

My reaction, like a lot of the class's when Rob said we were going to have to connect Smil and Nora Bateson was nervousness. Two seemingly different characters with a wide range of ideas seemed hard at first. In the back of my mind, I was thinking about this topic over the weekend and it finally hit me by analyzing my own thoughts. I was looking at some of the simplest things I used and tried to determine the complexity of that product or thing regarding energy. What amount of energy did it take for me to have that thing readily available to me in that moment? Complexity in energy is how I will connect Smil and Bateson.

While Bateson spent a lot of time talking about the complexity of our own identity, I think the same can be done with energy. If you look at everything you use, energy is the result of that product. Energy helped make and deliver it. Smil talks about the energy budget and how humans need to be aware that we will run out of certain forms of energy someday. By taking a system's approach and analyzing the complexity of energy in everything we use, people may begin to realize just how reliant we are on things like fossil fuels. With this new-found realization, maybe people will be more apt to change their habits.

Taking something as simple as the hot chocolate I had while writing this journal response, one realizes how complex getting some simple chocolate powder to the consumer really is in terms of energy. The numerous inter-relationships and inter-dependencies between the product and energy are amazing. To begin, growing the cacao is made possible through energy from the sun. It is then harvested by humans who get their energy from the food they eat, a completely other chain of energy events. The cacao bean is then made into chocolate in a process that most likely takes electrical energy. The chocolate needs to come from other parts of the world relying on fuel to power the modes of transportation it takes. Several moving and storing processes along the way consume energy, either by the physical movement of the product, or the storing in facilities that consume energy as well. When I finally make it in my home, I need to heat the water which takes a large amount of energy to get to me and become heated as well. I then enjoy my warm cup of hot coco and think about the process it took and the energy consumed in getting it to me.

While it would be exhausting to break down all our personal consumption items, it is important to acknowledge. As Nora mentioned, growing up a systems thinker, it is hard if not impossible for her not to do this. Everything we interact with and use has an energy story associated with it. While everything is eventually traced back to the sun, there are certain modes of energy that are being depleted at any alarming rate. Nora's systems approach to complexity can help us to inform and educate people on how much energy even the simplest things in life take. We live in a society that is so reliant on energy. Nora said that most problems in the world are consequences of previous solutions. This is because they were not considered with enough complexity. Without a change in our energy production sources, life as we know it will be in jeopardy. System's thinking can be a depressing thing, but a necessary thing. We cannot go on avoiding the problem. Through systems thinking we may find that something little that connects the pieces. These entry/leverage points will change society for the better.