

Chapter 4

The Ecology of Social Practice in Language, Communication, and Constructing the Future

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ABSTRACT

This chapter covers some aspects unified by the author's concept of psychology of constructing the future as an ecosystemic approach to social practice. The ecology of the future is considered to be nurtured through most important areas of human life, such as language, communication and rhetorics, education and healthcare, organizational management, and leadership. The chapter also presents the "problem-making" approach as a practice of deliberate creation of useful problems in developmental processes. The authors come to a conclusion that those areas can be significantly amplified using a collaborative approach to constructing the shared future.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is based on the authors' model of psychology of constructing the future (Mikhalsky, 2011) that covers historical philosophical and psychological features of the attitudes towards their future and ways to model it. All living beings use certain ways of constructing the future, with varying success and awareness. This anticipation and constructing processes contribute not only to survival and adaptation, but also to improvement of abilities and effectiveness, for solving problems and creating goals, for activating the options of life and activity. Scientists had many ideas but not much systemic theories about basic mechanisms of future-construction and about where does the magical power of its use in practice come from. Standing on the shoulders of Ludwig Wittgenstein and Lev Vygotsky, Albert Korzhibsky and George Kelly, Jacque Derrida and Gregory Bateson, Joseph Nutten and Kenneth Gergen scientists and practitioners can now look from a wider perspective. This chapter covers some aspects of ecosystemic glance on our future, unified by the concept and model of "psychology of constructing the future".

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BACKGROUND

In 1957 Jean-Paul Sartre wrote: «The sense of an action and its value can be understood only in the perspective of a motion, that realizes the possibilities, and unveils that was given earlier. A man is a significant entity for himself and others, because one can not understand any of his actions without transcending the present, without explaining it through the future” (Sartre, 1957). Moreover, the reader should take into account not only the compliance of the environment, but also the active interaction with the environment, a kind of system response. As Jean Renoir wrote about his father, August, “He sculpted the crowd keeping his ideal in mind... The streets of our cities are filled with Renoirs: girls, children with eyes wide-opened and skin that does not repel the light” (Petrenko, 2005).

The image of the future has not only direct impact on the future, but also the retroaction: the environment can actively oppose (resist) because the ecosystem integrates a new image of the future (if it doesn't fit to the context of its metasystem), and also it tunes up the ecosystem aligning to some new qualities of the new order, or a new state.

One of the basic premises of the model of constructing the future on ecosystemic level is the assumption of equifinality and multifinality of systems. Equifinality is a dynamic characteristic of a system that enables its transition from different beginning states towards one common final state. Multifinality is an ability of a system to come to different ending states starting from the same positions and statuses. As the authors see the holistic image of the future as a possible state of a system (future psychic reality of an individual or a group), so a common formed image can lead systems to different states, and, vice versa, different images can, somehow, lead the identical systems to different states. Being put in different ecosystems or contexts, and sharing a common desired future, neighboring systems can arrive at highly various situations (final states), but the systems in different conditions can be led by different images of the future, but come to the same point (final state). An important systemic characteristic of the constructed future is called circular causality (changes in one of the parts of a system - for example, in the mood of one of the members, - can change the development of a whole system). The ecosystemic view implies also intersystemic causality.

Images of the future as systems are organized following some leading principles:

1. **Spatial-Temporal Organization of the Image of the Future:** The image of the future is related to the mental and real space and time, but those scales are “compressed” in the psychological image, thus forming certain connections and regularities of interaction in the nervous system. The authors can say that the mental image of the future is a compressed, but has the isomorphic structure (e.g.: a map) as the future space and time of functioning. The spatial and temporal characteristics of the image of the future contain constructed parameters that are realized in behavior in the presence of appropriate motivational and semantic formations and situational favors.
2. **Semantic and Attributive Organization of the Image of the Future:** Spatial organization provides an understanding not only of the actual physical space encoded in the image, but also of its semantic organization. The semantic organization of the image is individual, but it has general patterns and is cartographically represented in the cortex and can be recorded with fMRI (research by Alexander Huth conducted in Berkeley, 2012) (Huth et al., 2012). The temporal organization of the image of the future, respectively, contains information about the attributive features of objects in relation to time. As A. Seriy mentions, “a rigid and rigidly localized system of constructs does not allow one to sufficiently differentiate its past experience and limit life prospects” (Seriy, 2004).

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