top redesign of our economic assumptions, values and institutions. Life, not money, is the measure of the real wealth value. The most important forms are beyond price and are unavailable for market purchase. They include healthy, happy children, loving families, caring communities, and a beautiful, healthy, natural environment. Real Wealth also includes all the many things of intrinsic artistic, spiritual, or utilitarian value essential to maintaining the various forms of living wealth. These may have or may not have a market price. They include healthful food, fertile land, pure water, clean air, caring relationships and loving parents, education, health care, fulfilling opportunities for service, and time for meditation and spiritual reflection.

On those terms, *Agenda for a New Economy* is a big picture story, or theory, of what went wrong in the design of the current economic institutions and what we can do about it. Korten finds that we do, in fact, have the means to create an economy that fulfills six criteria of economic health. Such an economy would:

1. Provide everyone with opportunity for a healthy, dignified, and fulfilling life.
2. Bring human consumption into balance with Earth's natural systems.
3. Nurture relationships within strong, caring communities.
4. Honor sound, rule-based market principles.
5. Support an equitable and socially efficient allocation of resources.
6. Fulfill the democratic ideal on one-person, one-vote citizen sovereignty.

The point of Korten's book is to look upstream, not in order to place blame, but to find real solutions to the system failure that now threatens our future. We need to shift our economic priorities from making money for rich people only to creating better lives for all. This new economy reallocates our economic resources from destructive, or merely wasteful, uses to beneficial ones. It is based on values opposed to Wall Street-dominated socio-economic system and includes a different understanding of wealth, our human nature, and sources of human happiness and well-being. Korten sees that the basic design elements of the New Economy he seeks are known, and elaborates them in his book.

In Part I, Korten discusses 'The Case for a New Economy', and shows that this innovating of the socio-economic life requires radical changes for an alternative, real, market to live. In Part II Korten explains why the Wall Street should be eliminated; he compares it with the British imperial rule over the 13 colonies that rebelled against abuse of power and made USA; he finds a similar end of power of empire called Wall Street necessary. Then, in Part III Korten outlines his agenda for a real-wealth economy, taking care of what people really want and putting the essential priorities anew, liberating Main Street, i.e. local economy in Adam Smith's ideal style, adapting financial services to this real-wealth economy. He finishes this part with a big-picture outline of life in real-wealth economy. The last, Part IV, is dedicated to action called 'Change the Story, Change the Future', Korten outlines a speech he hopes President Obama will one day deliver to the nation, and points out that the historic

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more holistic and tell the truth about the economic life – as a tool of human well-being – better. Unfortunately they are not applied enough, so far, because they contradict the industrial period mentality.

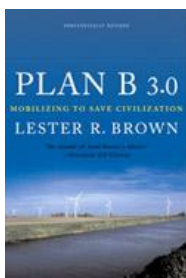
experience of US liberation from British Empire: people started the insurrection, and the local elite followed in order not to lose their positions. The middle class used to be the essence of US, and it should be so again; local rather than global economy should be back; walking and bicycle distance to work should be back; ICT technology should diminish the need for international travelling for conferences etc.; most roads and other asphalted areas should become fields and meadows and forests again; houses should need much less energy; public transportation should replace the need for car and related fuel, sun and wind being the main sources of energy; GDP should be abolished because it measures cost rather than results; businesses should be human-scale, locally owned and dedicated to serving the people of community; suburban building shall be abandoned for renewal of nature and construction of new dwellings in compact communities; agrochemicals shall be banned and just about everything shall be composted and recycled for waste dumps to no longer exist; the overall consumption shall be modest, thus health and vitality will be rich; etc.

The 12-point new economy agenda is summarized on p. 122 as follows:

1. Redirect the focus of economic policy from growing phantom wealth to growing real wealth.
2. Recover Wall Street's unearned profits, and assess fees and fines to make Wall Street's theft and gambling unprofitable.
3. Implement full-cost market pricing.
4. Reclaim the corporate charter.
5. Restore national economic sovereignty.
6. Rebuild communities with a goal of achieving local self-reliance in meeting basic needs.
7. Implement policies that create a strong bias in favor of human-scale businesses owned by local stakeholders.
8. Facilitate and fund stakeholder buyouts to democratize ownership.
9. Use tax and income policies to favor the equitable distribution of wealth and income.
10. Revise intellectual property rules to facilitate the free sharing of information and technology.
11. Restructure financial services to serve Main Street.
12. Transfer to the federal government the responsibility for issuing money.

All of these ideas can become reality, once people understand that the 2008- crisis is only the top of iceberg and provides the information: the current one-sided rather than requisitely holistic economy leads the current civilization to death. We must stop ruining life conditions of our children to the benefit of only a handful. Time of the 'feudal capitalism' must be over for the market-capitalism to become reality as foreseen by Adam Smith.

