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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 selfinterested. 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 nonwestern, 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 systemsoriented enterprises in science and technology.

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



Fig. 1. Cultural Evolution