

# ISI Conversations

Newsletter of the International Systems Institute | February 2005

## Reflections from the Conference Coordinator

Happy New Year! A new year fills us with hope for new beginnings and a better future for our social systems, a future that is designed by its members.

Looking around us, there certainly is no dearth of opportunities in our world for applying Systems Thinking and Systems Design. Perhaps this year we are able to come closer to an understanding of how to create peace.

We look back on ACC'04 with wonder. We gathered as a group with mixed levels of experience as systems practioners and systems scholars, all co-learners joined for a week of intensive conversations. While various research groups focused on their inquiries during the day, we came face-to-face with the question of whether or not to continue ISI and the Asilomar conversations in a Future Search conference in the evenings.

The answer to our continued existence came from a new ACC participant, who, after a few days of experiencing our conversation format, exclaimed along with other new participants, "How could you not continue this!" The energetic responses included: "You actually live and practice what you profess; this is so unique and so valuable as a learning experience – it must go on!"

Re-ignited by the fire of enthusiasm, we continue our stewardship of a legacy that Bela H. Banathy gifted to us. Our next step is to design ISI: The process of creating our own future, best fitting to our fast-moving times and to our individual aspirations that starts with you and me.

I would like to express my hope that we will continue to grow with our important work before us. As your new conference Coordinator I would also like to extend an invitation to others with similar interests to join us for ACC '05.

As a final point, I would like to paraphrase Plato, who made this point a long time ago, when he said, "I can understand myself only in conversation with someone else."

In Systems service,

*Christine Wailand Harrison*

Asilomar Conversation Coordinator

*Mark your calendar!  
The 16th Annual Asilomar Conversation Conference will be held:*

**November 4-9, 2005**

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## President's Message

To ISI Fellows and Friends,

Our world continues to face unabated, broad-reaching challenges: Globalization persists, world consumption is increasing, the environment faces ongoing threat, communities need restoration, and numerous other challenges abound. As many of these tribulations are fundamentally systemic, ISI Fellows—whether preferring a local or global focus—still have much to contribute to social betterment.

The 2004 Asilomar Conversation Conference marked the fifteenth annual “intensive” meeting of the year-round cycle.

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## ISI MISSION STATEMENT

*The International Systems Institute is a non-profit, public benefit, scientific and educational agency. Organized as a community of scholars and practitioners and a network of institutions, ISI aims to apply systems and design thinking: [1] to create models and methods for the design of educational and other human activity systems, [2] to develop resources for systems and design learning, and [3] to design models and methods for social and societal systems.*

Although attendance has declined over the last few years, particularly since the death of Dr. Banathy, the spirit of Asilomar has remained strong. Regardless of the number of people who show up, that magic concoction of a smoky and blazing fire, the crisp ocean air, and the opportunity to spend a few days in intense dialogue with systems *compadres* is rejuvenating and often insightful.

This last conference also brought its own fond—and sometimes comical—memories. From the first day, I walked into the living room of Scripps to find Sherryl Stalinski leading a team of professors and students on what started as an exploration of “Organizational Solutions,” but turned into a stone fireplace surrounded by flipcharts and ideas about expanding ISI and the ACC; Drs. Christine Wailand-Harrison and Judy Bach led us in multi-evening Future Search activity that included the capturing of mind maps using new software; Drs. Sue Gabriele and Diana Ryan further explored the roundtable in team F and also hosted a morning Roundtable for the whole community; Team A continued on to the next evolution of The Agora Project, which we now call the Global Open Space. These efforts have produced important fundamental work that feeds graduate level research and social action.

The Asilomar Conference Center retains many of its enduring, rustic qualities, while at the same time there have been some improvements. Perhaps its just my opinion, but I think the food has improved. Much more important than that: They have wireless Internet access in the lodge! As a result, the lodge has become a much greater place of communion, both in the afternoon and morning, where people gather with laptops and coffee to check their mail and the news, like a popular neighborhood coffee shop.

