

System Theory on the Ground: Research Methods and Managerial Applications

Professional Development Workshop



無名天地之始

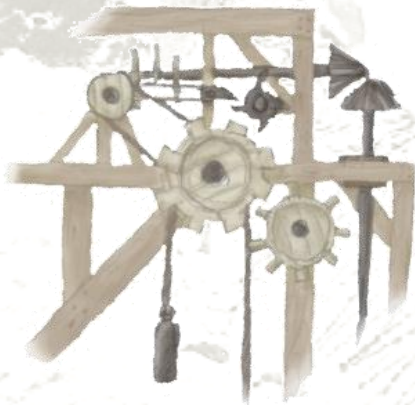
(wú míng tiān dì zhī shǐ)

“The origin of Heaven and Earth has no name”

Third sentence in the *Dàodéjīng* (Tao Te Ching) by Laozi
First sentence in *Laws of Form* by George Spencer Brown

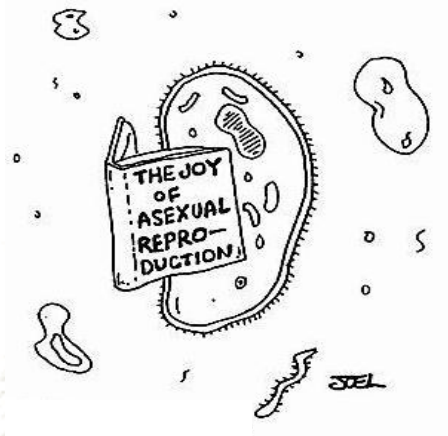
The Notion of “System”

Mechanical
up to 19th century



Complicated
Linear
Closed

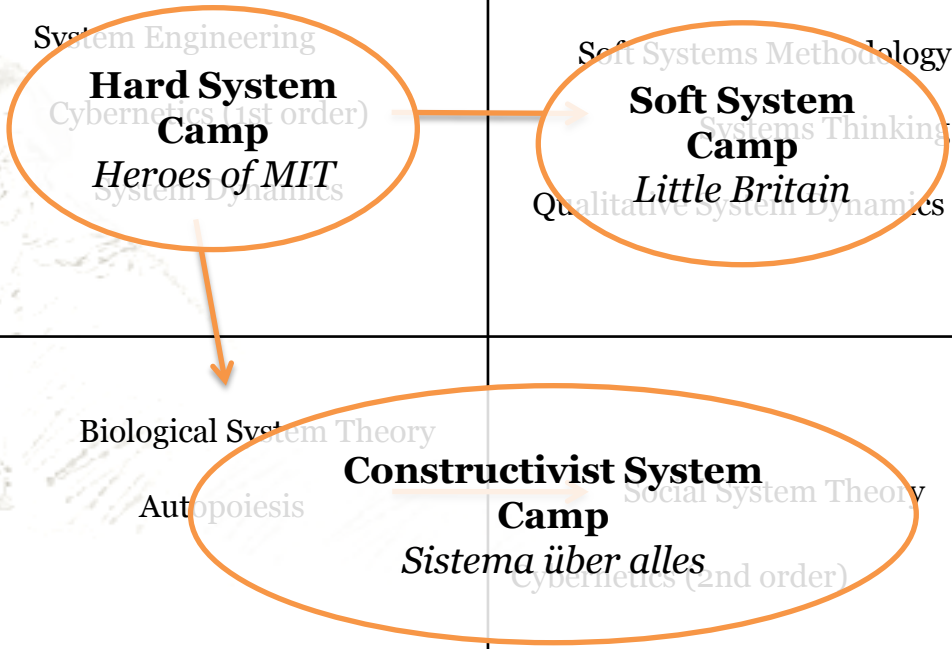
Biological
from 1920



Complex
Non-linear
Open

System Theories in a Box

	real	epistemic device
whole	<p>System Engineering Cybernetics (1st order) System Dynamics</p> <p>Hard System Camp <i>Heroes of MIT</i></p>	<p>Soft Systems Methodology Systems Thinking Qualitative System Dynamics</p> <p>Soft System Camp <i>Little Britain</i></p>
difference	<p>Biological System Theory Autopoiesis</p> <p>Constructivist System Camp <i>Sistema über alles</i></p>	





The Failures of System Theory

Ideological Battles in the 1970s

Ifragmentation in Practice / Application



Results and Insights from AoM 2010

Predict and control is impossible, systems (and their managers) need to be “allured” to organize for a certain task.

Systems Management is **not** Scientific Management

The turn towards a second-order approach makes it hard to conceptualize system theory, but it is **almost** impossible to methodologize and apply in real-world problem situations



Agenda for Today

Ever Tried Ever Failed No Matter!

Try Again Fail Again

Fail **Better!**

Samuel Beckett

Agenda for Today

Module I: Applications of System Theory

Presenter	Title	Parallel Roundtables	Presentation of Summaries
Donald Neumann	Collaborative Systems: a systems theoretical approach to inter-firm collaborative relationships	Parallel Discussion	
David Seidl	Theorizing the client–consultant relationship from the perspective of social-systems theory		
André Reichel	What’s next? Managing „boundary-less“ organizations		

Agenda for Today

Module II: Methods of System Theory

Presenter	Title	Parallel Roundtables	Presentation of Summaries
Harald Tuckermann	What researchers actually do... - taking a system perspective on longitudinal field research	Parallel Discussion	
Dennis Schöneborn	Organizations as Networks of Communication: A Luhmann-Inspired Methodology		
Lukas Scheiber	Next Taylorism: The Organization of Knowledge Work		



Agenda for Today

Module III: Questions and Answers in an Expert Panel

Moderated by Prof. James McHann and Prof. Laura Frost