

Ludwig von Bertalanffy, Social Systems and Sense-Making

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Contents

1. Systems in general

1.1. Methodology

1.2. Ontology

1.3. Ethics

2. Social (complex) systems

2.1. Metasystem transition

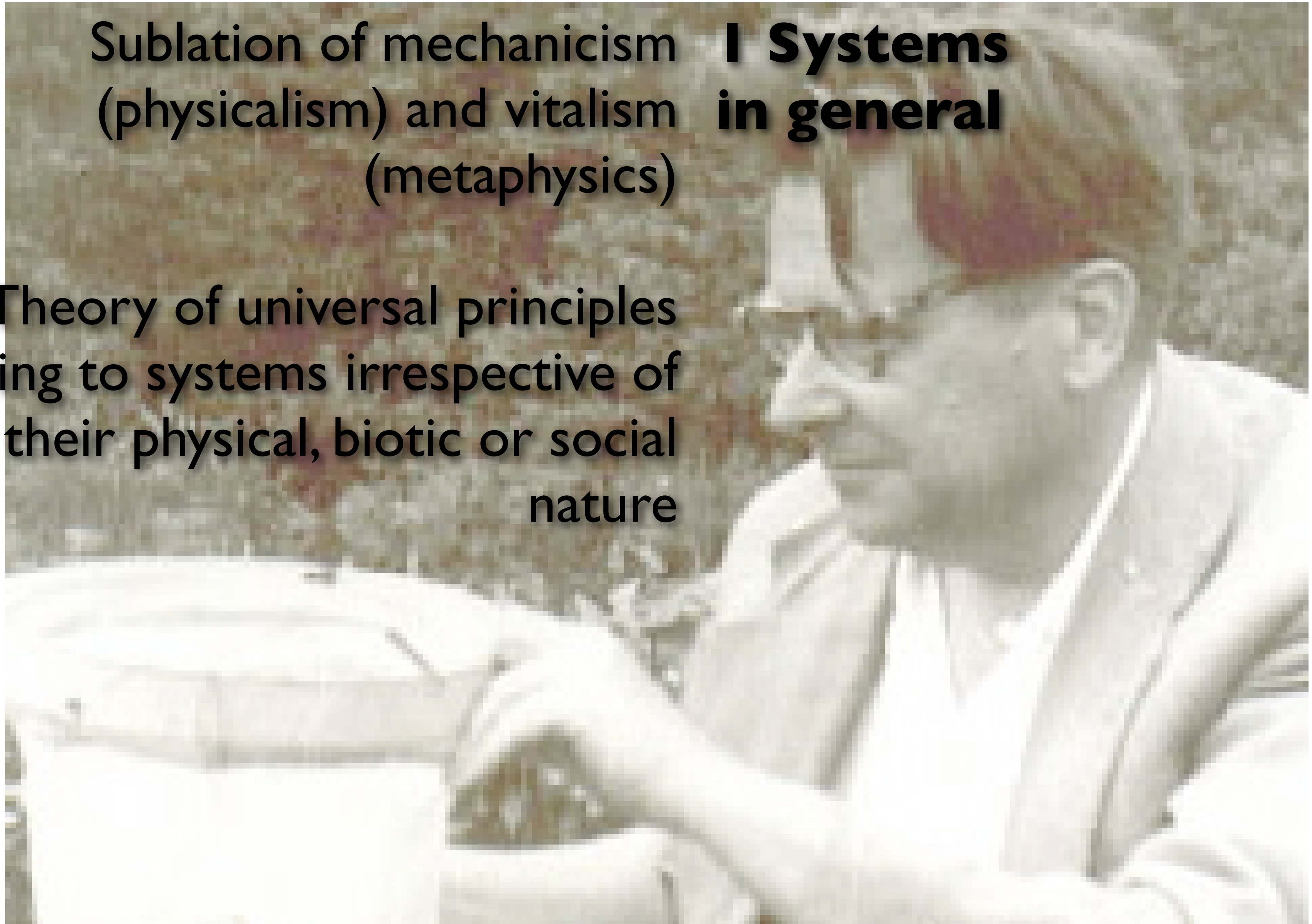
2.2. Suprasystem hierarchy

3. Information generation in community-building

Sublation of mechanicism
(physicalism) and vitalism
(metaphysics)

