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# The Cultures of Cooperation in a Systems Context: Position Paper

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**Premise:** Cultures of cooperation are necessary to successful applications of systems thinking and systems theory, using knowledge and methods from diverse fields, but are not generally considered or encouraged from a strategic planning perspective. The following topics are suggested as a basis for discussion:

1. **Prevailing Views about Cooperation and Rationality.** Neoclassical, neoliberal, and neoconservative traditions in economics and politics all claim that *rational* decisions are essentially self-interested. By extension, with a few exceptions, these traditions imply that cooperation and altruism are *irrational*. Yet many thriving collaborative enterprises exist in societies all over the world. And many communities in non-western, less individualistic societies reflect widespread collaboration as a cultural norm. Cooperation needs more systemic exploration.
2. **Cultures of Cooperation in the Natural World.** Our interpretation of Darwin's competitive "survival of the fittest" tends to exclude the important role of collaborative processes both within and among organisms.
3. **The Perspective of Integral Science** (see S.J. Goerner, *After the Clockwork Universe*, 1999). The common thread of self-organizing energy transfer, found today in all fields of science, links information processing (intelligence), organic response (learning), and increasingly intricate organizational

structure in the evolution of all living organisms.

4. **A Model of Cultural Evolution.** The attached graphic diagrams cultural evolution as understood by Integral Science. Unlike other models, this model provides a normative planning perspective based on the embodied science.
5. **Strategies for Engendering Cooperative Cultures in a Systems Context:**
  - A. **Systems Education.** To be fostered in all public education at all levels.
  - B. **Leadership and Leadership Training.** Crucial to collaborative processes.
  - C. **Social Learning by Doing.** Collaborative projects as shown in the model.
  - D. **"Appropriate" Science and Technology.** Appropriate to collaborative systems at all levels from local to global.
  - D. **Cooperative Organization and Financing of Science and Technology.** Shared ownership, management, and control of systems-oriented enterprises in science and technology.

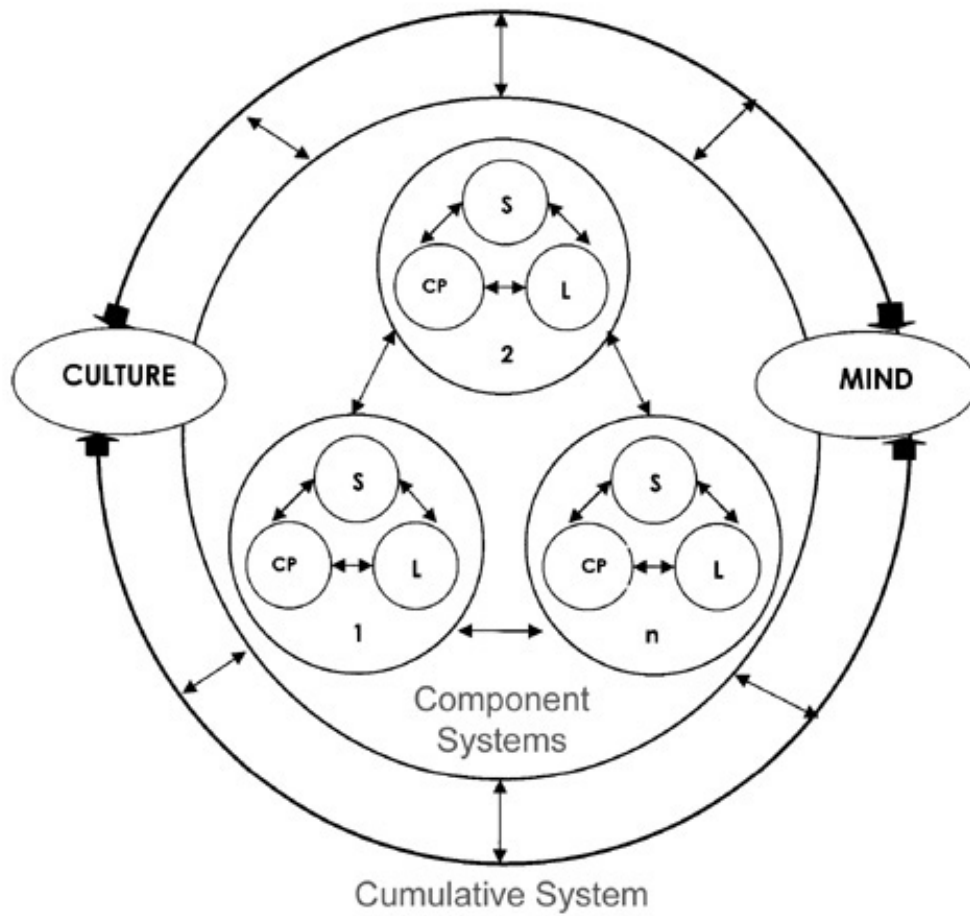
**Keywords:** cultures of cooperation, cultural evolution, systems thinking, strategic planning, integral science.

**S** = Structure

**L** = Learning

**CP** = Collaborative Process

Ecological Subunit



Component Systems =  $\sum$  Ecological Subunits 1,2,.. . n

Cumulative System = Culture  $\longleftrightarrow$  Mind

Fig. 1. Cultural Evolution