*The International Systems Institute is a member of the International Federation for Systems Research, Wien, Austria*

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## Future Search ACC 04 – Action Plan

- Marketing/communications materials & Newsletter
  - Revamp registration forms
  - Package Future Search materials
  - On-line registration materials & process
  - Pre & on-site coordinator (event planner)
  - Database update & maintenance
  - Regular ongoing communications (monthly, quarterly)
  - Financial Officer
  - Webmaster
  - Website content
- Stories – for web & newsletter
  - Follow up of outreach activities (coordinator)
  - Draft of conference activities

Sherryl Stalinski & Sue Gabriele  
 Sherryl Stalinski & Sue Gabriele  
 Diana Ryan  
 Doug Walton  
 Christine Wailand-Harrison & Judy Bach  
 Sue Gabriele, Mark Ottenberg, Wendy Fox  
 Doug Walton  
 Geri Walton.  
 Chris Curley  
 Diana Ryan, Sherryl Stalinski, Sue Gabriele  
 & Vivian Waldrup-Patterson  
 Diana Ryan, Judy Bach  
 Pat Stalinski  
 Doug Walton, Christine Wailand-Harrison

As we commence into 2005, we also begin a new annual cycle for the Asilomar conversation. Of course, this begins with the call for teams. Additionally, a number of fellows have agreed to serve in volunteer roles for the upcoming year. *[ed. note: see chart above]*

In these times of change, we need to become the leaders and innovators. We have a community of great history and substance. With it and through it, we can do great things. I deeply appreciate the contribution of those who have already volunteered and invite each and every member of our community to join us in making a great conversation this year. We need as many fellows as we can to bring systems design to bear on the pressing problems of our society and communities.

Warm regards,

*Doug Walton*  
 ISI President

## YEAR ROUND PROGRAM, PHASE ONE: Program announcement and team identification & selection.



Teams often continue from previous years. If any of the 2004 teams reporting in this issue are of interest to you, contact the team

coordinator to express your interest in participating on the team in 2005. All Team Topics will be announced in the April newsletter. Participants respond initially by contacting the team coordinator. Watch the April Newsletter for 2005 Conference information, team announcements and registration information.

Please visit the ISI website for the details of the year-round process for the Asilomar Conversation Conference:

**[www.isiconversations.org](http://www.isiconversations.org)**

## Team Reports from the 2004 Asilomar Conversation Conference

### Team A Report: Global Open Space

*Doug Walton, Dinesh Chandra, Lynn Jenks, Holly Rawlins, and Charlene Block*

Current societal systems are being stressed to the breaking point, requiring global society to shift to the next level of systemic organization. This was one of the chief contentions of the late Dr. Bela H.

Banathy. The opportunity now is to combine modern communications and information technology with social systems design methodology to create new way for people to interaction – to conduct extended global dialogue.

Research Team A at the Asilomar Conversation Conference 2004 inquired into what type of system would be needed to support

such an extended dialogue. Team members Doug Walton, Dinesh Chandra, Lynn Jenks, Holly Rawlins, and Charlene Block explored an evolution of The Agora Project, which is called the Global Open Space project.

The concept of the Global Open Space draws some inspiration from Open Space Technology, but adds a virtual, technology mediated component to connect geographically and even temporally distributed teams. Of course, it also adds a systems design methodology. This model is rooted in a variable number of small local teams of approximately 2 to 20 people who meet face-to-face and develop their own intentions and designs to improve society. The local teams then coordinate with other teams via technology such as discussion boards, websites, and audio/video confer-

ences.

The idea of forming small groups to foster conscious evolution has been proffered by many writers. However, the Global Open Space is the only known project that seeks to integrate many small communities using a coherent, systems design methodology. To achieve this, Team A explored what kind of system would be required to support this kind of collective, large-scale inquiry.

The basic structure pursued by Team A involves three interlocking and nested waves. These are described below.

**Local wave**—the local groups engage in disciplined inquiry to explore their most engaging question.

**Plenary wave**—the local groups come together to share their intended changes. These are mapped according to the 10 dimensions of Banathy's ideal image of the societal evolutionary guidance system (EGS).

**Conference wave**—Through a series of conferences, similar or related initiatives identified on the EGS are grouped into foci, and the conversations are held to facilitate design along a particular focus. This is the highest-level wave, which encompasses the other waves. Once a design has been created and an iteration of implementation accomplished, the wave begins again.

