
Contents

Chapter 1: Systems Thinking for the 21st Century	1
1.1 From Mechanism to Systems Thinking	2
1.2 From Observation to Intervention	4
1.3 From Theories of Everything to Theoretical Pluralism	5
1.4 The Structure and Contents of this Book	7
1.5 Practical Consequences for Life in the 21st Century	10
1.5.1 Interconnectedness	11
1.5.2 Scepticism about Value-Neutral Science	12
1.5.3 The Politics of Social Exclusion	14
1.6 Conclusion	16
SECTION I: PHILOSOPHY	19
Chapter 2: Why Philosophy?	21
2.1 Two Grounds for Exploring Philosophy	22
2.2 Terminology	23
2.3 Popper's Critical Fallibilism	23
2.4 Kelly's Personal Construct Theory	26
2.5 Habermas's Three Worlds	27
2.6 The Need for Philosophy	28
2.7 The Strategic Reason for Engaging with Philosophy	29
2.8 The Importance of Philosophical Argument	30
2.9 Conclusion	32
Chapter 3: The Systems Idea	33
3.1 The Meaning of 'Systems Philosophy'	34
3.2 The Boundary Concept	36
3.3 The 'Enemies' of Systems Thinking: Mechanism, Reductionism and Subject/Object Dualism	39
3.4 The Struggle against Subject/Object Dualism	43

3.5 General Systems Theory	45
3.5.1 Critique of General Systems Theory	46
3.6 The Theory of Mind	48
3.6.1 Critique of the Theory of Mind	51
3.7 The Theory of Autopoiesis	53
3.7.1 Critique of the Theory of Autopoiesis	57
3.8 Interpretive Systemology	59
3.8.1 Critique of Interpretive Systemology	63
3.9 Conclusion	67

Chapter 4: Process Philosophy	69
4.1 The Problem of Subject/Object Dualism	69
4.2 The Linguistic Turn	70
4.3 A Linguistic Turn in Systems Thinking	71
4.4 The Theory of 'Three Worlds'	73
4.5 A Critique of the Linguistic Turn	75
4.6 The Origins of Knowledge	76
4.7 From Content to Process Philosophy	78
4.8 Defining Knowledge	81
4.9 Sentient Beings	82
4.9.1 Shorthand Expressions of Boundary Judgements	85
4.10 Second-Order Reflections on the Nature of the Self	85
4.11 The Importance of Time	87
4.12 The Indeterminacy of Process	88
4.13 Some Consequences of Process Philosophy for Speaking about Reality	89
4.13.1 Realism	90
4.13.2 Idealism	90
4.13.3 Social Constructionism	91
4.13.4 What can be Said using Process Philosophy?	91
4.13.5 From Realism to Process	92
4.13.6 From Idealism to Process	93
4.13.7 From Social Constructionism to Process	95
4.14 Conclusion	98

SECTION II: METHODOLOGY **101**

Chapter 5: Why Methodology?	103
5.1 Why Methodology?	104
5.2 Method and Methodology	105
5.3 The Argument against Philosophical Purism	106

5.4 The Spectre of Instrumental Rationality	109
5.5 Arguments against the Atheoretical Use of Methods	110
5.6 Conclusion	112
Chapter 6: Systemic Intervention	113
6.1 Observation versus Intervention	115
6.1.1 Observation as the Basis of Science	116
6.1.2 Intervention as the Basis of Action Research	117
6.1.3 Summary of the Distinction between Observation and Intervention	120
6.2 Arguments against Intervention from within Action Research	120
6.3 The Impossibility of Independent Observation	123
6.4 Observation <i>as</i> Intervention	125
6.5 Systemic Intervention	128
6.6 Towards a Methodology for Systemic Intervention	129
6.7 Conclusion	132
Chapter 7: Boundary Critique	135
7.1 The Bounded Nature of Improvement	137
7.2 Critical Systems Heuristics	138
7.2.1 Key Differences between Churchman and Ulrich	142
7.3 Processes of Marginalisation	142
7.3.1 Is there a Need for a Sociological Theory?	146
7.3.2 Making Critical Boundary Judgements	148
7.3.3 Key Differences between Churchman, Ulrich and Myself	149
7.4 Elaborating the Theory of Boundary Critique	152
7.4.1 Modelling the Overlapping Concerns of Stakeholder Groups	153
7.4.2 A Key Difference between Yolles and Myself	155
7.5 Conclusion	156
Chapter 8: Theoretical Pluralism	159
8.1 Beyond the Cumulative View of Knowledge	160
8.2 Theory in Action	161
8.3 Choice between Theories	162
8.4 Standards and Principles for Choice	166
8.5 Conclusion	168

