

■ Research Paper

Communication Praxis for Ethical Accountability: The Ethics of the Tree of Action: Dialogue and Breaking down the Wall in Cyprus

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This paper proposes the thesis that it is unethical to plan an action for social change without excavating the knowledge and wisdom of the people who are responsible for implementing the plans of action and the people whose lives will be affected. But the people, being immersed in contemporary complexity, do not know what they know until they know it as a consensus emerging from structured dialogue among a group which represents all stakeholders. We argue that the science of dialogic design may be used to achieve such an emergence. As a consequence, it satisfies the Özbekhan Axiom of Engagement and the Laouris Law of Requisite Action. The paper elaborates for the first time on the ethics of the 'Tree of Action', which some stakeholders participating in co-laboratories have called the 'Tree of Life'. Copyright © 2008 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Keywords ethics; structured dialogic design process; tree of action; collective wisdom; dialogue

INTRODUCTION

'Whom should I invite to participate in a dialogue to discuss, decide and solve a difficult problem'? Whenever a decision maker, being head of an organization, chair of a committee or a broker

trying to put together a group of 'experts' to deal with a complex situation asks this question, s/he is inevitably dealing in the ethical dimension. The situation gets more complicated when the problem to be solved calls for the transformation of a social system. The question then expands in further dimensions: 'Who has the means and the power to change the system'? 'Who has the right to change the system'? Politicians face such dilemmas everyday. On one hand, they have been presumably elected on the basis of the pro-

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gramme they advocate. In that sense, they have the mandate and the authorization to take actions that involve changing social systems. Such changes unavoidably influence the lives of all people, those who voted for them and those who did not. On the other hand, to put into practice any action for change they need the involvement, contribution and participation of those who will be affected and those who have the power to enforce such changes. Furthermore, they face ethical dilemmas as to whether they have the right to change social systems that influence peoples' lives without the *explicit* approval of those implicated. Is it ethical to impose a change that affects peoples' lives simply because a government or an authority was elected democratically with a majority vote? We know that those with a different point of view will retain their different opinion. We also know that people vote for a party line that is usually composed of a conglomerate of policies, but voters might have different positions on distinct issues. Finally, when we plan and implement drastic changes in social systems, do we have a code of ethics or a code of conduct to ensure that we stick to morality as we go through the process of re-designing social systems? These are some of the major questions addressed in this paper.

The ethics of design, especially when it comes to the transformation of social systems, is a subject that has lately received increased attention. Bausch (2000) for example attempted to collect, condense and prioritize the principles or standards that govern the practice and ethics of design. In this endeavour, he condensed 30 major works of authors such as Prigigine, Eigen, Csanyi, Maturana, Varela, Bickerton, Habermas, Luhman, Alexander and Colomy, Churchman, Checkland, Jackson, Ulrich, Flood, Kauffman, Gell-Mann, Kampis, Goertzel, Lakoff, Laszlo, Artigiani, Masulli, Banathy and Warfield. He used the condensation process to distil out key statements that concerned the application of systems theory to social processes; and to sort those statements, on the basis of content analysis, into the areas of the practice and ethics of design, the structure of the social world, communication, cognition and epistemology. Interestingly, 'Ethics' was far up in the branches of the Influence Tree;

far from the influential roots of that tree. The influential roots and trunk of the tree were 'Comprehensiveness', 'Velocity', 'Innovation' and 'No Meta-narrative'. Bausch argues that in order to guarantee 'Ethics', the above factors must be respected, and he concludes that method and tools as applied in the science of dialogic design are appropriate in achieving this end (refer to 'Practical Ethics of Group Decisions in Complex Situations' in this issue).

Building our theory upon examples, we will begin with an examination of how ethics were related to the process of taking decisions and engaging stakeholders in ancient Athens. Next, we will elaborate on four contemporary examples, two negative and two positive to illustrate how the exclusion versus the true engagement of the stakeholders can have far reaching effects on the final outcome.

DEMOCRACY IN ATHENS 2500 YEARS AGO

The modern model of democracy is not the only treasure we have inherited from the Athenians. More importantly, through their short but awe-inspiring history they have taught us that people have the power to make decisions that affect their lives. A few ancient Greek words embrace almost all wisdom we need in order to appreciate their commitment to democratic participation based on constructive dialogue. Yet, the meaning of these Greek words is usually over-simplified or distorted in contemporary interpretations to a degree that endangers the applicability of 'democracy' in the context of our contemporary societies, which are a lot more complex. We will try in this section to clarify the meaning of these words and highlight their importance and relevance in the context of ethical considerations when people design their own futures. The first word is *democracy*. The Greek word is <δημοκρατία> and it is made up from <δήμος>, which means 'common', or 'ordinary people' and <κράτος>, which means 'ruling' or 'State'. The term democracy is typically used in the context of a political State. However, if we choose to adopt this interpretation, that is, a State in which the people rule, that is, by means of their