The result of these interlocking waves is a sort of huge canvas that draws the aspirations of many existing change efforts together, plots them on a large image, and focuses change efforts lines of common interest to various groups. Simultaneously, a dynamic is created so that local groups work on what is important to them while keeping a large connection in perspective.



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This should enable them to leverage each other's work and increase their likelihood of success.

A prototype of this conference was conducted on December 4, 2004. The conference was attended by approximately 30 people from all over the country, including Florida, Washington, and southern California. The participants were generally enthusiastic about the possibilities, and planning is underway for another conference to be held in March 2005, where there will be participation from a substantial team in India.

While the means of catalyzing self-organizing socially conscious volunteers is still in infancy, the need is widely recognized and emerging in various parts of the world. Many groups are working on a solution, and it is our hope that social systems design combined with technology can offer a much needed answer.

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## Team B Report: The Fire & Flame of ISI

*Christine Wailand Harrison, Judith Bach*

EGS, a new concept that, once we understood its value, led us to giving workshops in Portland, Oregon and Ostersund, Sweden, along with dissertations that were written about it. Then there were the experiments with dialogue and transcendence. We stretched our minds and hearts around these concepts, experiencing their power in depth and again learned more than we thought possible. Finally, there was the challenge about our societal system. Again, we needed to learn much more and we also knew that it was worth working on.

Now Bela's passing has presented us with his greatest challenge: What is to become of ISI?

We chose the Future Search Conference model (Weisbord & Janoff) as the method for this inquiry. At the onset, we need to state a caveat. It is not possible to recapture the atmosphere of incredible creativity, fun and deep meaning that emerged throughout the week. Although groups worked in their research teams during the day, we came together as one community in the evenings to dedicate ourselves to work in the spirit we know best - with depth of insight, with breadth and openness and with freedom to express the best we can envision in any creative genre we choose. Clearly Bela had set these criteria initially, and clearly his spirit is still alive in our community.

In the following we briefly describe our activities and summarize their outcomes. The results of our joint work can serve as the basis for a further design inquiry for ISI.

### Summary of activities and some early results. *The Past*

Our activities began by reflecting on the past. We chose 10-year increments, the 1980's, 1990's and the most recent past of 2000 to the present. We reflected on these time periods on three systemic levels:

1- Our own personal Past, 2- the past of

*continued...*



### Reflections and Summary

#### *Reflections*

It was difficult for us to believe that we have come to Asilomar for over 10 years! One of the drivers for coming for all those years was the challenges that Bela H. Banathy presented us with. They were frustrating and we were never certain of what was going to come of the ideas, concepts and challenges we were wrestling with. There was the

ISI and 3 - the global past.

A synthesis of our reflections yielded some common themes. For example, “Globalization” has not only arrived in areas of illnesses, the economy, war, and in technology but also on the personal level, as reflected in personal transitions/ transformation and a movement from personal change to a broadening of perspectives. ISI, on the other hand, seems to have had a growing differentiation of interests and participation until Bela’s transition and a declining enrollment since 9/11.

#### *The Present*

As a group we created a comprehensive Mind Map of current, external trends that are in some way affecting and impacting ISI. We had some spirited conversations around the map on our big board, giving examples for the groups of what we individually had identified as current trends. We branched off and built on each other’s ideas, rounding out our overall view of “our shared world” surrounding ISI.

Voting identified three major trends:

- 1- Increased expectations of Internet connectivity: greater digitalization of products/services; greater sharing of information; increased publications; and, alas, more junk mail.
- 2- ISI appeals to the “cultural creatives” and finally,
- 3- There now are an increased number of options of available conferences.

We owned up to the ‘mess’ we identified in our Mind Map. We shared what we feel proud of and what we feel sorry about regarding our relationship with ISI in view of the overall picture. The emotions we experienced grounded our data on a very personal level.

*Now Bela’s passing has presented us with his greatest challenge: What is to become of ISI?*

#### *The Future*

Leaving all this work on the past and present behind, we embarked on a fresh new start and ‘dreamed’ about what our ideal ISI could look like. We created future scenarios in sub-teams, imaginatively presenting our ideal vision through artful drawings, play acting and generally “acting as if...” what we really want has come to life and exists now.

