



*In the dialogue business...for real* -Aleco Christakis

This is an abbreviated version of eBuzz, as Aleco and I are taking care of the myriad details getting ready for the 7<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the International Society for the Systems Sciences (ISSS) that is being held in Crete on July 6 – 11. The contents of this issue are:

- Description of the conference
- Description of four co-laboratories that will be held in Crete
- An invitation to explore having a co-laboratory with your organization
- Notices for three upcoming publications

## **Crete 2003**

### **PROGRAM**

**July 6<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup>, 2003**

**Creta Maris Conference Center  
Hersonissos, Crete**

**47th Annual Conference of the  
International Society for the Systems Sciences (ISSS)**



**Conscious Evolution of Humanity:  
Using Systems Thinking  
To Construct *Agoras* of the Global Village**

**Alexander N. Christakis, Ph.D.**

**President and Co-Chair**

**Kenneth C. Bausch, Ph.D.  
Co-Chair**

Among the Special Integration Groups at this conference the following deal with issues of special interest to friends of participative democracy.

- Applied Systems and Development
- Evolutionary Development
- General Evolution Research Group
- Organizational Transformation and Social Change
- Participatory Design and Planning
- Syntegration Group on the Future of ISSS
- Four Co-Laboratories of Democracy (described below)

## **Indigenous Wisdom of the People Forum**

Laura and LaDonna Harris will lead a Wisdom of the People Forum to follow up on last year's exciting forum with Indigenous leaders from New Zealand and the United States that resulted in the formation of the Advancement of Indigenous Opportunity International. This co-laboratory will involve participants to

continue the process of engaging Indigenous populations from around the world to advance their interests and the values that are so needed in today's world. In the words of LaDonna: *"By empowering leadership with a firm cultural identity, we can withstand the forces of globalization, and even more importantly, contribute our Indigeneity."*

## Greek Co-Laboratory of Democracy

Marios Michaelides and Ioanna Tsvacou will lead a co-laboratory in Greek addressing the issue of ethnic conflict and peace building. The overall triggering questions are: *"What obstacles do Greek peace activists face in promoting peace, especially with Turkey, and what are the options for addressing the system of barriers?"* Related questions that would arise are: Do you believe that the difference between Western Morality on the one hand and the communal morality of the Islamic nations on the other generate an important barrier to global peace? Is there a specific Greek Morality that might help in addressing that barrier?

This co-laboratory invites conference attendees with an Arabic and/or Islamic background to join their dialogue. Should they attend, the group would converse in English instead of Greek.

## Spanish Co-Laboratory of Democracy

Reynaldo Trevino and Enrique Herrscher will lead a co-laboratory in Spanish addressing the issue of effective democracy in Latin America. The triggering question is: *"Explorar las posibilidades de la participación ciudadana en el diseño, implantación, evaluación y seguimiento de las políticas públicas, pero desprendiendo la participación ciudadana del sistema de partidos y de su lucha por el poder, es decir, mirando hacia la conformación de un "ciudadano moderno" que sabe organizarse, proponer, criticar, exigir sus derechos y obtener respuesta del gobierno y del resto de la sociedad"*.

The following summary of the overall project of which the co-laboratory is a component was prepared by Roxana Cardenas:

Perspectiva general del proyecto. En cuanto al proyecto en general, creo que es importante que vayamos clarificando cómo daríamos continuidad al trabajo realizado en Creta. Esto tiene que ver con los objetivos generales del proyecto y además, creo que debe ser la base para el diseño de las reuniones en Creta. Pienso que hay varias líneas que podríamos seguir para dar continuidad al trabajo que se haga en Creta.

Continuidad del proyecto en Argentina. Creo que un punto crítico es tener la visión de Enrique y los demás colegas argentinos acerca de la utilidad que tendrían los resultados de Creta para su trabajo de investigación/intervención en Argentina.

Posible continuidad del proyecto en otros lugares. En este punto, supongo que México es uno de los principales candidatos (somos 3 de por acá ¡!!), por lo que Carmen, Reynaldo y yo tenemos que pensar en esta posibilidad. Sin embargo, también será interesante explorar otras posibilidades.

Integración de este esfuerzo con el resto de las iniciativas e intereses que se están realizando alrededor del Congreso de Creta. Supongo que esta es una posibilidad que podemos trabajar durante los mismos días del congreso.

## Co-Laboratory on Constructing *Agoras* of the Global Village

Aleco Christakis will lead a Wisdom of the People Forum in English that addresses the need to construct livable democratic communities in an era of globalization. The goals of this co-laboratory are:

- To create a shared understanding of the challenges that will need to be addressed in the construction of *Agoras* of the Global Village in the context of globalization;
- To build commitment to an action agenda for collaboratively addressing the “system of challenges”;
- and
- To begin forging a “chain of interactions” to embrace the variety of stakeholders who will implement the agenda for overcoming the system of challenges.

