Create a System *From Scratch!*

By this point, you should be familiar with the inner workings of *Social Systems* and their *Codes.* A fun exercise is to try designing *your own* social system!

As you do so, consider the following: has your perspective on social systems changed? Do they seem more, or less, real?

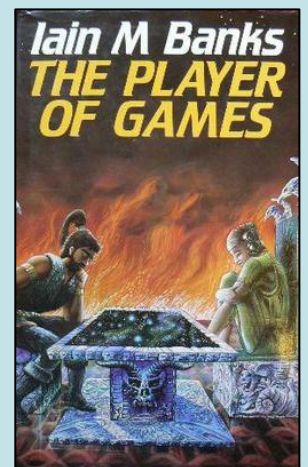Designing a social system is much easier than it looks. You effectively need four things:

(1) **A Purpose or Function.** What is the social system meant to achieve?

(2) **A Code:** what information needs to be sorted, organised, and coded to achieve this function?

(3) **An Algorithm:** how do you work out how the code is applied? How do coded objects interact with one another?

(4) **Multi-Code Links:** how does your social system interact with other systems? Is it connected to the economy? To the legal system?

Example 1: The Universal Board Game Azad

In Iain M Banks's '*The Player of Games'* an entire society is structured based on performance in a board game called 'Azad.' Its function? To determine who is at the top and bottom of society.

Your job, social status, legal position, all turned on your ability to **win** or **lose** at Azad. Its algorithm, and key to one's fate, lay in the game rules.

In the novel, the rules are not fully explained. Nonetheless, Banks suggests they are designed to *acculturate* you to the way of thinking of the society.

Iain M Banks — THE PLAYER OF GAMES

When you design the social system, have fun considering all the different connections it could make. Play around with using systems-language when describing how your code and algorithm work.

One of the magic things about social systems is that they can sanitise anything. Further, their codes are seductive, and can begin to enter everyday language and thought…

Example 2: 'Lob'

This is another semi-fictional social system. The purpose of Lob is to allocate organs. Its basic code is 'Fit' and 'Unfit.' Those who are 'Fit' receive Organs (linking Lob to the 'Organ Production System'); those who are 'Unfit' do not. The algorithm is found in the 'Fitness Criteria' guidelines: these incorporate data about health (linking to the 'Health System'), but have other requirements. These include IQ, 'Social Contribution', criminal convictions, and 'Political Affiliation.'

The system is run by Organ Allocation Experts, and works very efficiently. Choosing who you date is often a matter of someone's Lob score, and nicknames are given to those with low scores ('Lowlobs'). Naturally, employers take Lob Scores into account when hiring.

What System Will You Design?