

## The Concept of Sociatry Beyond Moreno - Designing and Crafting Societies that Value the Collective Good: What IAGP and EAGT Might Bring to the World!<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

We can take inspiration from the arts, poets, writers and musicians to tune our senses to each other. JL Moreno, a founder of IAGP, who together with his wife Zerka and others, developed Psychodrama, Sociometry and Group Psychotherapy, considered the intermediary parts of the self to be body, psyche and society. This article describes Sociatry, the study of the ways we interweave our co-existence, which can be measured through the instrument of sociometry. According to Moreno, we are born to the role of Creative Genius, which we can use to rouse the autonomic healing centre in each one of us. In this paper the author gives some examples of how this can be used and focuses on our connection with our biosphere, our zone of life on Earth. She asks how we can together, within all our networks, use our skills and knowledge to

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the best effect to address the fundamental questions for humanity concerning resilience - the capacity to live, persist and develop with changing conditions in a globally intertwined world of humans, societies and nature.



Fig. 1 Reconciliation work 50 years after the battle of Kohima

### **Being in Tune**

The session was to have started with a characteristic song of the Sámi, the nomadic people of northern Scandinavia, showing slides of the landscape, Ole sin Joik, which can be seen at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15HEXS11e7c&feature=youtube>.

The final image is of a man holding a rifle.

It signals something about the force of destruction and demarcation in the management of creative processes. A force which we need to be able to handle but which seems to repeatedly spin out of control, where psychological and physical violence take precedence over dialogue and the hard work of building and maintaining lasting relationships which can bear difficulties.

This presentation is about human beings living in relation to our environment. We can do well to listen to the wisdom of a people who are so closely connected to our basic living conditions and who see the signs of environmental change. The nomadic peoples of the world are often finely tuned to reading such non-verbal communications.



Fig. 2 Destruction and demarcation in the service of creative processes

### **Taking Inspiration**

We can take inspiration from the arts, poets, writers and musicians to tune our senses to each other and to our environment as through this poem, *From March '79*, by Swedish folk hero Tomas Tranströmer.

Tired of all who come with words, words but no language  
I went to the snow-covered island.  
The wild does not have words.  
The unwritten pages spread themselves out in all directions!  
I come across the marks of roe-deer's hooves in the snow.  
Language but no words.

Tranströmer, who sadly died in 2015, was a psychologist, poet and musician, friend of Robert Bly and the Syrian poet Adunis (Ali Ahmad Said Esber) who helped spread Tranströmer's fame in the Arab world, accompanying him on reading tours. This poem was shared when he received the Nobel prize in literature 2011. He suffered a stroke in 1990 that left him partially paralyzed and unable to speak. This did not prevent him from writing and publishing poetry through the early 2000s continuing to inspire and connect a nation to the world of nature and what could be called spiritual dimensions of integra-

tion. This latter may be what Daniel Siegel, American pioneer in the field of interpersonal neurobiology, refers to as Transpirational Integration “in which people begin to feel a different connection both to themselves and the world beyond their previously skin-defined sense of self”.

### **Sociatry**

Moreno considered the intermediary parts of the self to be body, psyche and society. From the moment we are born, in every moment, we stand between life and death. Death can be final or a kind of living death – the fear of being vital. To be or not to be! What connects a society together is the weave of infinite sociometric choices each of us are constantly making throughout our daily lives. Each of us plays a significant role in building a healthier global society.

### **Creative Genius**

Moreno told us that we are each the therapeutic agent of the other, and that we are born to the role of Creative Genius. He would walk around in a group and say, “Hello I’m Doctor. I’m a Creative Genius”, and ask you to say the same back! He called all his patients Doctor, as he aimed to call forth the highest level of functioning in each one. He roused what Zerka Moreno later referred to as the autonomic healing centre in each one of us. A world in which each of us is interacting from our most highly functioning self must be a better world don’t you think? You could just try on the thought and feeling, “Hello I’m Doctor and I’m a Creative Genius” to see how that feels. Take five minutes and greet your neighbour that way and feel the feeling. You might need to explain a bit what you’re doing!

#### **It’s the Dream**

It’s the dream we carry in secret  
that something miraculous will happen  
that it must happen --  
that time will open  
that the heart will open  
that doors will open  
that the mountains will open  
that springs will gush --  
that the dream will open

that one morning we will glide into  
some harbour we didn't know was there.