Chapter 9: Methodological Pluralism	171
9.1 Two Levels of Pluralism	171
9.2 The Value of Learning from Other Methodologies	173
9.3 The Value of a Plurality of Methods	174
9.4 A History of Methodologies and Methods	176
9.5 What is History?	177
9.6 Scientific Methods	179
9.7 Applied Science	182
9.7.1 Scientific Management	182
9.7.2 The Human Relations Movement	183
9.7.3 Operational Research	184
9.7.4 Action Research and Action Learning	185
9.8 Psychoanalysis	186
9.9 The First Wave of Systems Thinking	187
9.9.1 Socio-Technical Systems Thinking	188
9.9.2 Systemic Family Therapy	189
9.9.3 Systemic Operational Research	190
9.10 The Second Wave of Systems Thinking	191
9.10.1 Criticisms of the First Wave	191
9.10.2 Some Management Systems Methods from the Second Wave	193
9.10.3 Dialogical Family Therapy	197
9.11 Parallel Movements in OR and Participative Action Research	197
9.11.1 Participative Action Research	198
9.11.2 Problem Structuring Methods in OR	200
9.12 The Third Wave of Systems Thinking	202
9.12.1 Critiques of the Second Wave of Systems Thinking	203
9.12.2 The Birth of Critical Systems Thinking	204
9.12.3 Revisioning Critical Systems Thinking	206
9.12.4 The Third Wave of Family Therapy	210
9.13 Power Issues and Action Research	211
9.14 Multimethodology	213
9.15 A Key Implication of Third Wave Thinking	214
9.16 Conclusion	215
Chapter 10: Mixing Methods	217
10.1 The System of Systems Methodologies	218
10.1.1 Total Systems Intervention	222
10.1.2 Philosophical Underpinnings	223

10.1.3 Summary	224
10.2 The Creative Design of Methods	225
10.2.1 The Role of Intuition	227
10.2.2 The Pivotal Role of the Intervener	228
10.3 Practising the Creative Design of Methods	230
10.3.1 Purposes	231
10.3.2 Principles	231
10.3.3 Theories	232
10.3.4 Ideologies	233
10.3.5 Practical Results	236
10.3.6 Learning through Reflection on Methods	236
10.4 Writing Up Interventions	237
10.5 Moving Away from the System of Systems Methodologies	237
10.5.1 Limitations of the System of Systems Methodologies	238
10.5.2 Challenging the Philosophy behind the System of Systems Methodologies	239
10.6 Conclusion	241
Chapter 11: Learning about Methodology and Methods	243
11.1 The Philosophical Problem	244
11.2 The Cultural Problem	244
11.3 The Psychological Problem	245
11.4 Proposed Solutions	246
11.4.1 Meta-Paradigmatic Thinking	246
11.4.2 Towards a New Paradigm	247
11.4.3 Paradigm (In)commensurability	249
11.4.4 Critically Appreciating Alien Paradigms	251
11.4.5 Virtual Paradigms	252
11.5 A Model of Learning	253
11.5.1 Continuity and Discontinuity	254
11.5.2 Philosophical Reflections	260
11.5.3 Reflections on Practice	261
11.5.4 Reflections on Theory	262
11.5.5 Espoused Methodology and Methodology in Use	264
11.6 Reflections on the Three Challenges	266
11.6.1 Addressing the Paradigm Problem	266
11.6.2 Minimising the Psychological Problem	266
11.6.3 Dealing with the Cultural Problem	267