### Brown's book



#### **Plan B 3.0; Mobilizing to Save Civilization**

Published by:  
*Earth Policy Institute, W. W. Norton and  
Co., New York, London*

[Go to website for more information](#)

Lester Brown is a world-famous researcher and author concerned with humankind's future that depends on humankind's natural environment overburdened now. Thus humankind ruins its own basis of its own survival. His book abounds in persuasive data and links between them, based on a great interdisciplinary investigation (with many acknowledged coauthors and investigators behind the scene) offering a way out of the current crisis, but also calling others to offer something better.

In Ch. 1 Brown explains that the applied market model of ensuring humankind's wellbeing has failed, because it has neglected the humankind's interdependence with its natural environment and robbed the nonrenewable resources beyond all limits, leaving the generations to come in extremely difficult conditions, threatening humankind's physical survival. The number of failing states is constantly growing. If China keeps raising its standard of living like in recent decades, especially if China and other catching-up countries attain the robbing level of consumption of the West, especially USA, then humankind needs a radical alternative to survive, not only to live well on the current western criteria.

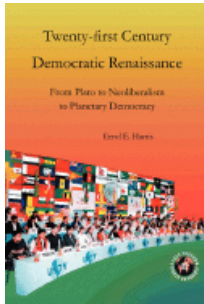
In Part I. A 'Civilization in Trouble' there are five chapters full of data and their interdependences demonstrating how bad the consequences of the applied market-based society and economy are because single parts of reality have been considered in separation rather than with a systemic approach, i.e. as wholes with many interdependencies and synergies. Oil and food security are deteriorating, states are failing, temperature and seas are rising, and carbon must be cut 80% by 2020 or +600 million people will have to flee inland – but where to? Water shortage threatens all around world, causing international and political stress. Natural systems, such as forests, soil, grass, fisheries, plants and animals are disappearing, while deserts are growing. Early signs of decline are clearly visible: our world is socially divided, health is challenged, throw-away-economy is no longer acceptable, population grows while natural resources shrink and/or disappear, more and more huge numbers of people are becoming refugees for environmental reasons. Thus, we face and more stress and failing countries.

In Part II 'The Response – Plan B' Brown makes suggestions in six chapters. In Ch. 7 he explains how can poverty be eradicated and population stabilized: universal basic education, better health for all, curbing the HIV epidemic, reducing farm subsidies and dept, and a poverty eradicating budget. In Ch. 8 he suggests how to restore the Earth: protecting and restoring forests, conserving and rebuilding soil, regenerating fisheries, protecting plant and animal diversity, planting trees to sequester carbon, with an Earth regenerating budget. In Ch. 9 he proposes how to feed 8 billion people: rethinking the land productivity, raising water productivity, producing protein more efficiently, moving down the food chain, with action on many fronts. In Ch. 10 Brown tackles designing cities for people rather than for cars. He addresses the ecology of cities, redesigning urban transport, reducing urban water use, farming in the city, and upgrading squatter settlements, thus creating cities for people. Ch. 11 is devoted to raising energy efficiency, e.g. by banning the bulb, using energy-efficient appliances, more efficient buildings, restructuring the transport system, a new materials economy, thus activating the energy saving potential. In Ch. 12 Brown shows chances for turning to renewable energy. He discusses harnessing the wind, wind-powered plug-in cars, solar cells and collectors, energy from the earth, plant-based resources of energy, river, tidal and wave power, summarizing it all as the world energy economy of 2020.

In Part III, which is the last chapter, Brown maintains that this system of warnings and suggestions provides for all humans an exciting new option. It requires shifting taxes and subsidies, summing up climate stabilization measures, providing for a response to failing states, which must be done so quickly and effectively that humankind needs a wartime mobilization for action, aimed at

saving humankind by enabling its/our survival. At the end Brown shows, that each and every one of us can do something.

### Harris's book



**Twenty-first Century: Democratic Renaissance, From Plato to Neoliberalism to Planetary Democracy**

Published by:  
*The Institute for Economic Democracy Press, Sun City, AZ.*

[Go to website for more information](#)

At the first sight his books addresses very different issues, but they are actually complementary. He mentions similar data, but much less in detail and only as a basis to finish his scholarly presentation of history of thinking about democracy with suggestions that we rethink the given international law in order for the humankind to be able to create a legal basis for solving the above problems and realize the above suggestions.

Harris starts with the thought the human search for the best kind of social order has exposed personal freedom through individual conduct and attitude and appropriate social and political organization. The latter is democracy as the political structure in which people are consulted and thus ruling themselves, either directly or by delegation of power, while assuring that government depends on the consent of the governed. In this framework the rule of law must prevail. The question, however, arises who makes, administers, and interprets the law. The maintenance of the rule of law must not be limited to the national state, but be equally valid in the relations between them.