*Olav H Hauge translated from Norwegian by Robin Fulton*

### **Citizens of the World**

Moreno wanted to empower us as citizens to take responsibility for our world. His hypothesis was, "A truly therapeutic procedure cannot have less of an objective than the whole of mankind". At its height this means being totally present and engaged in creative and spontaneous relationship with 'the other'. His philosophy was built on four pillars—time, space, reality and the cosmos. He emphasised "the importance of living one's truth in action, the validity of subjective reality, the premise of living a here-and-now encounter between individuals (including client and therapist) and a deep egalitarianism".<sup>2</sup>

#### **Time**

In psychotherapy he asked us to focus on what we now refer to as a dual awareness of there-and-then, past or future, in the here-and-now. To speak on the psychodrama stage in the present moment, of past or future events, as though they are happening now, being an actor (one who enacts one's own life) rather than using the distancing mechanism of describing events being a narrator of one's life. He emphasised the dynamics of the moment, the warming up to the moment, in preparation for the encounter between people who are maximally present.

#### **Space**

In psychodrama the stage represents a person's life space and the therapeutic space is explored in a particular moment. We insist on a description, a delineation and concretisation of the people and objects in it and their distance in relationship to one another. In life we are involved in many processes simultaneously and this might prevent us from being able to explore in depth a particular aspect. On stage a person can bring just that which he or she wants to reflect upon now, leaving other aspects aside for the moment to be reintegrated at the closure of the work.

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<sup>2</sup> Fox, J., Ed., (1987). *The Essential Moreno: Writings on Psychodrama, Group Method, and Spontaneity*. New York: Springer.

### **Reality**

When a person describes their life situation, it is what Moreno saw as a kind of reduced reality, not a genuine dialogue. By having a person show, rather than describe the events in their mind's eye, the therapist facilitates the concretisation of intangible, invisible dimensions of a person's intra- and extra-psychic life in what Moreno called surplus reality. This enables one to explore the events that have not, cannot or will not happen, but which are influencing a person's life in just as real a way as events, which have happened or will happen. Role reversal is one of the techniques of surplus reality - being able to see oneself through the eyes of another.

### **Cosmos**

Moreno considered that Freud emphasized the individual psyche, suggesting that the group was an epiphenomenon, whilst Marx emphasised the concept of social man and socio-economics, as if that were all there was in the world. Moreno described the larger world beyond the psychodynamics and sociodynamics of human society - what he termed cosmodynamics. Man is a cosmic man, not only a social man or an individual man. Life is about being totally engaged both in relation to self and to 'the other'. He framed that we are in an active relationship to everything within our environment - that is our society, our world, our biosphere, our universe.

I name these four pillars to be clear that a therapeutic procedure is not just a collection of nine-to-five techniques to be cut and pasted into life, but is a way of relating, which is rooted in a sense of connectedness to all that is. You are a Cosmic man or woman and bear responsibility for what you co-create.

Figure 1 exemplifies an intense engagement in the facilitation of social change drawn in 1932 by O. and L. Osi, under the supervision of JL Moreno and described by Moreno in his book, *Who Shall Survive*.

This is a map noting the lines of connection (Moreno called it tele - a term used to describe a feeling of individuals into one another, a kind of two-way empathy - the cement that holds groups together) between 435 inhabitants. The large circles are houses. The small circles are individuals. Each of the 4,350 lines connect two individuals. The chart portrays the houses in which they actually live and the houses in which they would like to live.

### **Sociometry**

This is the study of the actual psychological structure of human society consisting of complex inter-personal patterns studied by quantitative and qualitative procedures. The affinities of individuals for one another in the various

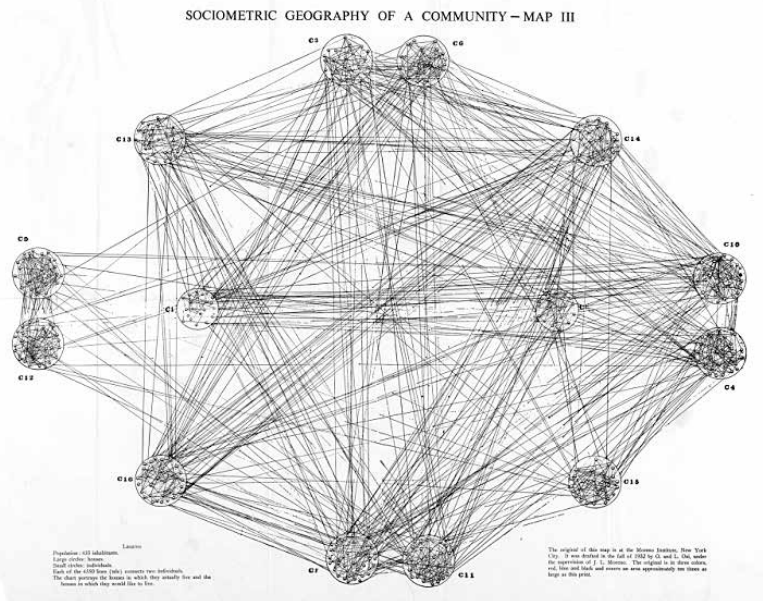


Fig. 3 The illustration Sociometric Geography of a Community—Map III

groups to which they belong can be made apparent e.g. through sociometric testing.