Looking back, I am still awed by the idea of some “Scottish dancers” in one drawing, an interview by Mc Media Inc., and the continuously expanding thoughts of another team.

The extremely creative ways these scenarios were presented, the genuine laughter and joy we experienced created ISI as a community on a new level, a level of renewal.

The common themes we identified that we all want to find in ISI included:

We want ISI to have

- Fun and movement, laughter and creativity and a ‘sparkle’
- New people, diversity and a broadening of the base of interest and impact
- Levels of participation: the whole range from full/high level of participation to learning levels
- Thought leadership and a value base
- an orientation toward action, while addressing real and important challenges
- Honoring our roots while building on known resources
- Technological support

These key areas define our “common ground” for the ISI of the future.

One unresolved difference we chose not to work through due to time constraints was to take an in depth look at the methods of ‘Conversations’ as compared to ‘Dialogue.’

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## Team E Report: Organizational Solutions

Sherryl Stalinski

Team E, Organizational Solutions, was a new team this year. Participants included John Adams, Wendy Fox, Harry Bury,



Vivian Patterson and Patrick Stalinski and myself (Sherryl Stalinski).

This team sought to engage in a small group design conversation

around the inquiry: *How can the traditional and popular applications of systems thinking be integrated with new applications from an evolutionary systems perspective to create innovative solutions in the organizational setting?* This research effort hoped to explore, conceptualize and begin to design concrete, viable solutions for organizational applications of evolutionary systems thinking. The research team also was invited to explore how these new solutions can be differentiated from, and integrated with, more widely used complex and adaptive systems processes, as well as traditional humanistic approaches to Organizational Development practice.

### The Conversation

During the pre-conference preparation, a very loose, flexible agenda for the conference dialogues was proposed. With the objective of providing a minimal framework that would enable a true design conversation to take place, I simply suggested that the first two days of the conversation focus

on the generative dialogue and engaged the questions of “Why?” and “What?” in response to the research topic. The rest of the conference time would then focus on the strategic part of the dialogue, exploring “who, how and when?”

The team began the conference by agreeing upon ground rules for the conference dialogues. Each individual took turns adding a ground rule which was open for discussion before agreement. The next agenda topic was to identify trigger questions which would guide the generative portion of the dialogue. A lengthy list was formulated, including:

- Why are people so resistant to ...[fill in the blank: change, openness, dialogue... ]?
- What does it take to change a worldview?
- What is the purpose of OD work?
- What difference can we make?
- What constitutes movement toward success?
- What does it take to reach a “critical mass”? How much (qty) is critical mass?

The rest of the first full day of dialogue was spent considering these above questions. The team spent several hours considering some of the deeper issues involved in resistance to the process of change, as well as the ability to guide and take ownership in change. It seemed to the group that the core issues were fear, safety and trust: that fear underlies most resistance, and that the “root needs” of safety and trust are what enable individuals to act beyond the fear. Once these “root causes/needs” were articulated and agreed upon, the conversation evolved naturally to the purpose of OD work itself.

The second day of generative dialogue moved to examples of organizations that seemed to demonstrate the capacity for evolution, and the specific qualities they demonstrated. The group agreed that a capacity for creativity and innovation was

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one of the key factors for growth and ongoing viability.

So why could some organizations realize this capacity while others don't? In response to the generative questions focusing on "what is possible?" and "what constitutes movement toward success?"

John suggested that the adage denouncing the practice of "preaching to the choir" was flawed; that change and evolution happen best when a "critical mass" of supporters is reached within any group. He proposed that "calling choir practice" and "identifying the hummers" was the best way to identify and engage those who are willing to support a change effort. John also noted that his research and others suggested that somewhere between 25 and 35% of a population of any group would constitute a "critical mass" for driving change. (Adams, 2003).