I Systems in general

Theory of universal principles
applying to systems irrespective of
their physical, biotic or social
nature



I.I Methodology:

I Systems in general

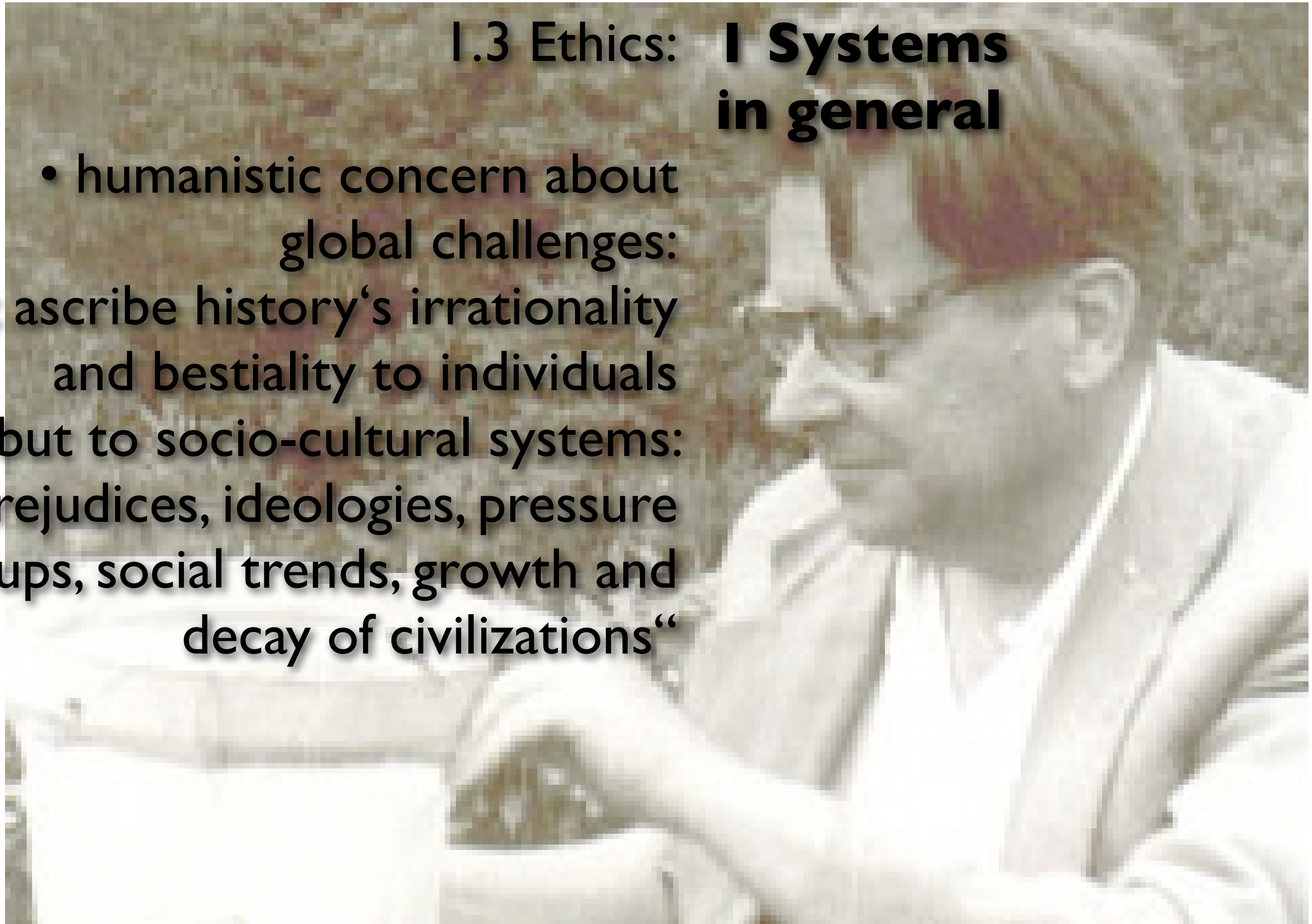
- either mathematical terms or ordinary language
- antireductionism:
neither Physicalism nor Biologism
- „Perspectivism“:
models mirror only certain traits
of reality
(cognition based upon corporeal
adaptations in evolution)

