

ECLT - Press Release Opening

European Center for Living Technology, Venice, 3 December 2004

European Center for Living Technology Opens

With founding support from the EU, the European Center for Living Technology (ECLT, <http://www.protocell.org/ECLT>) will be inaugurated today at the University of Venice Ca' Foscari. The opening of the ECLT heralds the breakthrough to a new kind of technology—"living technology", based on life-like organization and lying at the intersection of information technology, nanotechnology and biotechnology. The ECLT is a scientific research and visitor center charged to pilot research in this new revolutionary field and raise its public profile. When present machine-like technology becomes complicated, it is difficult to design, prone to malfunction, and usable only in carefully circumscribed settings. Yet everyday living systems are very complicated but still automatically repair themselves, adapt and self-organize, and cope with unexpected challenges. Applications of living technology will enjoy these same benefits, stress Prof. John McCaskill, Dr. Norman Packard, and Prof. Irene Poli, the ECLT Board of Directors. The study of complex natural systems, the evolution of life, and artificial living systems, has now reached the point that the principles of living organization can be explored with a unified multi-disciplinary combination of theory, simulation and experiment at the ECLT. The Center's vision for living technology is very broad, including realizations on a spectrum of platforms, from molecules to machines to human organizations.

The Center will embed the development of living technology in an informed public discussion of its novel implications for humankind and the environment. "This time the social and ethical debate about a powerful new technology will precede its commercial application," remarked Prof. Mark Bedau, ECLT Science Board Chair.

Initially, the Center will primarily foster the research, training and outreach of the European Union's 6th Framework Future and Emerging Technology integrated project entitled "Programmable Artificial Cell Evolution" (PACE, <http://www.protocell.org/PACE>), which aims to help create the foundation for the new Information Society Technologies. PACE aims to create the technology to program complex nano- and micro-scale systems, such as non-biological living cells, and to roadmap applications of this technology. PACE is coordinated from the Ruhr University of Bochum in Germany by McCaskill. The PACE project collaborates closely with the complementary "Protocell Assembly" research initiative at Los Alamos in the USA, led by Dr. Steen Rasmussen.

The Center is located in the Palazzo Giovanelli on the Canal Grande, with administrative seat at the University of Venice Ca'Foscari. To enable living technology to become a physical reality, the ECLT also has the benefit of laboratory facilities at Parco Vega, a new scientific and industrial park in Venice (<http://www.vegapark.ve.it/>).