Author Paul Ray (1996) identified "cultural creatives" as an emerging culture in Western society, contrasting them to "traditionalists" (or "heartlanders" as Ray labels those who adhere to traditional

values and viewpoints) and "modernists" (in Adams, 2000). The team conversation around "identifying hummers" moved toward identifying Cultural Creatives as a key strategy in facilitating growth and evolution within organizations (and likewise, smaller groups and larger society). Ray identifies Cultural Creatives as individuals most likely to:

- hold global viewpoints (xenophiles vs. xenophobes)
- hold "green" values and promote ecological sustainability
- be supportive of feminism

- be less inclined toward materialism and consumerism
- hold worldviews that emphasize an ideal humanity (potential-oriented)
- be future-oriented and optimistic about the future (Adams, 2000, p. 160)

In contrast, however, we as a team identified Cultural Creatives slightly differently. We proposed that Cultural Creatives are individuals who:

- Are willing to listen; are open to other points of view,
- Are open to a "both/and" versus an "either/or" framework. Not only do they listen, they listen with a *willingness to be influenced*.
- Have a "we can do better" outlook on humanity and the world.

This distinction in identifying the qualities and characteristics of Cultural Creatives seemed especially relevant to our conversation. John pointed out that many self-identified "cultural creatives" by Ray's definitions were very single-issue focused: they promoted one, perhaps two typical postmodern viewpoints but were often closed or disinterested in other issues. Environmentalists hold ecological sustainability as the "only" critical issue for positive change, dismissing feminist or social justice issues, and likewise social activists often diminish the importance of environmental issues. It was suggested that while the numbers of Ray's definition of cultural creatives in western society may be reaching a "critical mass"; their inability to unify as a group is preventing the kind of cultural transformation possible. In other words, they may hold the values identified by Ray, but do not seem to hold the capacity for integration, flexibility and versatility identified by our team. Thus, it seemed to us that even so-called "Cultural Creatives" could demonstrate rigidity in thinking,

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*John suggested that the adage denouncing the practice of "preaching to the choir" was flawed; that change and evolution happen best when a "critical mass" of supporters is reached within any group. He proposed that "calling choir practice" and "identifying the hummers" was the best way to identify and engage those who are willing to support a change effort.*

preventing the kind of integration, flexibility and versatility required for real individual and collective change. We decided that our markers of identifying “potential choir members” seem more useful than Ray’s original identifiers.

*...it became clear rather quickly that the team as a whole identified the very dialogue process we were using ourselves as a key strategy for enabling individuals and groups to design and drive positive change in their own systems.*

The Strategic Dialogue.

While the team began the generative portion of the dialogue first identifying specific trigger questions, the basic strategic questions of Who, Where and How seemed to not require such deep exploration. Very quickly on the third morning, the team identified “who” might catalyze and engage in transformational processes as those within our own circles of work and life who reflected willingness and openness to new ideas—the “hummers” who might want to “join the choir.”

A key strategic trigger question emerged for the team as: “What can we do to enable organizational leadership who qualify for ‘the choir’ to experience a reframing or awakening?” Several options were brainstormed, and it became clear rather quickly that the team as a whole identified the very dialogue process we were using ourselves as a key strategy for enabling individuals and groups to design and drive positive change in their own systems. After considerable discussion on the list of brainstormed ideas, two foci emerged for action: an “invitation” focus with the objective of bringing a larger audience to the Asilomar Conversation Conference itself, and an “outreach” focus with the objective of bringing the same type process to people within their own groups, organizations and communities. The idea of an “Asilomar-to-Go” process guide modeled after similar programs such as World Café

and Open Space seemed a worthwhile effort.

The remainder of the strategic dialogue was spent identifying ways of promoting the design conversation process and the Asilomar conference specifically to a broader audience and identifying specific tasks to accomplish this goal. Historically, the Asilomar Conversation Conference of the ISI was marketed almost exclusively to the systems research communities. When considering how to engage a broader market, the group decided to create a list of “opportunities” that the conversation process can provide for others. The team asked “Why participate in the Asilomar Conversations?” Because, the team listed, it is an opportunity to:

1. Learn to relate to others who have differing worldviews and to participate effectively with such individuals,
2. Reflect upon and express one’s deepest thoughts, feelings, and values and experience being heard and valued,
3. Be heard, understood and appreciated,
4. Learn new modes, methods and skills for effective and meaningful dialogue,
5. Learn to facilitate the discovery of our common ground for cultural creatives,
6. Discover and co-create tangible, concrete tools that we can use in our daily life to enable ourselves and others to evolve and grow,
7. Receive assistance with the significant issues in our professional lives,
8. Delve deeply into research issues or passionate concerns with others in dialogue,
9. Discover options and alternatives rather than receive answers and advice, and
10. Learn the skills and benefits of dialogue.