### **Sociatry is Applied Sociometry**

#### **What is Sociometric choice?**

Based on a certain stated criterion that the group decides and agrees upon, the conductor of the research asks:

- who do you choose most positively based on this criterion?
- who do you least choose based on this criterion?
- who do you react neutrally toward based on this criterion?

By charting this we can see the cooperative state of the group. Of course exploring this requires a skilled sociometrist since the dynamics which the procedure elicits can otherwise be damaging to participants.

### **Integration**

As I mentioned earlier Moreno considered the intermediary parts of the self to be body, psyche and society. Key to well-being of a system—an individual, family, organisation or society—are the concepts of diversity, differentiation, linkage and integration. All separate parts remain different and intact but are linked. Integration is not fusion. The “catharsis of integration” is a state achieved when the parts of self are linked, consciously, emotionally and physically through experiencing events—past, present or future—with new insight in relation to the present context.

Recently a Swedish photographer, Caroline Tönnies, in connection with a planned exhibition, asked me these two questions:

How do I understand my power?

Where and how do I find courage?

She asked me to answer each question in a very few sentences. It is an impossible task but what it did was to kick-start a journeying thought process. If we are to be resilient, active, cohesive world citizens, we need to ask ourselves these questions and to keep searching and asking again and again. Well-being and harmony are fresh products. So far I answered this way:

### **How I understand my power?**

We live between life and death. I was born, just after World War II, healthy and strong, both loved and hated, and soon became aware that power has many faces. As both creator and created I am continuously revitalized in my context through my choices to promote creativity and spontaneity and my selected principles and values. The small degree of power I have can be given or taken away from me. I use my power to promote the life-giving force of all. I am aware that my power can only be orchestrated in concert with others.

### **Where and how I find courage?**

I am grateful to everyone who has ‘en-couraged’ me throughout my life and those who have worked-through conflicts with me, as they have *given* me courage. I *take* courage when I struggle against injustices and destructive forces. Such threaten the very sense of existence.

I engage in my life and other’s lives, and am empowered by the company of nature—a small flower that grows despite unpromising circumstances reminds me of what I need to do.

I’d love to hear how all of you would answer these questions!



## **Japanese/British Experience—WWII—Masao and Graham**

Masao Hirakubo and my father, Graham Bradshaw, met in the mid-1980s, 50 years after WWII to discuss ways of making reconciliation between two countries that had been at war. Masao invited my father as part of a group of ten veterans to visit Japan to promote reconciliation. The British would then host a return visit of ten Japanese veterans to the UK.

Both men had been involved in the Battle of Kohima in North East India between April and June 1944. They both were part of the renowned Battle of the Tennis Court where perhaps the most bitter fighting of the whole Burma campaign took place. The fighting was harsh and the cost was severe for both sides. It can be regarded as one of the turning points of WWII.

Both agreed that they had just been young men serving their countries as required. There was no personal enmity between them, just a pervasive jarring tone running through life's music.

## **Journey of Reconciliation**

Although they could agree that they had just been young men serving their countries as required, there was a difficulty for ex-servicemen on both sides to meet 'the enemy'. It was hard in a different way for those who hadn't been involved in active combat but who had lost their dear ones through the war. To befriend the enemy was tantamount to betraying the dead. It demanded a great deal of soul searching. During this phase I planned with my father ways of facilitating dialogue and using psychodrama to create a path leading to the exchange meetings between the veterans.

One meeting in this initial phase entailed Masao and Graham visiting a man who had been ensconced in a London psychiatric hospital since the war. He had experienced nightmares every night for 50 years. During the meeting he was able to pour out his torturous war experiences at the hands of Masao's countrymen and his pain. Masao, with Grahams support, listened respectfully without interrupting. After several hours, Masao stood up and unreservedly personally apologised, asking forgiveness for the terrible things the man had experienced. Then they left.

Several days later my father received a letter from the man saying how relieved he had felt after the visit. For the first time since the war he could sleep peacefully and let go of the hate and the terror. He could engage in life in a new way.

