

## Chapter 35

# The KINONOS Project: Conscious Citizens for Change

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### **ABSTRACT**

*In the Fall of 2017, while a rising high school junior, the author founded a school club at the American Community Schools of Athens named KOINΩNOS (pronounced Kinonos), derived from the Greek word “Κοινωνία” which means “Community.” KOINΩNOS refers to the community of people that come together for a common cause. It connotes the importance of participation in community affairs that as citizens we must all participate in community affairs in order to improve social conditions, problem solve, and better plan so as to have a healthy, thriving community. On a larger scale, KOINΩNOS denotes that we are all members of a community, and while we have many differences we also have commonalities, the main commonality being that we are all human beings regardless of socio-economic status, gender, opportunity, or education. Revering this simple fact is a necessary mindset in order to develop the highest form of social interest and become conscious citizens who ‘see’ society’s plaguing issues and address them.*

*“We do not say that a man who takes no interest in public affairs is a man who minds his own business. We say he has no business being here at all” - Pericles*

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the fall of 2017, while a rising high school Junior, I founded a school club at the American Community Schools (ACS) of Athens named KOINΩNOS (pronounced Kinonós); derived from the Greek word “Κοινωνία” which means “Community”. ACS Athens is a JK-12 International school embracing American educational philosophy, principles and values. Housing more than 60 different nationalities, the ACS Athens vision is ‘empowering individuals to be architects of their own learning’ (ACS Athens website). The school culture fosters innovative ideas, both among faculty and students and believes in

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‘reflective practitioners’. This means that the school has processes in place for students, faculty and staff to continuously reflect on learning, current practice and on how to turn learning into effective action. Community Service is encouraged early in school and social awareness potentially can lead to social initiatives; students initiating projects that will improve lives. Within this context my ideas harvested and eventually took form.

“ΚΟΙΝΩΝΟΣ” refers to a community of people that come together for a common cause. It connotes the importance of participation in community affairs, that as citizens we must all participate in community affairs in order to improve social conditions, problem solve and better plan so as to have a healthy, thriving community. A healthy thriving community also creates better living on the planet. On a larger scale “ΚΟΙΝΩΝΟΣ” denotes that we are all members of a community and while we have many differences we also have commonalities, the main commonality being that we are all human beings regardless of socio-economic status, gender, opportunity or education. Revering this simple fact develops a necessary mindset expressing the highest form of social interest while becoming responsible, reflective citizens who ‘see’ society’s plaguing issues and address them.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### **Social Interest**

It is fitting to create a context related to the importance of Social Interest. According to the Psychologist Alfred Adler, *Community* is not just a place we live in, it is where we experience belonging, having a home within the world, a sense that we are worthwhile and that we have something to contribute which adds to our meaning of life on earth. This ‘Community feeling’ develops our social interest. When Social Interest turns to action it adds value and meaning to our lives and contributes positively to our mental health (Adler 1938; Ansbacher, 1992). One could say that in the absence of Social Interest, we tend to become more self centered, take less interest in others, become more isolated and preoccupied with ourselves and thus optimal mental health is questionable (Adler, 1997).

Social interest therefore refers to an individual’s awareness of belonging in their human community, and the extent to which they contribute to it. Social interest can grow with time and learning (Clark, 2017). One factor that raised my interest and stimulated a desire in community service was Alfred Adler’s holistic theory of personality, psychopathology and psychotherapy that was closely connected to “a humanistic philosophy of living”. Alfred Adler was a philosopher and psychiatrist, who had the need to understand individuals’ social backgrounds, in order to address issues such as, equality, lifestyle, the holism of individuals, parent education and influence of birth order (Alfred Adler, 2019). He believed that all human beings have one main aspiration and goal: to belong and to feel important.

According to Adler, when human beings are encouraged, they feel that they are respected and good enough, and will act in a positive and cooperative way with others. On the other hand, when discouraged, human beings tend to act in unhealthy ways by negatively competing, being disrespectful and giving up easily. Adler believed that when we are encouraged, we can achieve many things, with respect, social interest, fulfillment and optimism (Lundin, 1989). After learning about Adlerian beliefs and theories, I was able to connect these to my personal life. Frequently when we start something new, there may not be many people who support us. Some may not believe in you, others may not think your idea is good enough, and discouragement begins to set in. Taking Adler’s theory and applying it to my own “movement”,

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