Here the addressed problem begins. George Keeton is quoted to say: 'Sovereignty is the evil genius of international affairs' (p. 123). Neither international law nor the United Nations can ameliorate this state of affairs (i.e. too much weapons, insecurity, conflict, war, superpower's hegemony, etc.). International law's first principle consists of sovereign states, which acknowledge no legislation superior to their own, thus annulling its own authority. United Nations is constrained by article 2 of its Chart to respect and uphold the sovereign independence of its members. United Nations is only advisory. Due to global economy, peace versus war, well-being versus destruction of all – nation states can no longer be legitimate bearers of sovereign authority; they do not use requisite holism with a requisitely broad definition. Contemporary government is motivated by fear – of foreign aggression, international terrorism, economic decline, starvation (due to climate change), unjust discrimination, religious apostasy, genocide; they disable true democracy and almost all of them are global problems.

The solution can be learned from practice of federal states such as United States, Switzerland, Canada, Australia, or India. It's possible success can thus not be questioned. Also internationally, nation states have been members of confederation, first the League of Nations and, since 1945, the United Nations. The economic interdependence of all nations is marked and undeniable. The overriding common interest is undoubtedly the prospect of survival in the face of environmental deterioration and the menace of warfare with nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. There

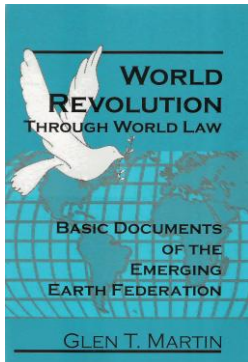
can thus be little doubt that the conditions exist conspicuously (in only peoples and their national governments can be brought to see them) for world federal union.

Prejudices against federal government, widespread as they are today, are ill-founded and baseless (p. 136). Genuine federalism does not allow the central government to intervene in the administration of the purely local affairs of its member states. It reserves for the federal legislature only issues of common interest of all, and such as the separate states in any case could not control, because (as now when they are sovereign) such matters are beyond the limits of their jurisdiction, and are affected by what happens and is done or left undone in other countries (p. 137). It may address only issues of common interest demanding concerted action beyond sovereign states' respected agreement and chance of enforcing observance except by military action – by enforceable world law, enforceable on delinquents who are individual persons (not upon sovereign states). World Union cannot be established by hegemony of one superpower, but by free popular decisions without duress, through referenda prior or after governmental ratification.

World Federation is clearly the only course that can provide means by which global problems that can be solved only by global measures, and can be effectively addressed, because it establishes the universal Rule of Law of creative democracy (p. 138). Details follow on pp. 138-148.

This new world order offers a chance for nations and peoples and individuals to survive. How can this be attained, from the legal point of view, can be learned from Glenn Martin's book.

#### Martin's book



#### World Revolution through World Law

Published by:

*IED Institute for Economic democracy, Sun City, AZ, in cooperation with Institute on World Problems, Radford, Va.*

[Go to website for more information](#)

Martin provides details and rationales to what other referenced authors mention only: the institutional change of the current international law toward a world law. It does not cancel the sovereign state of nations, but it does limit its prerequisites to the internal topics of the given nation/s, and he suggests the same about the international law of so far. Namely: “A fragmented world system cannot support the unity-in-diversity of democracy. Only the sovereignty of all the people who live on Earth institutionalized in the *Earth Constitution* can achieve the goals inherent in democracy: peace, equity, freedom, and prosperity”.<sup>2</sup> And: “It is the nation-state system (where nations inevitably act in their own perceived self-interest), in league with the global system of exploitative monopoly capitalism, that has created this economic nightmare for the majority of humankind. Both these institutions must be transformed into the unity-in-diversity of democratic world government under the *Constitution for the Federation of Earth*. Under democratic federal world government, the prosperity of all nations and

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<sup>2</sup> The terms 'Unity and diversity' were well chosen for the title of the conference celebrating the 100 years anniversary of birth of Ludwig von Bertalanffy, the crucial authors of the systems theory (Elohim, Hofkirchner, editors, 2001). They express the essence of holistic behavior fighting the narrowness of humans.

peoples is the constitutional goal. The elimination of poverty, illiteracy, misery, and disease worldwide is the goal. The preservation of the global environment for future generations is the goal. Demilitarization of the world is the goal. And the institutions will be in place (for the first time in history) that can meet these goals quickly and efficiently.” This cannot be done under the political system of so far because the nation states, United Nations, other international institutions and international law do not attain the world-wide level of holism and wholeness and make a world based of premises of economic domination and exploitation by imperial nation-states inevitable, resulting in terror rather than making economic exploitation illegal and unproductive. “The changes needed are not difficult, nor impractical. But they are indeed fundamental. The “Declaration of the Rights of People”, the *Manifesto*, and the Earth Constitution together in this volume provide all that is necessary to establish this new world order”.

### Some conclusions

Institutions are crucial, but not sufficient preconditions for humankind to survive. The same is true of all other criticisms and suggestions by the briefed authors. Synergy of all of them might provide a chance – technological and social innovations replacing the obsolete tools of humankind of so far. They might provide the content for the ‘fifth phase of development of the basis of competitiveness’ we have started to outline elsewhere (Mulej et al, 2007; Mulej, Prosenak, 2007; Prosenak, Mulej, 2008).

Several conferences on systems and cybernetics should be added as critical sources of critical ideas, too, another time.

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