

## Brief Encounters with the Taos Institute

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This month Kenneth J. Gergen, Taos Institute co-founder and board president, shares with us his reflections on our happenings in 2017 and what we are looking forward to in 2018...



By Kenneth J. Gergen

### Reflecting and Energizing as We Enter the New Year

As we enter a New Year it is time to reflect on the roads we have traveled, and their coming directions. The past year has rippled with political and societal challenges. As a non-profit educational organization working at the intersection of social constructionist theory and professional practices, these challenges are foremost in mind. So much of our work is dedicated to generating ideas and practices that can enrich the quality of relationships, locally and globally. How can we build bridges among people, enhance collaboration, locate synergies and energize the co-creative process - in education, organizations, caring professions, peace-building and more. Hundreds of our associates and friends have contributed generously to this year's globe-spanning activities, and should be justly proud. Here I share some of their accomplishments this year and some plans for 2018.

Face to face gatherings are essential for sharing, creating, and preparing for action. Energies were indeed high for the over 400 who took part in the Third International Conference on Collaborative-Dialogic Practices, in Tenerife, Spain. Special appreciation here to Barcelona Associate Josep Segui as conference organizer. Two more lively international meetings took place, both in Denmark. In November, Taos joined with Absalon University in Denmark and Youth Invest in Norway to offer a conference on collaborative practices in education for "children and youth on the edge." We are deeply indebted here to Associate Karsten Mellon for his organizing talents. We also collaborated with the Mannaz consulting firm to offer a Summer Institute on leadership in turbulent times. Special gratitude this year goes to our Chinese colleagues who formed a satellite organization, Taos China. The kickoff meetings at Nanjing Normal University featured contributions from over 30 scholars and practitioners. Associate Xinping Zhang of Nanjing Normal University spearheaded the event and is its first president.

The coming year is exciting as well. In June we will collaborate with the Danish consulting group Joint Action for a conference on Relational Welfare. Then in November (8-11) we are thrilled in offering the [Taos 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary jubilee conference](#), in Cancun, Mexico. We welcome all to come, celebrate, share and learn.

Taos educational programs continued to flourish. Especially significant was the landmark graduation of our 100th PhD student, a culminating event for a program that has enabled diverse professionals to enrich and extend the impact of their efforts. Five students graduated

this year from three of the five European universities with which we have collaborative relations. The [International Certificate program in Collaborative-Dialogic Practices](#) had a banner year, with 11 different programs offered in 16 countries. The on-line certificate program continued to expand, with a new course on relational theory added to the group of workshops. Online learning opportunities abounded with the free offerings hosted by the [Relational Research Network](#), and the [Week In Dialogue with the Authors](#) series supported by the [Taos Institute Online Learning Community website](#).

For this New Year, applications are now being accepted for a new on-line [Master's degree program in Collaborative and Dialogic Practices](#). Three new programs may be added to the International Certificate in Collaborative-Dialogic Practices. New on-line certificate courses will be mounted. And the Professional Diploma program in Social Construction and Professional Practices will hit its stride.

In fostering global relations, we have been especially pleased with the work of our publishing wing. Our [WorldShare Books](#) series offers books free for downloading. This series added 12 new books this year, on topics such as education, therapy, organization, peace-building, and more. WorldShare books now appear in 13 languages. However, with special thanks to Associate Edgar Noumair, we were able to offer three works translated in Arabic - our first books for Middle East readers. Four new soft cover books were also published, two on the Coordinated Management of Meaning and two devoted to enriching the aging process. [The International Journal of Collaborative and Dialogic Practices](#) continues to grow, and the [Positive Aging Newsletter](#) published its 100th edition. These publications are available free on line.

We invite the continued participation of all of you, from around the world. We look for new and creative ways of expanding our mission, and value partnerships in the quest for enhancing the relational conditions of the world. We are all in this together, and together we can make a difference.