

Background to Session 1 (10.20-11.20 am) of
SCiO Open Day
Monday 8 October 2012

and programme for

Invitational
Workshop on
Beyond Weber
or
**Socio-Cybernetic Contributions to
Models of Management for Complex Organisations**

Tuesday 9 October 2012
9am to 3pm
Stockport, Cheshire
(Invited participants will be sent exact details.)

Workshop Leaders:

Bernd Hornung

Director of IT and Data Protection, Marburg Hospitals, Germany.
Past president of Sociocybernetics Research Group (RC51), International Sociological Association.

Tony Korycki

Director, Lead to Cash Service Improvement, BT Global Customer Service Operations.
Society for the Study of Systems Thinking and Socio Cybernetics in Organisations (SCiO)

John Raven

Professor, Author and Policy Researcher (website.eyeesociety.co.uk)
Society for the Study of Systems Thinking and Sociocybernetics in Organisations (SCiO)

Version Date: 30 September 2012

Recognition of the need for this workshop was precipitated by Hornung's observation at the 2012 conference of Research Committee 51 (RC51) of the International Sociological Association that the Weberian model of management, which somehow lurks at the back of many peoples' minds, bears little relationship to what actually has to happen in complex organisations like multi-hospital health care organisations offering a vast range of diverse treatment specialities with thousands of units, tens of thousands of staff, and hundreds of thousands of patients ... and pervaded by both technological and social innovation and change.

Although Hornung's paper precipitated this proposal, the seriousness and intractability of the problem had previously been disturbingly, if hilariously, demonstrated by Korycki in relation to the workings of a huge UK-based telecommunications company at a members-only "Development Day" of the Society for Systems Thinking and Socio Cybernetics in Organisations (SCiO).

And by John Raven, at earlier meetings of both RC51 and SCiO, in relation to both the educational system and society more generally.

Indeed, the (American) *Committee on the Political Economy of the Good Society* (PEGS) had struggled with the problem for 25 years without making notable progress.

The papers which Hornung and Raven delivered at the 2012 RC51 conference, taken together with another by Karl-Heinz Simon, led the AGM of the Committee to agree to set up an international, internet-based, working group to try to contribute to the evolution of thinking which would take the matter forward.

On hearing of this suggestion, Mike McCarron, who had for years struggled with the interconnected aspects of UK drugs policy and the problem-exacerbating effects of simplistic policy “solutions”, and who had recently set up a symposium to promote systems thinking with members of the Scottish Parliament, came to feel that it would be desirable to set up a small UK-based face-to-face discussion group among those with a track record of work in the area to clarify some of the issues that the proposed internet group would need to tackle.

Hence this workshop.

*It is important for those who might wish to participate in the workshop to note that the previously mentioned papers present **sociocybernetic accounts of the problems and socio-cybernetically based proposals for their solution***. Their authors do not simply list ailments or present off-the-cuff, common-sense based, prescriptions for their solution.

The **proposed format** for the workshop is that the three speakers mentioned above will each spend about 1 hour illustrating and discussing the problem as it emerges in the areas they have been studying. It is hoped that this will provoke general discussion generating *socio-cybernetically-based* insights into how it might be possible to move forward, that is, toward something which might be envisaged as an updated Weberian statement about the appropriate functioning of the types of organisations of which modern society is so largely composed.

The workshop will be limited to those who have devoted considerable thought, grounded in systems thinking, to problems in this area.

In more detail, it is proposed to organise the workshop, which will be chaired by Mike McCarron, as follows:

The first speaker will be John Raven whose 50 years’ research into the problems of the educational system eventually led to the production of a systemogram which highlighted the way the various causes of the problems formed a *system* in which attempts to change any one part on its own are negated by the reactions of the rest of the system. This systemogram also drew attention to the fact that one of the central problems is the governance system itself. Instead of breeding a climate of experimentation and learning, recognition of the need for systems change tends to result in a call for centralised, system-wide, change based on “common sense” rather than multiple *systems-oriented* (and evaluated) interventions based on an understanding of the system. The insights which emerged were first published in his book *Managing Education for Effective Schooling* but later formed the basis of his *New Wealth of Nations*. The latter is, in essence, an attempt to provide an alternative answer to Adam Smith’s question about how to devise a societal management system which will innovate and learn without central direction and without anyone having to know anything very much.

Next, Bernd Hornung will present “the problem” as it initially emerged in the University Hospital of Marburg (Germany), but has now been exacerbated as that organisational system has been merged into a still more complex network of a holding company encompassing more than 50 hospitals in the German health care system. It will be remembered that it was his dramatic presentation at the recent 11th Annual International Conference of Sociocybernetics of ISA-RC51 that led to the proposal to set up an Internet workshop on sociocybernetic contributions to thinking about appropriate arrangements for the management of complex organisations.

In the last session, Tony Korycki will explore the problems of managing organisational coherence, for a variety of inter-related functions and objectives, with matrixed and outsourced service operations, as well as considerable product and geographical diversity, emerging in a large international company, to build on a presentation given at a recent SCiO development day."

Most of the day will be devoted to general discussion of socio-cybernetically based ways of thinking about the issues involved.

Further Reading.

PDFs of most of the chapters from John Raven’s books *Managing Education for Effective Schooling* and *The New Wealth of Nations: The Societal Management Arrangements required for a Sustainable Society*, together with those of many other papers, can be found at <http://www.eyesociety.co.uk/resources/fulllist.html>

Links to some of Bernd Hornung’s publications can be found at <http://sociocybernetics.unizar.es/chen/Hornung/webcompl.html>