



Relating Systems Thinking and Design
2021 Symposium
University of Brighton, Brighton, UK,
October 13-16, 2022

A Cybernetic Picnic

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What could be better than a picnic to kick off RSD 11? Come join us for a cybernetic picnic on the wonder.me platform, where we dream the dream of a dream in virtual lands.

Picnic blankets have been prepared for you. There is a blanket with otters, a Bali blanket, a West Coast blanket, an Ecology of Mind blanket, and more. Choose yours! Other people will join.

Be advised, entering the virtual lands is not entirely free. There is one obstruction. You have to bring with your virtual self two virtual cybernetic objects. To link to the Gregory Bateson focus theme at RSD 11, we suggest you bring 'Batesonian cybernetic objects.' Choose wisely.

KEYWORDS: art, play, systems, cybernetics

RSD TOPIC(S): Methods & Methodology, Socioecological Design, Sociotechnical Systems.

Introduction

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Batesonian cybernetic objects are objects that are important for what we could call a Batesonian approach to cybernetics. They might be related to a story, an anecdote or an idea that describes Bateson's cybernetics and can be contextually re-interpreted during the picnic sessions.

Here are some examples of objects of historical significance linked to Bateson. You can choose these, or come with your own.

- **Bateson's camera**, which is certainly not just a camera. It sees certain things in certain ways. There is agency inscribed in the object. The camera might feel most comfortable on the picnic blanket with otters and a river view.
- **Balinese Painting** (or any other work of art) from the vast collection of artworks from Bali that Meads and Bateson created ([Vickers et al., N.D.](#)). These works of art, one could say, served Bateson to rethink the ecologies of communities.
- **A Witch's Mask** marking supernatural transformation in performative action, and leading to Gregory Bateson's observations of autocosmic play interpreted as identity performance.

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Each of these objects is more than an object. It is the initiation of a new way of seeing, feeling, touching, observing – in short, being. We would love it if you brought your own Batesonian objects, but if you are new to cybernetics, do not worry, choose two of the objects from the list above.

During the picnic we will listen to each object's story, ask how the objects act or perform. We will ask how this way of acting can possibly be translated into new objects.

In case this is confusing, please note that virtual lands do not require physical objects. Stories of objects will do!

You can view the following link for news and updates

<https://ta.pubpub.org/pub/picnic-at-rsd-11>.

At the Picnic

At the picnic, you will meet other people. You can choose a picnic blanket and meet friends or people you have never seen before. Be prepared to tell the stories of your objects.

You will weave your objects and your stories into other objects and stories to make new objects, new uses, and new ways of being.

We are looking forward to this Cybernetic Picnic.

Technicalities

A Cybernetic Picnic will take place on the wonder.me platform. Unfortunately, wonder will not run on a tablet or phone. Participants will need to have either the edge or google chrome browser installed on a computer. No other browser will work. No other software is needed. The computer should have a camera, a microphone, and audio output.

Participants will be asked to create an account when they connect to the wonder.me platform for the first time. They will also be

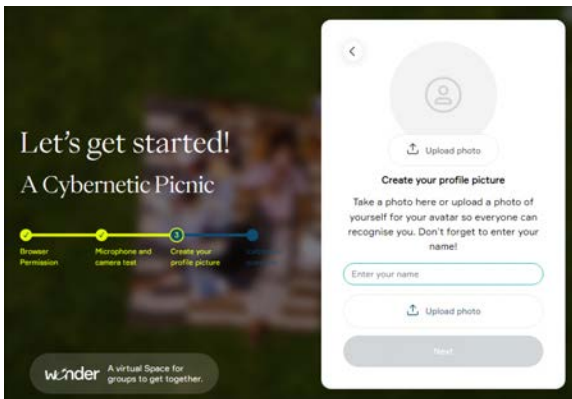
asked to provide an initial very short description of their cybernetic objects, a maximum of 40 characters.

[Here is a brief video explaining how the wonder.me platform works.](#)

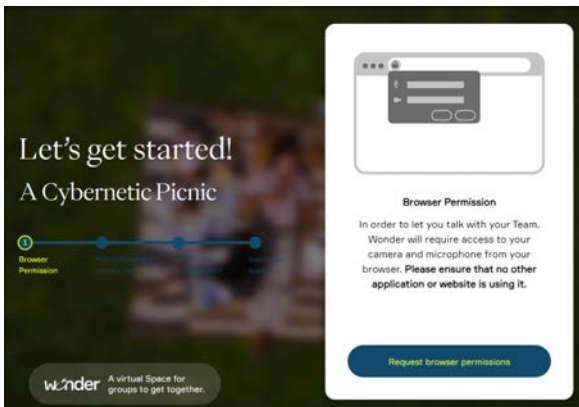
Instructions for all Participants

1. Getting Ready | 2 minutes

- Remember that only **Edge** or **Chrome** browsers will work for the [wonder.me](https://www.wonder.me) platform. The Picnic is here: <https://www.wonder.me/r?id=069c3963-0b18-47ce-bdb8-f57c2e6adc61>.
- You will be asked to create an account when you connect to the wonder.me platform for the first time.