Further information on these co-laboratories and on other Crete activities, including the conference program and paper abstracts, can be found at [www.isss-conference.org](http://www.isss-conference.org).

## **An Invitation: Is a Co-Laboratory in Your Future**

If you would like to explore the possibility of conducting a Co-Laboratory of Democracy with your community or NGO, please fill out this form and

Fax it to 001-770-461-0041

OR

E-mail it to [info@globalagoras.org](mailto:info@globalagoras.org)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Organization(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Anticipated Purpose \_\_\_\_\_

### ***Co-Laboratory Offer Explained***

The 47<sup>th</sup> annual conference of ISSS marks the beginning of a long-term effort to construct *agoras* of the global village. Each of us will contribute in our own way to realize their creation. To do its part, the Institute for 21st Century *Agoras*, in coordination with Interactive Management (IM) facilitators around the globe, is offering local communities and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) the opportunity to conduct co-laboratories for their own groups.

We will tailor these co-laboratories to your organization’s requirements and resources. To defray the ordinary costs of the co-laboratory process, we are offering them to you at reduced and/or subsidized rates and are actively seeking

grants. For subsidized co-laboratories, you will provide co-payment in money, goods, or services to defray part of the cost. The co-payment will be assessed on a sliding scale depending on the financial resources of your organization.

Co-laboratories are offered in five scenarios, some of which are geared to training your own personnel so that they can function on their own.

**Scenario I: Basic Co-laboratory: 3 days, total cost \$24,000, co-pay on a sliding scale. We conduct the co-laboratory exclusive of any training.**

*Scenario II: Co-Laboratory with Initial Training Session: 6 days, total cost \$35,000, co-pay on a sliding scale. When an organization or community commits to learning the co-laboratory process so they may ultimately use it independently, we add a training component. In connection with these co-laboratories, the initial training takes place over three days preceding the co-laboratory. In the training session, participants are instructed in the system and take turns in the roles of facilitator, recorder, and coordinator. In the actual co-laboratory, three of these novice trainees act as assistants in those roles.*

*Scenario III: Co-Laboratory with Paid Trainee Assistants: 3 days, total cost \$24,000, co-pay on a sliding scale. Intermediate trainees act as assistants in a co-laboratory for which they will receive a modest stipend.*

*Scenario IV: Co-Laboratories Performed by New Teams with Consultant: 3 days, total cost \$24,000, co-pay on a sliding scale. Senior trainees perform their roles on their own, with only one experienced team member acting as a consultant.*

*Scenario V: Internally Conducted Co-Laboratories: When teams complete the training process in Scenarios II, III, and IV, they proceed to use the co-laboratory procedure and CogniScope software within their “entity” (governmental unit, community group, non-profit organization, etc).*

We anticipate being able to conduct:

- 8 Scenario II and 4 Scenario III co-laboratories in the first year, August 2003 through July, 2004.
- 8 Scenario II, 8 Scenario III, and 4 Scenario IV co-laboratories in the second year, 2004-2005.
- 8 Scenario II, 16 Scenario III, and 12 Scenario IV co-laboratories in the third year, 2005-2006
- 8 Scenario II, 16 Scenario III, 16 Scenario IV, and 8 Scenario V co-laboratories in the fourth year, 2006-2007.

## **Upcoming Publications**

# The Great Adventure

TOWARD A FULLY HUMAN THEORY OF EVOLUTION

David Loye, Editor



The contribution of Aleco Christakis and Ken Bausch is entitled “Technology to Liberate Rather Than Imprison Consciousness.” The book is published by SUNY and will be available in November.

- Aleco Christakis is editing an issue of *Systems Research and Behavioral Science* reporting on the participatory design work done at the ISSS Crete conference.
- Ken Bausch is editing a double issue of *World Futures* reporting on the work being done as conscious evolution in constructing *agoras* of the global village.
- Aleco and Ken are finishing the first draft of the book, *Wisdom of the People*, and are looking for an appropriate publisher.

## **Institute for 21<sup>st</sup> Century *Agoras***

The Institute for 21<sup>st</sup> Century *Agoras* (AGORAS) is a volunteer-driven 501(c)(3) charitable organization that promotes vigorous democracy. It revives the spirit of the ancient Greek *agoras* for the age of globalization. With its Co-Laboratories of Democracy, it streamlines participatory democracy, making it efficient and transparent. Its mission is to employ these co-laboratories in complex situations with diverse groups of willing stakeholders to jump start new or stalling democratic processes. In this way, it aims to spread *agoras* around the world.