It was the generation of this list of opportunities, which for me beautifully articulated the deeper value of the conver-

*continued on page 12...*

## RESEARCH TEAM F: Co-operated Roundtables for Schools, Workplaces, and Other Organizations or Communities

Sue Gabriele Ted Ferguson and  
Diana Ryan

This year, our team consisted of Diana and Sue, as Ted was unable to attend. Our general goals and overview was a flexible design/master plan to help us [1] to continue to locate opportunities for

opportunity to connect and reflect in this way. Second, we will offer a formal Roundtable Research Team for the people interested in working more at depth with the Roundtable theory and practice during this conversation.

A third possibility is to assist in bringing back a short (30 or 45 minute) whole community evening team report, adding value to it with emancipatory features of the Roundtable. We anticipate three benefits in this possibility: [1] whole group connection with ongoing team and individual progress reports, [2] the opportunity for later risers to experience the Roundtable benefits, and [3] time for creative play in the evening: i.e., international singing night, line dancing, whatever emerges!

Please contact us with questions or comments, or to indicate your interest in our work or proposed work.

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Roundtables; [2] to create Roundtable guides, workbooks, and/or starter kits for interested and potential users; [3] to create promotional pieces for

the buyer; and [4] to continue developing the “Roundtable Program.”

Our progress in November 2004: Sue worked mainly on promotional pieces for the buyer; and Diana mainly on developing the Roundtable for her workplaces: two universities in Chicago.

Additionally, we acted as the core team to convene the morning Roundtable and a new core document/Roundtable reading was born: “Our Rationale.”

Our goals in 2005: With regard to ISI and ACC, we see three possible developments for our “Roundtable” work during the year and at the November ACC conversation. First, we are prepared to continue the morning Roundtable, open to all attending the conference—both those interested in the Roundtable as a new systems tool, and those who simply want a morning

## Team F Report

By D. Ryan

Sue Gabriele and Diana Ryan met to celebrate the Roundtable teams’ fourth conversation. Ted Ferguson was there by phone during some of our meetings. We alternated facilitation so that we each could focus on our interest in the Roundtable. Both of us had breakthrough moments when we made real headway on our goals. It may be a result of using the Roundtable in our work over the past few years, but both of us applied the listening and speaking philosophy of the roundtable and, as a result, made some meaningful contributions to our mutual work. Sue was particularly interested in designing ways to inter-

*continued...*

face with schools where she might facilitate the Roundtable. She perfected two documents; an introductory letter and a description of the Roundtable's theoretical basis. Diana shared reactions and issues she had encountered while using the Roundtable as a tool for teaching for social justice in her university classrooms over the past year. The theoretical dialogue contributed to a substantial aspect of her formal rationale and explanation for participants in her future research endeavors. She also used part of her focused time to get feedback and dialogue about an article she was submitting on her continuing research on the roundtable as a teaching tool. The team members will continue to dialogue and share progress over the coming year.

Team B: Continued from page 6...

#### *Potential Projects*

Our final task was to identify what we, as a community, are ready, willing and able to do now in order to take responsibility for next steps that will lead us in our desired direction.

We will be so bold as to share this great list of actions and those willing to be responsible to see them happen. [*ed. note: see the chart on page 3*].

As a final note we, as facilitators, would like to express what a gift it was to work with such an outstanding group of creative professionals. Truly a time we will cherish and add to our collection of 'amazing' Asilomar moments.

As we look back we can feel a 'new spirit' of ISI emerging, created by inspiration, in the spirit of Bela, and aligned with our core values.

