



# Newsletter

The Official Newsletter of  
THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION  
FOR SYSTEMS RESEARCH

G. Chroust: Editor-in-Chief

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Dear Readers!

*The key topic of this Newsletter is the preparations of the next Fuschl Conversation taking place from April 7 to 12, 2002 in Fuschl, Austria – a major event in IFSR's activities. considerable information concerning the Fuschl Conversation 2000 can be found on the Fuschl home page. A similar way for information exchange is planned for the Fuschl 2002 conference.*

*With respect to IFSR activities you will find a report on the past Executive Committee Meeting in Monterey in July 2001, an updated list of IFSR members and reports from some of our members. We also give a preview of the next Board Meeting of the IFSR on April 3, 2002 in Vienna, announcing the elections of the new Executive Committee. The Newsletter also contains reports and announcements of several conferences, which are closely linked to members of the IFSR.*



Looking from Hotel Seewinkel in Fuschl  
to the south.  
An ideal place for the Fuschl Conversations!





## Fuschl Conversation 2002 (April 7 – 12, 2002)

### Fuschl –20 Years history

The first Fuschl conversation was held in 1980 in Fuschl. Fuschl conversations are different from other forms of conferences and have in the mean time not only been held bi-annually at their place of origin in Fuschl. In 2002 it will be the 11th biennial Fuschl *conversation*. Some 40 Fuschl-style *conversations* have taken place around the globe since they first began in Fuschl in 1981.



Fuschl with location of hotel

### What is Fuschl and the Hotel Seewinkel?

Fuschl is a beautiful, romantic little Austrian village on a small lake in lovely Salzkammergut, near Salzburg. It is surrounded by mountains of approx. 1600m height, see also

[www.fuschlseeregion.com/de/orte/fuschl.shtml](http://www.fuschlseeregion.com/de/orte/fuschl.shtml)

The Hotel Seewinkel was the starting point of the "Fuschl Conversations". Then a small inn it now has become a beautiful hotel.



Hotel Seewinkel

### Why conversation and what form do they take?

The main reason for conversations as initiated by the IFSR was a dissatisfaction with the conventional style of a conference: An individual writes a paper, has 20 minutes to present it and then 10 minutes of questions. After that the conference is virtually over for the individual. Clearly, this format is not the most effective way to progress the exchange and development of ideas on pressing major issues.

The experience we will have during the week at Fuschl is of quite a different nature. It is in the form of a *conversation*. Bela Banathy characterized a conversation as follows:

A Conversation is

- ?? a collectively guided disciplined inquiry
- ?? an exploration of issues of social/societal significance
- ?? engaged by scholarly practitioners in self-organized teams
- ?? who select a theme for their conversation
- ?? which is initiated in the course of a preparation phase that leads to an intensive learning phase

At Fuschl we will spend 5 days in intense discussion around our chosen themes and triggering questions. A major concept of a conversation is its being a process engaged in by self-organized teams who select their own theme for their conversation

The theme is initiated in the course of a preparation phase, that leads to the intensive learning phase, i.e. the 5 day conversation itself.

The teams follow a set of conversation rules that guide their action (they generate their own rules during the initial stage of the conversation). They document and share their findings and prepare a team report, and reflection papers that present their own findings. The IFSR will publish the proceedings.

Members take the message of their experience with them and apply what they have learned in their own contexts of life. The conversation process never ends.

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## Steps in the Fuschl Conversation

### Preparation Phase

The preparation phase for Fuschl is now underway. The five basic themes have been selected, teams now need to work on refining their theme towards a set of agreed initiating trigger questions for their conversation. Potential participants and team co-ordinators are asked to proceed as defined by the *key dates* below:

#### 15 December 2001

Latest date for potential participants to submit (e-mail) their input paper to the team co-ordinator of their intended theme, with a copy to Gerhard Chroust, Secretary IFSR: [gc@sea.uni-linz.ac.at](mailto:gc@sea.uni-linz.ac.at).

The **input paper** should be a minimum of 1 page with maximum of 4 pages. The input paper should suggest ideas for a direction of the discussion and offer some linked trigger questions for the team.

#### 10 January 2002

During December the IFSR Fuschl Committee together with the team co-ordinators will select those who will be sponsored by IFSR to attend Fuschl.

#### ***Invitations to those selected will be issued by 10 January 2002.***

Logistical and financial considerations restrict the number who can attend to about 27.

Selection will depend on a number of factors. Most important will be how well the input paper contributes to the theme, but the need for a wide geographic spread of participants and the wish to introduce a proportion of newcomers to the conversation will also be taken into account.

#### 1 February 2002

Team Coordinators prepare a two-page summary of the ideas from the input papers, including the selection of a coherent range of trigger questions from those which have been suggested. This draft summary should be sent to members of the team by 1 February 2002, inviting their comment and /or endorsement.

#### 1 March 2002

Team co-ordinators revise the summary input in the light of comment and send this to the team by 1 March 2002. This paper represents an important part of the conversation process. It is the collective effort of preparation and will hopefully provide a firm basis on which the

team's conversation (learning phase) at Fuschl can proceed.