11.7 Conclusion	268
SECTION III: PRACTICE	269
Chapter 12: Why Practice?	271
12.1 Practice and Discourses <i>about</i> Practice	271
12.2 Why Practice?	272
12.3 The Argument against 'Pure' Philosophy	272
12.4 The Arguments against 'Pure' Methodology	274
12.5 Conclusion	276
Chapter 13: Community Operational Research	279
13.1 The Origins of Community OR	281
13.2 Motivations for Involvement in Community OR	282
13.3 The Breadth of Community OR Practice	283
13.4 The Community Operational Researcher as an Agent	285
13.5 Conclusion	288
Chapter 14: Developing Housing Services for Older People	289
14.1 Boundary Critique	289
14.2 The Initial Remit of the Intervention	290
14.3 Phase One: Identifying Problems	291
14.4 Designing the Methods for the Second Phase	294
14.5 Phase Two: Designing Improvements	297
14.5.1 Designing Organisational Delivery	301
14.6 The Design of Methods	304
14.7 Conclusion	306
Chapter 15: Planning for Disaster	309
15.1 Choosing Methods from Just One Source	310
15.2 Planning for Disaster	310
15.3 Initial Contacts with the Multi-Agency Group	310
15.4 Boundary Critique	311
15.5 Choosing Soft Systems Methodology	313
15.6 Soft Systems Methodology	316
15.7 The Process of Application	319
15.7.1 Exploring Disasters	319
15.7.2 Producing Rich Pictures	320
15.7.3 Identifying Relevant Systems	321
15.7.4 Exploring the Relevant Systems	322
15.7.5 Whole System Modelling	323

15.7.6 Conceptual Modelling	325
15.7.7 Creating an Action Plan	326
15.8 Learning Outcomes	327
15.9 Feedback on the Intervention	330
15.10 Conclusion	331
Chapter 16: Planning and Evaluating Diversion from Custody for Mentally Disordered Offenders	333
16.1 Diversion from Custody	334
16.2 The Project	335
16.3 Negotiating the Remit	337
16.4 Some Preliminary Boundary Critique	341
16.5 The Team-Building	342
16.6 The Operational Planning	345
16.6.1 Outputs from the Soft Systems Methodology	346
16.7 Designing the Evaluation Methods	347
16.8 Quantitative Methods	348
16.9 Qualitative Methods	351
16.9.1 Stakeholder Analysis	351
16.9.2 Interviews	351
16.9.3 Shadowing	353
16.9.4 Participant Observation	353
16.9.5 Documentary Research	354
16.9.6 Case Studies	354
16.10 Key Issues	354
16.11 The Strategic Planning	355
16.11.1 Critical Systems Heuristics	357
16.11.2 Interactive Planning	357
16.11.3 The Workshops	358
16.12 Findings	361
16.12.1 User Characteristics	361
16.12.2 Results of Final Interventions	362
16.12.3 The Management Structure	363
16.12.4 Multi-Agency Working	363
16.12.5 Results of the Strategic Planning	363
16.13 Outcomes	364
16.14 Conclusion	365
Chapter 17: Developing Services with Young People (Under 16) Missing from Home or Care	367
17.1 Young People on the Streets	367

17.2 First Contacts	369
17.3 Our Initial Proposal	370
17.4 An Overview of the Intervention	371
17.5 Establishing the Ground Rules	372
17.6 Phase One: Identifying Key Issues	373
17.6.1 Designing the Interviews	374
17.6.2 Conducting the Interviews	376
17.7 Phase Two: Evolving Stakeholder Goals	378
17.7.1 Designing the Workshops	378
17.7.2 Conducting the Workshops	382
17.7.3 The Multi-Agency Workshop	382
17.7.4 The Young People's Workshop	385
17.7.5 The Second Multi-Agency Workshop	387
17.8 Phase Three: Action Planning	389
17.8.1 The Final Multi-Agency Workshop	393
17.9 Stage Four: Dissemination	395
17.10 Reflections	395
17.11 Conclusion	396
Chapter 18: Looking to the Future	397
18.1 Further Issues to be Addressed	398
18.1.1 Systemic Intervention and Scientific Research	398
18.1.2 The Politics of Systemic Intervention	399
18.2 Start from Where You Are	401
References	403
Author Index	427
Subject Index	435