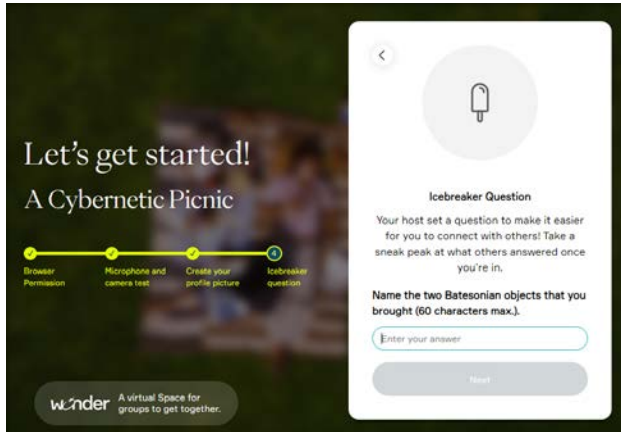


- When you log in, you will need to give permission to the browser to use your microphone and camera.



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- A screen prompt will ask you to provide an initial very short description of the two cybernetic objects, with a maximum of 40 characters.



2. Explore the Wonder Interface | 3 minutes

- Explore the platform (move your avatar between the different blankets using the mouse/trackpad or the arrow keys)
- Find the chat (individual chat, circles/group chat, global chat)
- Explore zooming in and zooming out the Picnic environment via the middle mouse button or the plus and minus signs on the left of the screen, find your blanket – you have free choice.

3. Get into a Communication Circle and Meet your Blanket Mates | ca. 3 minutes

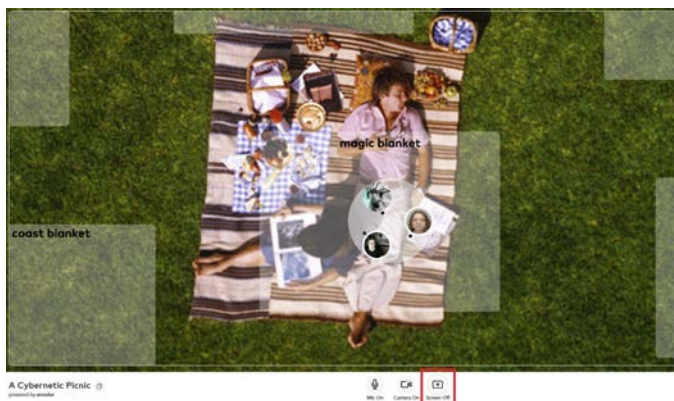
- Move your avatar close to other participants to create a circle of communication. You can do this by using the arrow keys or by clicking on the desired destination and keeping the mouse/trackpad button pressed.
- A blanket can have several circles of communication but we recommend that all participants be in the same circle.
- Once you are in the same circle of communication (defined by participants proximity) the discussion tools will appear and

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you will be able to see, hear and chat with all the participants in the circle.



- In the circle, you can chat, share screens, speak to each other, and see each other on video.

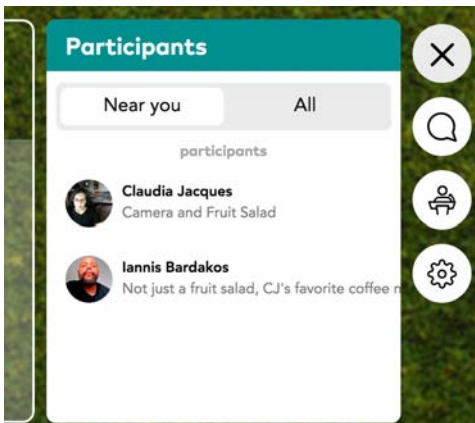
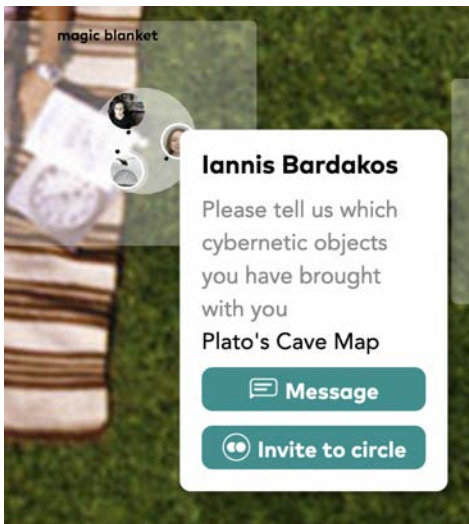


4. In Your Communication Circle | 7 minutes

- With your circle mates choose a way to document your conversations, the documentation format and application: for example, note-taking in a text editor; video recording, sound bites, presentation, illustration, etc.

5. Cybernetic Conversations with your Circle Mates | 60 minutes

- Describe how and why your objects are cybernetic objects and why you have chosen to come to this blanket.
- As a group, you can define the characteristics of your chosen blanket.
- Note that you can see the two cybernetic objects that each participant is bringing to the picnic by placing the cursor over the participant's circle. You can also click on participants to see all the participants in your communication circle and blanket.



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- Stitch and transition your cybernetic objects' stories to create one collaborative cybernetic object to represent your blanket.
- Make sure to document your conversations. This can be done in writing, video, sound bites, presentation, illustrations, etc. Each circle will be asked to present the collaborative cybernetic object in the next step.
- Choose one or two circle mates to present your circle's collaborative cybernetic object and its story.

6. Cybernetic Conversations with All Mates | 45 minutes:

- Each circle's presenters present their circle's collaborative cybernetic object (time will be defined once we know how many circles are in the cybernetic picnic conversation).
- Presenters need to be prepared to explain and defend the relevance of their final cybernetic object.

References

Vickers, A., Worsley, P., & Campbell, S. (Eds.). (N.D.N.D.). *The Virtual Museum of Balinese Painting: Bateson and Mead Collection*. The University of Sydney. <https://balipaintings.org>