### Conversation Phase

#### **(Fuschl, April 5-12, 2002)**

On April 5 the learning phase begins in Fuschl at the Hotel Seewinkel. The participants follow their course of Conversation, reporting to the other teams and preparing an initial document of the outcome of their conversation.

At the on-set of the Conversation in Fuschl the groups review their agenda and choose specific triggering questions that guide their conversation. At the end of each day, the teams report on their progress. On Friday morning the teams present their findings. Plans are developed to accomplish the Dissemination Phase.

There might be deviations from this over-all plan depending on the specific proceeding of the individual conversation teams.

### Dissemination Phase

It is our duty – and the wish of the IFSR – that the outcome of the Conversations be disseminated to a wider audience. This will be done by publishing a preliminary report in the IFSR Newsletter (which will also appear on IFSR-homepage) and a little bit later by issuing proceedings of the conversation under the auspices of the Austrian Society for Cybernetic Studies.

#### 15 July 2002

For each team an Intermediate team report is sent by the Team Coordinator to the Editors (G. Chroust and C. Hofer) for inclusion in the IFSR Newsletter.

#### Sept 2002

The Team reports are published in the IFSR Newsletter.

#### 15 Oct 2002

The final papers of the teams are sent to the Editors by the Team Coordinator s. Individual supporting papers should also be submitted.

#### Nov 2002

Proceedings of the Fuschl Conversations are published as a Report of the Austrian Society for Cybernetic Studies, Vienna with an ISBN-Number.

Call for Participation in the  
**Eleventh Fuschl Conversation**

Sunday, April 7 to Friday, April 12, 2002  
at Hotel Seewinkel,  
Fuschl am See, Austria

The Fuschl 2002 Conversations will – to a large extent – be the continuation of the Conversations held in 1996 through 2000 and will comprise the following five teams, each led by a Team Coordinator .

**Team 1: New Agoras for the 21st Century:  
Conscious Self-Guided Evolution**

**Coordinator: Patrick M Jenlink, F\_Jenlinkpm@titan.sfasu.edu**

The Agoras of the City States of the Classical Greeks were public spheres where true democracy was lived by citizens who made collective decisions about issues affecting their daily lives. Reconsidering the idea Agora in society today, and creating an ideal of the New Agora is a metaphor for social action contexts (public spheres or arenas) in which people can make collective decisions about their future. These contexts would be forums of democratic discourse. People in the settings of their families, neighbourhoods, community groups, organizations, and institutions have the potential to organize themselves as evolutionary design communities. These New Agoras could link up with each other and engage in evolutionary conversation in order to bring to life the Guided Evolution of the Society. The dual purposes of the New Agora project are to first create and sustain an Agora community of stewards who will then support the right of people to take part directly in the decisions that affect their lives and to guide their own destiny. The New Agora would guide the conscious evolution of civil society on local, national, and world levels. This goal will be achieved by creating knowledge bases for evolutionary inquiry; developing resources for evolutionary learning; and exploring approaches, methods, and technologies toward the establishment of New Agoras. These purposes are grounded in the belief that the right of people to take part directly in making decisions that affect their lives and to guide their own destiny is a fundamental human right.

**Triggering questions:**

What are the major problems confronting our species within the context of our global society?

What is the role of the New Agora project in addressing societies problems?

What would be the design of a "New Agora" that would serve as an evolutionary guidance system for world peace?

How could the "New Agoras" contribute to the conscious evolution of the human species?

In what ways can the "New Agora" serve humanity through creating and sustaining civil society?

**Team 2: Designing Systems for Human Betterment**

**Coordinator: Arne Collen, acollen@saybrook.edu**

We continue the 1998-2000 focus on the relevance and applications of systems thinking to the design of human activity systems for human betterment. We emphasize the nature of social oriented human activity systems that reveal to us what ways we relate to one another, how we come to know our world, who we are becoming, and who we become through proactive participation in systems creation. We are especially interested in such systems as learning and learner centered education (caring) systems, systems that foster human development, personal and collective guidance systems, and synergistic win-win seeking systems in continuous negotiation co-evolving with its tenuous risky environment. Our interests shall be informed by what we have learned about human beings and can learn constructively from each other during our conversation. We believe that knowledge of the ways we think, feel, perceive, and inter-relate help us as systemic designers to create and develop our systems for human betterment. We expect such systems to take into consideration our human welfare as well as the welfare of those affected indirectly by our activities. Whether we like it or not, human

beings are the entrusted stewards of all life on the planet. Therefore, our concern for the design of systems of human betterment must include the ecological, ethical, humane, and participatory dimensions broadly conceived. To facilitate our forthcoming conversation, we welcome explicit examples of systems designed for human betterment. Those participating are asked to bring if possible a specific case to contribute to our conversation. Earlier conversations are platforms to launch into specific cases. Our 1998 and 2000 conversation reports available by request. Newcomers welcome.

**Triggering questions:** What case exemplifies the design of a system for human betterment? Trigger question to be applied to each case: What can we learn by way of best practices that we find in this case?

