

The Nature of Information

While we understand a great deal about material ecosystems, and are now including entropy and energy flows in our equations, we've barely applied understandings of ecology to the physical, social and economic transformations being wrought by the rapid, consumer-driven developments of computing and communications technologies, by our becoming an increasingly networked 'society of mind', and by the complex impacts of evermore noise to signal in our lives.

Information is not just data or bits. It is not simply a useful technical resource; a commodity that can be sent and received, bought and sold, or regulated. Information must also be considered as patterns of perception, genetic expression, cognitive relationships and differences. Like water irrigating our fields and yields, the flow of information determines the course of social evolution.

The information environment, the flow of information, and the sensory and communicative effects of information, have to date not been included in most whole-systems ecological understandings or applications. This is a major omission that will have evermore troubling consequences as local-global societies tune into, learn, invest, develop, consume, exchange, manipulate, pollute and live in an evermore dynamically complex information environment.

That we do not yet fully comprehend what information is, however, is not critically important. What is important to understand is that information, as a fundamental constituent of all reality, along with matter and energy, must be included in our sense of nature, in our development of technologies, in our determination of values and rights, and in best ecologically intended actions.

Will artists, scientists, sensate pathfinders and contemporary tricksters lead the charge in a real Information Revolution? As always, some are already taking opportunities to set examples, create models and express simple truths. Amid life's delicately complex unknowns, urgencies, risks and compromises, creative intelligence, inspiration and caring responsibility must be a greater part of the equation.

Arts & Sciences: Telluride 2024 intends to offer an ecological understanding of information, and of differences that may make a difference, by providing inspiring exchanges, in town and online, with invited practitioners who are working and playing in the arts, in the sciences and in new ways, to explore and address primary issues, concerns and opportunities facing our societies, our livelihoods and our lives today.

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