



Strategic Articulation of Actions to Cope with the Huge Challenges of Our World: A Platform for Reflection. (A Social Systems Approach to Global Problems)

Dr. Reynaldo Trevino Cisneros

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Volume 1 of Monograph Series, "A Social Systems Approach to Global Problems" A principal failing of research on large-scale, complex social/technological problems is the excessive reliance upon easily measured technical observations and the accompanying minimal regard for hard-to-measure humanist aspirations, intentions, and hopes (Flanagan and Bausch, 2011). By focusing on the easily harvested quantitative data of technological science, complex systems research too easily excludes people's life experiences, their need for practical relevance, their desires, and their traditions.. In doing this, they have alienated popular culture from the research and lay the grounds for ignoring its findings. A new science is emerging that takes account of people's life concerns in the context of critical human problems. This science accepts the observations of all stakeholders, helps observers as they combine these observations, and results in a composite, rich definition of the problem. This comprehensive definition melds many contexts in which stakeholders view the problem. By using this contextualized definition, scientists and populace working together can reach consensus on the nature of the problem and what they are to do about it. This new science was formulated by Gerard DeZeeuw as Third Phase science (1997). If we are to reach a common ground for collective action, we need to talk not only with each other but also to reason together. Such a process requires dialogue. And not just any dialogue, but a highly structured one. In this volume, Reynaldo Treviño Cisneros and Bethania Arango Hisijara present an analysis that joins the 15 global challenges found by the Millennium Project (Glenn, J., Gordon, T., and Florescu, E., 2010) with the 49 Continuous Critical Problems (CCPs) identified by Hasan Ozbekhan (1970). The method they used is expert-analysis using Interpretive Structural Modeling (ISM). It relies upon its two source documents to provide the required diversity of observations. It also reflects the considered judgment of only two people. It nevertheless illustrates the complexity that is inherent in a deep consideration of the challenge of global sustainability. In preparation, the authors immersed themselves in the world as viewed in the 15 challenges and the 49 critical problems. Then they used Interpretive Structural Modeling (Warfield, 1974, 1976; Christakis and Bausch, 2006) to rank the 15 challenges on the basis of the influence they have on each other. In doing this, they generated a map that indicates the most influential challenges. This map points out that these challenges possess leverage and therefore deserve priority in efforts to improve the global situation. Second, they clustered the individual CCPs with the corresponding Challenges. Third, they generated actions that work to solve the individual Challenges. Finally, they generated a second map that indicates how the actions can confront the Challenges. The central message from Bethania and Reynaldo is to invite civil society and governmental organizations to shape transdisciplinary groups and to follow their own journey of discovery, dialog and design, to achieve, by themselves, shared and clever strategies that might address at global, national, regional or local levels some of the challenges they had identified as needing attention, to pursue together a better quality of life for themselves and their communities.

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