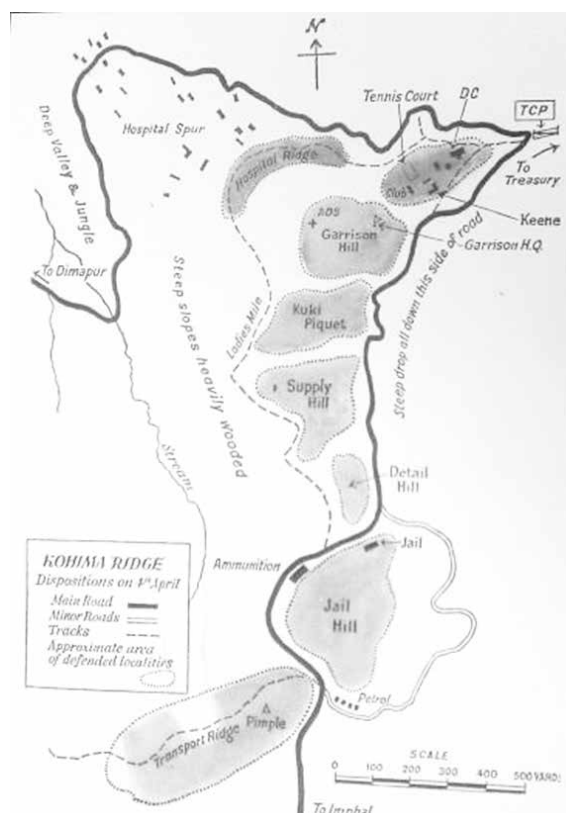


Fig. 4 Map of Kohima Ridge

There were two group exchange visits of ten British ex-servicemen to Japan and two visits of ten Japanese ex-servicemen to UK sponsored by the GB. Sasakawa Foundation. My father visited in 1990 and told me these older men in their 70s and 80s were received at the Sasakawa Hall in Tokyo by hundreds of young people. Each man told his story and explained why they wanted to reconcile with ‘the enemy’. The audience were screaming and applauding as though they were rock stars. Then the men shook hands and exchanged toys with each other so that when they came home the grandchildren could shake hands and through the toys become friends.

A few years later at my father’s funeral I became aware of an unfamiliar presence by my left side. I looked to see who it was. It was Masao Hirakubo quietly and unassumingly paying his last respects to his valued friend—offering his support in a tender moment.

### **Nelson Mandela—Invictus—Embracing the Enemy**

In 2014, Assie Gildenhuys and his colleagues at the Pretoria University most generously hosted the 1<sup>st</sup> IAGP South African Conference/the 2<sup>nd</sup> IAGP African Regional Conference and the accompanying IAGP Board Meeting. Experiencing a post-apartheid South Africa moved me deeply. This nation in transition had, and has, so much to struggle with in becoming a more integrated society, and is showing us how difficult that is to achieve. The courageous story told by Albie Sachs leading to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and that of Nelson Mandela as described in the film *Invictus* further endorsed my belief that to promote social integration it is absolutely necessary to find a way to embrace the enemy. There is no way to build a healthy society or organisation by 'sticking to your own kind'.

We can only aim toward a harmonious societal state, as it is a continuous work. What touched me most from the poem, which is said to have inspired Mandela during his 27-year imprisonment, and eventually enabled him to go out to head the transformational process toward a rainbow nation, were the lines:

I thank whatever gods may be/ for my unconquerable soul. ...  
I am the master of my fate/ I am the captain of my soul.

Invictus

Out of the night that covers me,  
    Black as the pit from pole to pole,  
I thank whatever gods may be  
    For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance  
    I have not winced nor cried aloud.  
Under the bludgeonings of chance  
    My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears  
    Looms but the Horror of the shade,  
And yet the menace of the years  
    Finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishments the scroll,  
I am the master of my fate,  
I am the captain of my soul.

*William Ernest Henley*

### **We Need to Use our Systems Thinking**

We are strongly dependent on a healthy and functioning planet and biosphere for our own development. Nature is not a sector of our society, it's a prerequisite for it. Surrounding society is the biosphere, that thin layer of the earth and the atmosphere where life is possible—our ultimate ecosystem. It can also be termed as the zone of life on Earth. We humans do not exist outside the biosphere, we're part of it. We are dependent on the biosphere and our actions—with their outsized scope and speed—have an impact on the planet's capacity to sustain us. “We have to reconnect with our planet..... There is no business to be done on a dead planet.”



Fig. 5 From the exhibition ‘Reflections about man and the biosphere’; photographer Lars Hall and leading scientist and pioneer in research on social-ecological systems, resilience thinking and sustainability science, Carl Folke

Lars Hall and Carl Folke point to these **Fundamental** questions for humanity: poverty, security, democracy, power, health, human rights, equality, peace, resting on the life-maintaining power and resilience of the biosphere. The biosphere provides the basic conditions for maintaining the dignity of human relationships. Their work reflects resilience - the capacity to live, persist and develop with changing conditions in a globally intertwined world of humans, societies and nature.

### **So what can one human being achieve?**

How can we together in IAGP, EAGT, and within all our networks, use our skills and knowledge to the best effect to address these questions? JL Moreno and SH Foulkes together with others founded IAGP from a shared vision that, with our group psychotherapy and group process methods, we could make significant changes in the world by meeting 'the other'. We are citizens of the world.

Finally, some music for you again—a song to commemorate the hope and resilience that exists within us all—*Imagine* touched by other cultures and sung by Gagan Singh and friends available on: <https://www.facebook.com/gagan.singh.56863/videos/10156510824750727/>

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