

Announcement - PhD Course

Systems Thinking and Practice in PhD Research: Cybersystemic Possibilities for Governing the Anthropocene

30 July – 7 August 2015, Germany

Comprising

- Two days of participation in a Systemic Inquiry in **Hannover** (Herrenhausen) on “Governing the Anthropocene: Cybersystemic Possibilities?”
- Two days of dedicated ‘workshops’ introducing different systems approaches, methods and research traditions at Humbolt University in **Berlin**
- Five days of participation in the 2015 ISSS Conference in **Berlin**, including a group generated presentation on the final day
- 5 ECTS - points

Objectives

Working strategically to negotiate boundaries for research in a meaningful way in the areas of contemporary concern e.g. sustainability; development; health; farming, food, rural areas and environment/biodiversity, to name but a few, requires particular skills and abilities: It is necessary to be able to make relevant connections and to contextualize research activities without becoming overwhelmed by potential complexity and uncertainty. The context of the increasingly multifaceted complexity of issues of sustainability and climate change in relation to most contemporary issues is particularly challenging for PhD research. It is a context that is however a core part of the ISSS community’s experience. The purpose of this course is to help you, the PhD student, develop your skills in contextualizing your research, to make connections among issues using systems, cybernetic and complexity thinking and to so improve your ability to work both strategically and purposefully. The course is also designed to help you build on what other researchers have done.

Through joining this course you can expect to:

- gain an overview of the intellectual traditions of Cyber-systemic Thinking Approaches,
- make links to the history of ISSS and other organized bodies concerned with cybersystemic research and scholarship,
- strengthen your research through developing understanding of cybersystemic theories and methodologies
- have an opportunity to reflect on strengths and weaknesses of different systems approaches and methodologies in relation to your own PhD research
- get added value from your participation in the Herrenhausen Systemic Inquiry and the Berlin ISSS Conference by also becoming part of a parallel critical learning systems community that has a PhD research focus



- critically review potential contributions of your research to help meet global challenges
- develop appreciation of multiple perspectives on contemporary issues
- work across multiple disciplines, build networks and establish new relationships supportive of your research and scholarship

Process

The course will be held in connection to the 2015 ISSS Conference in Berlin and the Herrenhausen "Governing the Anthropocene" systemic inquiry (sponsored by the Volkswagen (VW) Foundation at the Herrenhausen Palace in Hannover – see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herrenhausen>) and draw on the gathering of specialists and researchers within this field. The design draws on tried and tested ways of experiential learning and the expertise of academics who have been designing learning experiences for mature age learners for many years. The course will be grounded in a project of your own choice, preferably based on your PhD work. In your time in the program, if accepted, you will participate in an inquiry with three main parts - before, during and after the conference. It will also involve some preparation and submission of a final reflection.

1. *Before the course*, you will be asked to complete an assignment in which you describe and reflect on either (i) your understanding and use of systems/cybernetic theories in your project; or (ii) the rationale you have followed, or would follow, in making a choice to include, or not, systems/cybernetic theories in your PhD research; this will require an on-line submission prior to your arrival.
2. The course will start with participation in a purposefully designed 'systemic inquiry' exploring the question: Governing the Anthropocene: cybersystemic possibilities" taking place on 30 - 31 July at Herrenhausen Hannover hosted by the VW Foundation. You will be engaged in active table-based inquiry with 150 invited participants keynote presenters and panels who will provide 'evidence' for your inquiry. As part of your participation you will be expected to help with report preparation from your inquiry group.
3. The second part of the course is a weekend workshop held on the campus of Humbolt University Berlin followed by the ISSS conference held at the Scandic Hotel, Berlin. This phase will start by exploring your own research context and needs and beginning a process of self-designing a 'critical learning system'. You will be supported in the process by facilitators and other specialists who will provide inputs and resources and prepare you for the final phase of the course including mentorship that helps you plan your attendance at the most relevant sessions for you at the ISSS conference. It will also provide an opportunity for joint reflection and feedback as the conference progresses. The endpoint of this phase will be a presentation developed by the whole PhD group for the ISSS conference attendees during the final session.
4. After the conference (afternoon of 7 August), you and the other students will gather **for half a day** to recapitulate and work in groups, and complete the assignment that has been agreed, on possible improvements of your own PhD study design, or future research trajectory, linking it to cybersystemic thinking and practice.