I.2 Ontology: I Systems in general

- „Principle of Progressive Organisation“ („Anamorphosis“):
differentiation and integration
- *ex omnibus partibus relucet totum*
(Nicholas of Cusa):
maintenance of the organisation
through change of components
(Downward Causation)
- superposition of many levels

I.3 Ethics: **I Systems in general**

- humanistic concern about global challenges:
not ascribe history's irrationality and bestiality to individuals but to socio-cultural systems:
„prejudices, ideologies, pressure groups, social trends, growth and decay of civilizations“



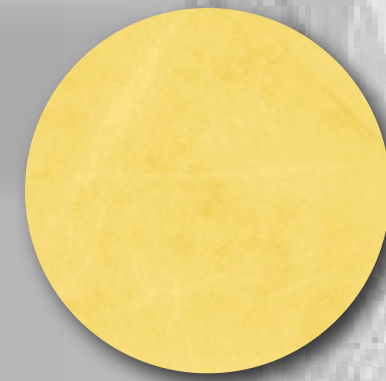
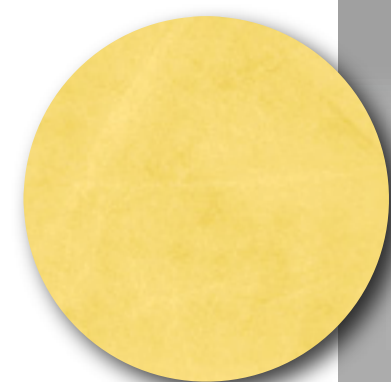
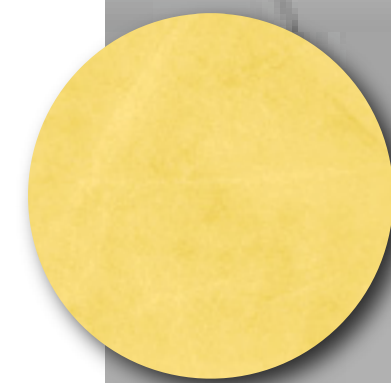
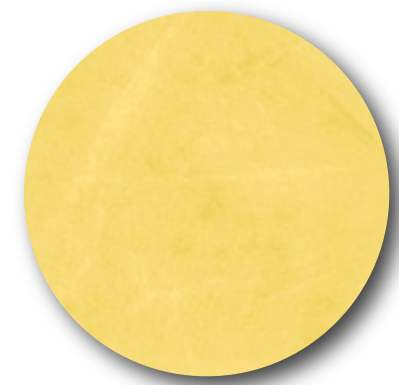
Self-organisation
= actors organise themselves into
a social system
that, in turn, organises itself
by making the actors
maintain the social system