The *immediate* criteria of evaluation are the abilities of co-laboratories to draw together the relevant stakeholders of a situation, elicit a comprehensive list of responses to a well-devised triggering question,

generate consensus on the deep parameters of the situation, and produce effective action plans. The *mid-term* results are measured in the extent that participants and their constituencies follow through on the action scenarios generated in the co-laboratories. The *long-term* results are measured in the vitality of the participating groups and their effectiveness in influencing problematic situations.

Co-laboratories require preparatory field work to interview stakeholder groups and compose a paper presenting their various views, to draft the proper triggering question, to obtain and set up the proper meeting room, computer projection equipment, etc. They require a minimum three-person team for two-plus days. They require a large expenditure of time and effort from AGORAS staff, facilitators, and local personnel. AGORAS works on a tight budget, but still needs \$15,000 to \$25,000 for each co-laboratory, depending on the size and complexity of the situation, travel, lodging, etc.

Grassroots organizations seldom have the resources to cover that expense. For that reason, we seek sponsorship from foundations, corporations, and individuals.

If your organization is having growing pains or is faced with many complex problems all at once, you might want to contact AGORAS. If you want to sponsor a favorite organization for rejuvenation, we would like to hear from you. You might want to contribute to our work. (You can contribute online and your donations are tax-deductible.) You just might want to find out more. In any case, go to [www.globalagoras.org](http://www.globalagoras.org). and click the Get Involved menu tab. We would like to hear from you

**Announcing the 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference 2003  
of the International Society for the Systems Sciences (ISSS)**  
[www.ISSS.org](http://www.ISSS.org)

**ISSS 2003 Conference Theme**



**Conscious Evolution of Humanity: Using Systems Thinking  
To Construct *Agoras* of The Global Village**

The conference theme has been chosen to focus attention on: (a) the challenge facing humanity as it transforms from “evolutionary consciousness” to “conscious evolution,” and (b) the role systems thinking must play in constructing 21<sup>st</sup> Century *Agoras* in the context of globalization.

Globalization is being described by many as an emerging new system of world order that has accelerated following the end of the Cold War order in 1989. Systems thinking must make clear what is being

eliminated and what constructed by globalization. We must rise to the challenge of democratizing the processes of conscious evolution to ensure that globalization empowers all peoples and not just elites.

Dialogue is essential for understanding cultures and subcultures in the emerging global village. Boundary-spanning dialogue across disciplines and civilizations, if conducted wisely, can generate democratic agreement on the courses we must pursue to create *agoras* and avoid Big Brother. Thus, the ability to engage in dialogue becomes one of the most fundamental and most needed human capabilities. Dialogue becomes a central component of any model of conscious evolution.

Dialogue was practiced very effectively in the *agoras* of Ancient Greece, like the one in Athens. The *agoras* were public spaces where people congregated and deliberated on their issues. If we want to democratize the emerging global village, we must provide *agora*-like places where people can engage in meaningful dialogue.

ISSS ([www.ISSS.org](http://www.ISSS.org)) has long advocated “transdisciplinarity.” This was indeed the common feature of the four aims of the Society for General System Research (the forerunner of ISSS) as stated by its founders in 1954. Concepts, laws and models developed in particular fields were to be investigated to see if they could be properly transferred to emerging phenomena which were less well conceptualized. The challenges of the 21st Century, associated with conscious evolution and globalization, demand the identification and general transmission of such concepts, laws and models in whatever field they were originally developed in order to enhance humanity’s capacity to design the 21<sup>st</sup> Century *Agoras*. Systems thinking remains the best hope for this to be achieved.

ISSS 2003 will engage participants in earnest discussion and structured dialogue on topics such as the following:

- Defining what a democratic global discussion might look like (*agora* as process)
- Describing what a global village achieved by an effective global discussion might look like (*agora* as product)
- Exploring how local discussions as processes and *agoras* as product might come about
- Making explicit what thinking globally and acting locally means for individuals and groups within ISSS
- Fashioning ISSS into a model functioning *agora*
- Deciding how ISSS can become organized for influencing the course of globalization
- Discovering how to enhance the practice of boundary-spanning dialogue across disciplines and civilizations.

**Conference Location: Iraklion, Crete, Greece.**

**Conference Dates: July 7-11, 2003.**

**Conference Committee**

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**Conference Objectives:**

- 1) To work towards making ISSS a living model of a Society capable of appreciating and practicing “conscious evolution;”
- 2) To explore and identify the role of systems thinking in the context of the emerging phenomenon of globalization;
- 3) To identify action steps in the pathway of constructing the agoras of the global village;
- 4) To enhance the praxis of boundary-spanning dialogue across disciplines and civilizations.