Background and resources

This PhD course will benefit strongly from the fact that many outstanding researchers within the systems, cybernetics and complexity science approaches will be gathered at the ISSS Conference. Contributions specifically to this course will come from experienced researchers who have been a part of the ISSS and related community for many years. They will include lectures and/or workshops that

- introduce systems and cybernetic (hence cybersystemic) theories;
- consider different cybersystemic approaches and methodologies suitable for researching issues of contemporary concern grounded in the participant's own research interests;
- bridge the different cybersystemic approaches – soft, hard, critical, viable, first-order, second-order etc.
- explore how to deal with handling of complexity and the role that modeling can play
- critically review focuses on action, learning and reflexivity
- explicate social learning and learning systems approaches
- explore the relationship between cybersystemic approaches and transdisciplinary research

Key literature

Blackmore, Chris (Ed.) (2010) Social Learning Systems and Communities of Practice. Springer: London. For online extracts see:

<http://www.springer.com/computer/information+systems+and+applications/book/978-1-84996-132-5>

Ison, Ray (2010) Systems Practice: How to Act in a Climate-Change World. Springer: London. For online extracts see:

<http://www.springer.com/computer/information+systems+and+applications/book/978-1-84996-124-0>

Ramage, Manus and Shipp, Karen (2009) Systems Thinkers. Springer: London.

For online extracts see:

<http://www.springer.com/life+sciences/behavioural/book/978-1-84882-524-6>

Reynolds, Martin and Holwell, Sue. Systems Approaches to Managing Change. Springer: London. For online extracts see:

<http://www.springer.com/computer/information+systems+and+applications/book/978-1-84882-808-7>

Course Assessment

To obtain the course certificate you will be required to:

- complete the assignments as outlined above
- participate in the lectures and group discussion.
- participate in one of the relevant working groups of the ISSS conference .
- after the conference, discuss improvements to your own PhD study, or future research trajectory design linking it to cybersystemic thinking and practice.

Nomination process

Nominations are open to any current PhD students studying anywhere in the world. A maximum of 30 places exists. When nominating students must:

- provide details of their current PhD enrolment
- explain in no more than a paragraph why they would benefit from the course
- affirm that they have the financial resources to participate and have, or can obtain a relevant visa

To be accepted students must register using the student registration box on the ISSS conference website – see <http://iss.org/world/node/608>

Nominees will be advised by the end of April 2015.

Fees

The only direct fee is the student registration fee for the ISSS conference (US\$399). For those accepted all expenses at Herrenhausen (Hannover), including European travel, will be paid by the organisers. All other travel, accommodation and living expenses will be the responsibility of the student.

Registration for the Course

Wiebke Hampel
WINS
Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

Phone: +49-(0)30-2093-46382
Email : w.hampel@staff.hu-berlin.de

Dr. Thomas Aenis
Extension and Communication Group
Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

Phone: +49-(0)30-2093-6511
Email: thomas.aenis@agrar.hu-berlin.de



Course Team

Coordinators

[Dr. Thomas Aenis](#), Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Germany

[Prof. Dr. Nadarajah Sriskandarajah](#), Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Sweden

[Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Konrad Hagedorn](#), Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Germany

Program designers/facilitators

[Prof. Dr. Ray Ison](#), The Open University Applied Systems Thinking in Practice Group, UK and Monash University, Australia (current President of the International Society for Systems Sciences)

[Dr Chris Blackmore](#), The Open University Applied Systems Thinking in Practice Group, UK

[Prof. Dr. Nadarajah Sriskandarajah](#), Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Sweden

Guest lecturers

(to be advised)

Programme (preliminary)

Date, City	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
30 July, H	Herrenhausen Systemic inquiry: Governing the Anthropocene: cybersystemic possibilities	Herrenhausen Systemic inquiry: Governing the Anthropocene: cybersystemic possibilities	
31 July, H	Herrenhausen Systemic inquiry: Governing the Anthropocene: cybersystemic possibilities	Herrenhausen Systemic inquiry: Governing the Anthropocene: cybersystemic possibilities	
1 August, B	Introductions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · sharing our research and systems trajectories · working as a critical learning systems (CLS) community · reviewing pre-course assignments & taking an overview of the course book 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · reflections on Herrenhausen · Systems theoretical lineages and traditions · Implications of these traditions for practice · Introducing systemic inquiry (SI session 1) 	'Walking our talk': grounding what has been presented in your own context. Practical exercise over dinner
2 August, B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Using systems approaches, tools and techniques · Conducting a systemic inquiry at the ISSS conference (SI session 3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · How different systems traditions might engage in the problematique of the Anthropocene · Bridging systems approaches · Contextualising you and your PhD research (SI session 2) · Conference registration from 14.00 t.b.c 	
3 August, B	<i>Keynotes</i>	Conference sessions	
4 August, B	<i>Keynotes</i>	Conference sessions	5pm to 6pm: CLS community reflections session 1
5 August, B	<i>Keynotes</i>	Conference sessions	
6 August, B	<i>Keynotes</i>	Conference sessions	5pm to 6pm : CLS community reflections session 2
7 August, B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Group presentation to the conference · Final reflections 	PhD Closing Group work; critical reflections and presentations	Course concludes Friday p.m.

H – Hannover (Herrenhausen)
B – Berlin