**2 Social (complex)
systems**



2.1 Metasystem transition (dynamics): phase I – individual systems (proto-elements)

2 Social (complex) systems

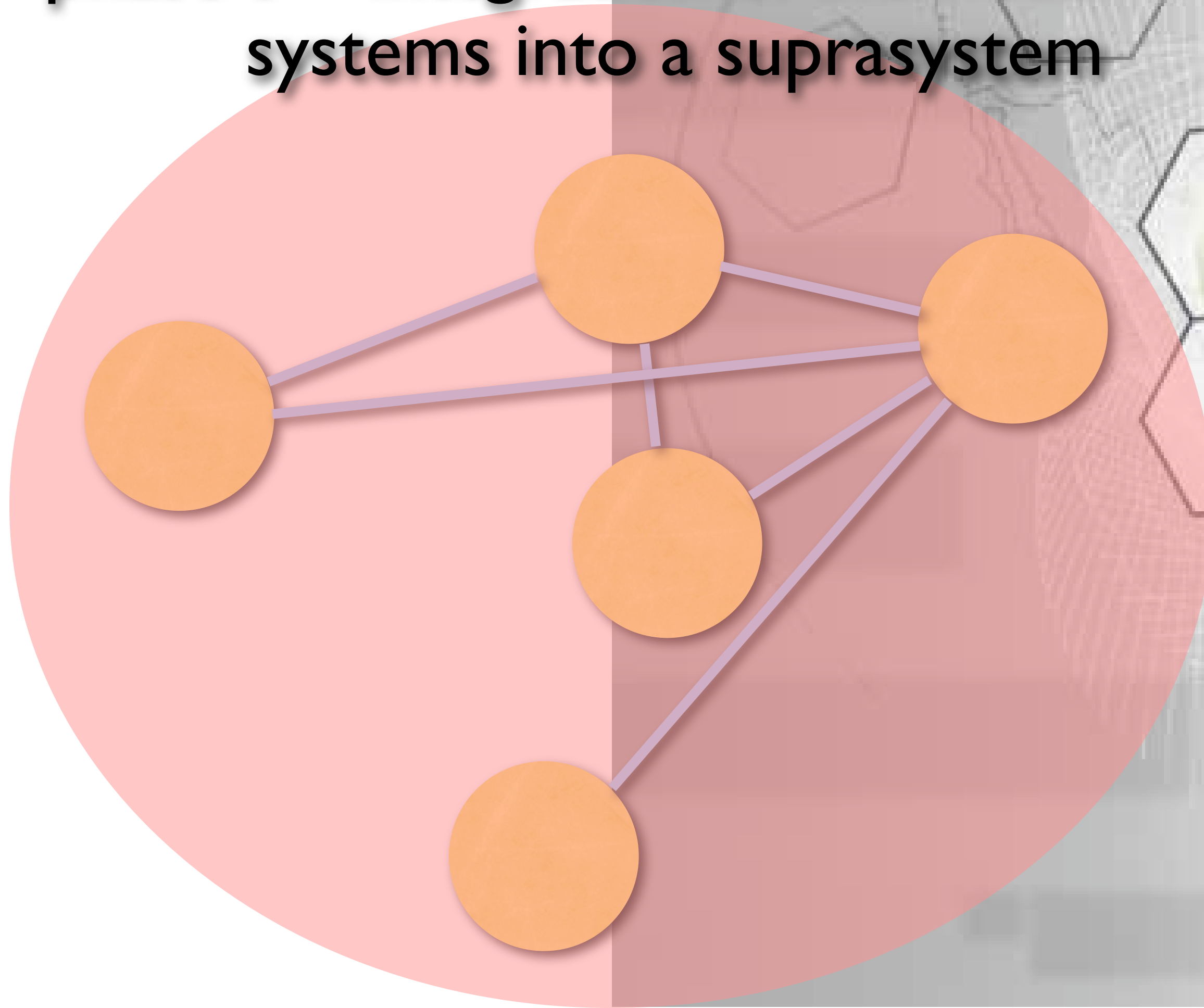


2.1 Metasystem transition (dynamics): phase 2 – interaction of individual systems (proto-elements)

2 Social (complex) systems

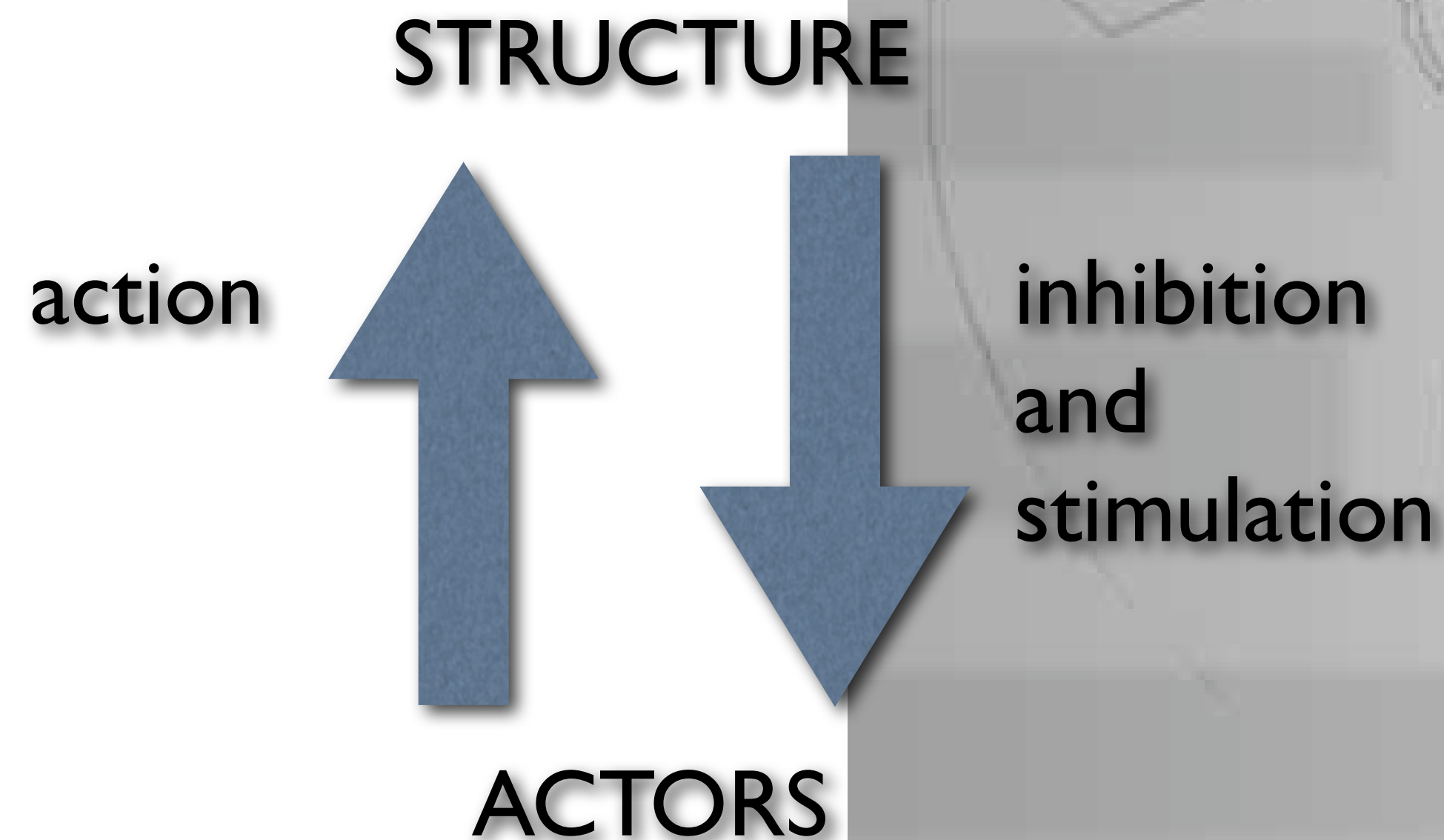


2.1 Metasystem transition
(dynamics): **2 Social (complex) systems**
phase 3 – integration of individual
systems into a suprasystem



2.2 Suprasystem hierarchy (architecture): **2 Social (complex) systems**

interplay of a macro- and a micro-level



Information = relation in which
(1) a difference
(object)
(2) makes a difference to
(gains meaning for)
(3) somebody
(individual or collective actor)
by whom this relation is set up

3 Information generation in community-building



Sense = meaning
that connects individual meanings
(constructed by individual actors)
through collective meanings
(constructed by collective actors
through the co-construction done
by individual actors)

3 Information generation in community-building



Cooperative sense-making:
consensualisation regarding
rules (values, norms), regularities,
resources

3 Information generation in community-building

producing sense

sense

selection

collective
social
actor

quorum
of
individuals

making use of sense
stabilisation (retention)

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