

Taos Institute News

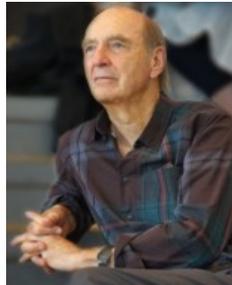
Creating Promising Futures through Social Construction

January 2013

Reflecting on the Past and Looking Forward

A message from Kenneth Gergen, President of the Taos Institute

In the rush of daily life we tend to focus on the present and near future. What is past is past! Yet, there is good reason to cast one's gaze toward the wake. There we learn of the intensity of movement and its trajectory. Scanning the year's activity of the Taos Institute, I am dazzled at the power of collaborative participation, and what can be achieved by people working



voluntarily together. Although it is difficult enough to produce a single conference each year, in 2012 our collaborative efforts yielded three separate conferences. With our neighbors at the Kanankil Institute in Merida, Mexico, we offered in early spring, *Enriching Collaborative Practices Across Cultural Borders*. Then, working with the Attractor consulting firm in Denmark, a Summer Institute in systemic/constructionist process was staged for a second year. Finally, joining together in November with Associates on the West Coast, we offered an international conference, *Exploring Relational Practices in Peacebuilding, Mediation, and Conflict Transformation*. Dozens of presentations, performances, and papers enriched every gathering for participants from around the world. Inspiring energies!

The PhD program, a collaborative effort with Professor John Rijsman at Tilburg University, reached a milestone this year. We graduated our 50th student! This program has been a source of enormous joy, as the participants have used this opportunity to create, enrich, or reflect on practices in organizational development, therapeutic process, education, community development, and so much more. Then, in collaboration with the Houston/Galveston Institute, the *International Certificate Program in Collaborative Practices* rolled into high gear, with the certificate now offered in six countries. Our collaborators in *La Red de Trabajo para Dialogos Productivos* have also been

wonderfully active, drawing together research projects in dialogue in seven countries.

Taos Institute Publications worked with gifted authors and editors to generate three new books, including Monk and Winslade's, *When Stories Clash: Addressing Conflict with Narrative Mediation*; Hedtke's *Bereavement Support*

Groups: Breathing Life into Stories of the Dead; Cole and Gergen's, *Retiring But Not Shy: Feminist Psychologists Create their Post-Careers*, I must add a special note of delight at the launching this year of *WorldShare Books*, a unique publishing venture in which we offer book length manuscripts for downloading free of charge! Some 30 Associates from around the world have volunteered to participate in the Editorial Board, thus offering an opportunity to publish in many languages. Thus far, we have offered eight books, beginning with John Shotter's *Wittgenstein in Practice*, and including a book in Spanish and another in Afrikaans. To our happy surprise, books have already been downloaded in over 50 nations!

Yet, for all the excitement, this reflective pause also offers a chance to consider routes not taken. In this period of political stalemates in the U.S. government and elsewhere, we have been disappointed that we have not been able to locate means of sharing with the political world resources on effective collaboration and dialogue. And, while we have been delighted this year at the opening of the Center for Social Constructionist Psychology Studies in China, there are no constructionist resources available so far in many other places. One hope is that we might develop our work in Arabic, and find ways to collaborate with colleagues in the Middle East, and in other troubled places in the world. Given all that has been accomplished in our first 20 years, we remain optimistic.