## **Team 3: Foundations of Information Science**

**Coordinator: Bela H. Banathy,** [babanathy@worldnet.att.net](mailto:babanathy@worldnet.att.net)

Participation is being invited for a Conversation on the Foundations of Information Science (FIS). This Conversation will be a continuation of a line of work that began in 1994 with the first FIS conference in Madrid (Spain), and was extended through a series of related meetings. Prospective participants are encouraged to review the abstracts and papers of FIS 94, FIS 96, the subsequent FIS virtual conferences, the FIS sessions conducted at the ISSS Annual Meetings in 1999, 2000, and 2001 (summarized on the FIS website at <http://fis.iguw.tuwien.ac.at> ), as well as the 2000 Fuschl Conversation on FIS.

Participants are expected to prepare short input papers that will help to establish a common ground for the subsequent conversations. Papers that extend any of the previous work are welcome. Work focusing on the relationship between the epistemological and ontological aspects of information are of great interest, and participants are particularly encouraged to address issues related to the ontogeny of information.

**Triggering Questions:** Intuitive starting points for this Conversation may be: "Where does "information" come from? Assuming that suitable answers to such questions can be formulated the next question is: What are the implications of this for the interaction between human beings, their artefacts in general and computers in particular, and the ecosystem of this planet as a whole? How do alternative conceptions of what information is, or where it comes from, influence our approach to the design of Human Activity Systems?

## **Team 4: Social Awareness**

**Coordinator: Gary Metcalf** ([gmetcalf@ezv.com](mailto:gmetcalf@ezv.com)), **Charles Francois** ([library@iafe.uba.ar](mailto:library@iafe.uba.ar))

The purpose of this conversation is to explore together the range of factors that seem to drive or influence human behaviour, especially at the collective level. While the events of Sept. 11 created a milestone in the history of the U.S., and for many people there seemed without precedent, they did not occur as some merely-random act of violence. Like most major human events, they were the culmination of many histories and the clashing of many human differences that collided in catastrophic events at a point in time.

The purpose of this conversation is not to attempt to resolve the events of Sept. 11 in the U.S., or any similar events in history. It is not to justify or condemn viewpoints or beliefs or approaches of one group of people over another. This conversation is to be a time to attempt some better understanding of the forces that shape the human landscape in which we live. Why is the "nature" of many social systems such that alternative views and beliefs (or even differences in general) are felt to threaten its existence? Why are the values that we say we hold most dear (truth, beauty, freedom, etc.) not the factors that most drive our behaviour, individually or collectively? And most importantly, are there ways in which we can consciously shape or affect the social systems in which we live, or are the "elements" and "forces" of which social systems are made too remote from human consciousness to be affected?

The conversation begins at the level of individual awareness, because until I have some sense about why I am as I am in the world, I cannot address the things that cause me to be that way.

**Triggering Question:** *How can we become more consciously aware of the “forces” that drive our behaviour as humans, and how can we better learn to make choices about the world that we help to create?*

## **Team 5: Actions and Evolutionary Guidance for Y3K**

**Coordinator: Gordon Dyer, G.C.Dyer@open.ac.uk**

At the Fuschl Conversation 2000 a team discussed the Y3K issue i.e. what would we as systems designers wish to see for humankind for the Year 3000. By the end of the conversation we had obtained some insights towards six principles, which constitute an Evolutionary Guidance System (EGS), for the Year 3000, or similar long-term future. It identified some markers in terms of desirable behaviour patterns for the Year 3000. These desirable behaviours provide a basis for considering future education and human development programmes in future conversations. Our wish this time is to move toward something more practical linked to this theme. Hence the Y3K focus at Fuschl 2002 will be derived from the triggering questions.

### **Triggering questions:**

How can the conceptual frameworks that we generated at Fuschl 2000 be shaped into meaningful actions?

What specific actions can we and others take over the next several years as first steps towards the types of ideals that were identified?

The work of the Teams is described on the previous pages.

### **Rules for the Fuschl Conversations:**

- ?? The application will be considered by the IFSR Fuschl Committee together with the Team Coordinators.
- ?? Accepted participants will be informed of acceptance/rejection by **Jan 10, 2002**
- ?? The IFSR will pay for hotel accommodation, breakfast and dinner from Sunday (April 7) evening until Friday (April 12) morning.
- ?? Lunch and drinks will have to be paid individually by the participants
- ?? The registration fee is \$55
- ?? Participants are required to supply the necessary input papers, contribution to proceedings etc. as requested by their Team Coordinator .
- ?? The proceedings will be published under the auspices of Austrian Society for Cybernetic Studies, Vienna with an ISBN-Number. Participants will be asked to contribute to the proceedings
- ?? Participants may take their partner along, at their own cost. With the confirmation of the acceptance they will be informed about the additional costs.
- ?? Prospective Participants should **immediately mail an e-mail-note** about their intention to participate to the respective **Team Coordinator** and to **Gerhard Chroust** ([GC@sea.unilinz.ac.at](mailto:GC@sea.unilinz.ac.at)). **DEADLINE is December 15, 2001.** By that time also the **input paper is due!**



**IFSR's Web Site : <http://www.ifsr.org>**