Now that we jointly identified our "common ground," the next step is to build on this ground and grow a full Systems Design inquiry for ISI. Who is willing to accept the torch from the "Fire and Flame" facilitators? Do I hear a possible dissertation topic?

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## **A Personal Reflection**

*by Diana Ryan*

Can I say, "Thank you?"

Perhaps we all share a concern about the future of the Asilomar Conversation Community since Bela H.'s passing to the happy hunting grounds. Doug Walton has gently stepped into the gap Bela left and has unaffectedly been helping us move forward. It is already clear the self-organization Bela wanted for us is taking place. Thank you, Doug. I wanted to dialogue around an article I was writing on systemic change and work on my research. I knew I could count on my Roundtable Research Team F. Sue amazed me with her dedication and good humor, particularly in view of the fact that she had just completed what has turned out to be a successful chemotherapy treatment. Thank you, Sue. As ACC historian, I wanted to gather memorable stories of past experiences at ACC to help maintain our cultural continuity (the thread). The "thread" wove itself into the historical mindmapping activity of the Fire and Flame of Team B, an excellent activity that resulted in a concrete image of past, present and future of the Asilomar Conversation Community. The mindmap approach helped me develop my article, too. Thank you, Judy and Christine. The traditional morning Roundtables had their usual grounding effect for me. The evening meetings with the Fire and Flame had a similar effect and both were ways to connect and reflect on the emerging design of Asilomar conversations of the future. Thank you for keeping ACC alive this past November, everyone.

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## The ACC/ISI Morning Roundtable

Sue Gabriele [sgabriele@gemslearning.com](mailto:sgabriele@gemslearning.com)

This year, we convened a 30 minute morning Roundtable with 5 minutes of readings (core documents) and 25 minutes of participant comments. Over the five days, we added a new Roundtable core document: OUR RATIONALE.

OUR RATIONALE. Bureaucratic models assume all parts of a social system are designable. Laissez-faire models assume no parts are designable. Boulding organizes the systems of the world from simple to complex for a “systems” model of a social system. His model clarifies that some parts of social systems (things) are designable to externally-prescribed criteria

Team E: Continued from page 9...

sation process itself. These opportunities provided the potential tangible and concrete solutions identified as the goal of the research effort itself. This was reflected especially by the four team members who were participating in the Asilomar Conference for the first time. They seemed to convey in the above list that the process itself, rather than the research topic and the conversation results, had affected them most during the week. We look forward to expanding our efforts next year and invite all who are interested to join us.

Contact Sherryl Stalinski: [s2@auroranow.org](mailto:s2@auroranow.org)

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(levels 1-3: frameworks, clockworks, thermostat-like systems). Other parts (humans) are not designable (levels 4-7: open, blueprint, image-aware, symbol-processing). They act according to internally-prescribed criteria--needs, perceptions, choices--of increasing variability. Hence, the Roundtable scripts and timing are tightly designed to leave maximum time for variable individual comments.

Our five Roundtable core documents/Roundtable Guidelines/readings are now:

- Our Format,
- Our Purposes,
- Guidelines for Listening,
- Guidelines for Speaking and Responding, and
- Our Rationale.

These are the readings for an Introductory or Phase I Roundtable. Furthermore, we advanced to a Phase II Roundtable, where the readings are specific to the users. That is, during the five minutes allotted to readings, instead of reading the Roundtable core documents all five days (Phase I), we read ISI core documents the last four days.

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*“At times of dynamic, revolutionary and continuous societal changes and transformations, anything less than the design of an ideal system and a continuous pursuit of the ideal leaves us behind.*

*Anything less is a waste of time. The ideal system could be revolutionary, but the journey toward it can be evolutionary. Nothing less than the ideal is worth the effort.”*

— Bela H. Banathy

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## Publications

### **Dialogue as a Means of Collective Communication**

*Edited by Bela H. Banathy and Patrick M. Jenlink*

*Dialogue as a Means of Collective Communication*, the first of a two-volume compendium on dialogue, offers a cross-disciplinary approach to examining dialogue as a communicative medium. Presented in five parts, the book takes the reader on a journey of exploring the power and potential of dialogue as a means for communication. In particular, this volume comes at a time when the global society's attention has been directed to creating more productive conversations in the name of world peace and harmony. It provides a unique new work on dialogue that brings the reader into a "dialogue with dialogue", offering an opportunity to understand the communicative potential of dialogue.

