RC51 Walter Buckley Memoria Award 2018

The “Walter Buckley Memorial Award for Excellence in Presenting Sociocybernetics” 2018 is an award that encourages the improvement of oral paper presentations in conferences by giving a prize to the didactically best presentation in the RC51 sessions at a conference or at an RC51 conference.

RC51 on Sociocybernetics wants to give such a prize because Cybernetics is – following Norbert Wiener’s formulation – a science of communication and, as per Heinz von Foerster’s formulation of Second Order Cybernetics, a science of observing observers. Hence it makes every sense for RC51 on Sociocybernetics to self-referentially observe its own observers and try to promote and improve scientific communication.

The Nomination Committee at Toronto 2018 have ranked the following presentations for the nomination (in order of presentation):
1. Societal innovation in a systems perspective / Eva BUCHINGER
2. Language to trigger change: second-order intercultural conversations with urban youth of Maya descent / Ksenia SIDOROVA, Francia PENICHE PAVÍA, and Astrid Karina RIVERO PÉREZ
3. Sociocybernetics of corruption / Robert HODGE
4. Rethinking the collapse of reality to live for: from a perspective of second-order observation / Saburo AKAHORI

The presentation selected for the RC51 Walter Buckley Memoria Award 2018 was:

Language to trigger change: second-order intercultural conversations with urban youth of Maya descent
Ksenia SIDOROVA, Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán, Mexico; Francia PENICHE PAVÍA, Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán, Mexico and Astrid Karina RIVERO PÉREZ, Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán, Mexico

The paper presents an applied research project that looks into whether the Maya language can become an identity factor and not a mere epiphenomenon for the urban youth of Maya descent, but not Maya speakers, inhabitants of a marginal urban area in south-eastern Mexico, against the entropic tendency towards the Maya language loss in the urban environment. Our starting point is Maturana’s (1989, 1990) idea that through languaging and emotioning human worlds are built and maintained; our lives are intertwined in interactional networks, therefore we only exist as human beings through conversations we hold with other human beings. Firstly, we explore how the lifeways of the urban youth of Maya descent are constructed through communicational interactions within the family, including the intergenerational memory transmission, and with other members of their personal networks. The second step corresponds to the second–order intercultural conversations, whose participants (the young men and women and the researchers) reflect on the role of languaging and emotioning within the personal interactional networks in shaping their attitudes and representations of the Maya language and culture. These conversations are seen as potential triggers of changes in their attitudes and representations. We also maintain that for the changes to be sustainable, the rest of the local society, viewed as a cultural multiverse (Krotz, 2003, 2004), is to recognize Maya speakers as legitimate others (Maturana, 1990); therefore the non–Maya groups are also to engage, so that the structural coupling between different parts of the multiverse can be ensured. Our role as researchers, then, is not that of external observers, but of co–producers of the cultural multiverse, who through languaging and emotioning, participate in intercultural dialogues and seek to contribute to a broader acceptance and respect towards the minorized language and its speakers.

On behalf of the RC51 Board
Patricia E. Almaguer-Kalixto
Secretary