Contributing authors to the book include members of the International Systems Institute (ISI), International Society for Systems Sciences (ISSS), and individuals recognized for their respective work with dialogue.

In the book, readers are introduced to five sections: Section I examines the historical and cultural perspectives of conversation. This examination helps to create a foundation for a deeper study of the emergent and salient aspects of conversation as it relates to cultural creativity and human systems design. Section II offers the reader an examination of dialogue through different philosophical and theoretical perspectives as well as methodological ideas related to conversation. Section III explores different modalities of conversation and the application of design conversation within and across various types of design settings and human experiences. Section IV exam-

ines the field of practice as related to use of different forms of conversation. Here various authors will share their different approaches to conversation and their reflections and insights in using conversation in a variety of settings. Concluding the book, Section V reflectively examines the authors' contributions to the book and provides the reader with a focus on the future.

The co-editors, Bela H. Banathy and Patrick M. Jenlink began work on the *Dialogue* compendium a few years ago. Jenlink completed the editing on the first volume late last year and presented the manuscript to the publisher with a Memoriam to Bela. The first volume was released fall 2004, with the second volume to follow later. *Dialogue as a Collective Means of Communication* is published by Kluwer Academic Press.

### **Festschrifts Honoring Bela H. Banathy**

*Patrick M. Jenlink*

Bela H. Banathy's life work and contributions to systems science is the focus of two Festschrift journal issues, published in *Systems Research and Behavioral Science (SRBS)* (21:3) and *Systems Practice and Action Research (SPAR)* (17:4), respectively. The Festschrift issues honor Bela's work and his contribution to systems thinking, and build on Bela's scholarship and work, paying tribute to his legacy and paying forward, in their own voices and contributions, the inheritance that Bela left for all.

Those who worked with Bela, know that he considered himself a systems and design scientist, an educator, and author. Importantly, for those of us who were

*continued...*

closest to Bela, knew him as a great teacher, mentor, humanitarian, systemist, valued scholar, and a true practitioner of systems design.

The contributing authors to the two Festschrifts knew and worked with Bela in many different capacities, over several years. Whether as professor of their doctoral graduate studies, systems science and design mentor, ISI Research Fellow, ISSS peer, professional colleague, or friend, the common ground which connected each of the authors was Bela's immeasurable gift of himself and his unyielding concern for the future of humankind.

The manuscripts comprising the two issues (*SRBS* and *SPAR*) focus on the work of Bela H. Banathy and his contributions to the systems community. Contributions include epistemologically and/or methodologically examinations of Bela's influence in social systems, examinations of how

Bela's work with social systems design influenced and/or otherwise impacted on the contributing author's own work in systems thinking, systems design, Bela's influence in systems inquiry, as well as Bela's contributions to dialogue and design conversation. Importantly, select contributions illuminate the evolution of Bela's thinking and work, specifically with respect to systems

design, inquiry, and practice. Contributions related to Bela's more recent work with evolutionary systems design, 21st Century Agoras, and the implications for social action and social change are of equal and particular interest. The contributed manuscripts reflect original unpublished scholarly work. The contributing authors have prepared articles that honor Bela H. Banathy, while analyzing his life work and the related

implications for the current and future state of society.

Bela found inspiration in the works of William Blake (1991), in particular the illuminated work *Jerusalem: The Emancipation of the Great Albion*. It was from this work that Bela quoted in the closing section of his book, *Guided Evolution of Society: A Systems View* (2000), and which seems appropriate to quote now (Blake, pl. 10, l. 20) in memory of Bela.

I must create a system,  
Or be enslaved by another Man's;  
I will not Reason and Compare,  
My business is to Create.

One of Bela's expressed desires was that International Systems Institute members, as well as his students, colleagues, and friends in the systems community would continue his work of creating a better world. The Festschrift authors build on Bela's scholarship and work, honoring his life and his work, in their own voices and contributions, the inheritance that Bela left for all of us as Stewards of the future.

#### References

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