equal voting, we risk missing an important distinction. The ending <-κρατία> actually translates into 'holding the power' or 'strength', thus <δημο-κρατία> is about the 'power of the people'. The difference appears to be minor, but it becomes instrumental when we attempt to describe democratic participation in the context of a decision-making process. To have a State in which all citizens have an equal vote is not exactly equal to truly and honestly trusting the power to the ordinary people to make final decisions, as the ending <κρατία> demands. The *power is expected to emerge out of the ordinary people* in a more direct manner. Looking at the situation from our 21st century perspective, it is remarkable that the Athenians were capable to invite and engage in their dialogues practically *all* stakeholders (i.e. any ordinary man who so wished¹). Their dialogues were practiced in the public open space of the Agora that extended over 26 acres. The Athenians held 40 statutory assemblies a year in the Agora, and more when urgent matters demanded. These assemblies provided the citizenry the opportunity to take part in deliberations and make decisions about issues that affected their lives. The procedure of the Agora was governed by the democratic constitution, which was established in 507 B.C. in Athens by Cleisthenes. Athenians were open to opposite ideas and the process guaranteed everybody the right to participate and promote their point of view. The difference between a decision-making process based on the 'State model' (i.e. equal voting as a means to chose between alternatives) and the 'Athenian model' (i.e. decision-making power emerging directly out of ordinary peoples' deliberations) will become more obvious when we consider democracy in the context of authentic dialogue as required by the next terms, which we will also borrow from the Athenians. The terms are *dialogue*, *discussion* and *deliberation*. The Greek words are <διάλογος>, <συζήτηση> and <περίσκεψη>. The first word means 'conversation', or 'discourse' and it is composed from

<διά> which means, 'through, inter' and <λόγος> which means 'speech', 'oration' or 'discourse'. The meaning of the second word, 'συζήτηση', composed of <συ->, which means 'together' and <ζητώ> which means 'searching' translates into 'searching together with the aim to clarify a debatable issue', while the third word 'περίσκεψη' translates into arguing marked by reason-giving in order to reach a decision'. Further meanings of the word deliberation include 'εξέταση', that is, examination and 'στάθμιση' that is, judging. In other words, when the ancient Greeks practiced their democracy (=δημοκρατία) they did this by using words to exchange their ideas (=διάλογος) and they engaged in discussions and deliberations as their preferred tools for searching and carefully examining meanings and alternatives together in trying to clarify a debatable situation and make a decision. They applied these procedures, because they trusted the 'wisdom of the people', which brings us to our next word. *Demosophia*, or in Greek <δημοσοφία> is from <δήμος> which means 'people' and <σοφία> which stands for 'wisdom'. As a result of their interactive, thorough and far-reaching dialogues and deliberations they were able to achieve wide consensus and reach an agreement, <συμφωνία>. Since this agreement was always shared by a great majority of those participating in the 'dialogic searching together', the sense of ownership was also very strong and their commitment to take collective action based on the agreement irrevocable. This brings us to the last term we wish to borrow from the Athenians, that is the term *decision on an agreed course of action*: <απόφαση>. It was almost always the case that Athenian dialogues had to end with a verdict, with an actual statement of what is right or wrong or what has been decided as a course of action. If we consider these terms in concert and integrate their underlying concepts, we conclude the following:

- 1 Ancient Athenians enjoyed a system, which gave them the power to make decisions that affected their lives. *Democracy*
- 2 In order to make decisions, it was necessary to first explore the situation or the debatable

¹For the purpose of our discussion, we did not consider in this argument the fact that women and slaves were excluded from such dialogues, even though of course they were also stakeholders!

- issue. They used language as their preferred method of exchanging, sharpening and clarifying their ideas. *Dialogue, Discussion*
- 3 Through a process they called 'deliberation', they engaged collectively in searching and carefully examining meanings and alternatives together with the aim to fully understand the underlying problems, clarify the debatable situation and achieve consensus. *Deliberation*
 - 4 They reached consensus regarding a collectively agreed action. They justified the correctness of their decision because they trusted their collective wisdom. *Demosophia*
 - 5 The collectively agreed course of action was backed up by all and it was considered unthinkable or even unethical to go against it, not because it was a decision eventually ordered by their king, but a decision taken democratically and shared by the great majority of those considered stakeholders. *Course of action*

Reviewing the deep meanings of these terms deems important, because it helps us grasp the importance of decision-making embedded within a democratic process that not only requires, but also capitalizes on the collective wisdom of ordinary people. Whereas democratic participation of all stakeholders embedded in their code of ethics could be secured in the small community of Athenians relying on Cleisthenes's democratic constitution, in today's society we argue that technology-assisted scientifically grounded methodologies are required in order to conduct meaningful dialogue about a complex problem engaging diverse stakeholders and to create the necessary conditions for a collectively agreed course of action to emerge, that is backed up by all those whose lives will be affected.

INCLUDING VERSUS EXCLUDING STAKEHOLDERS

In the following sections, we describe four examples in which relevant stakeholders were truly engaged versus excluded and discuss the ethical consequences of these cases. We demonstrate how the science of dialogic design is used to secure the authentic and true engagement of

the stakeholders. Moreover, we examine how it provides the mechanism through which people with different points of view can arrive at a consensus and agree on a common course of action. The first 'negative' example concerns the fact that the UN has neglected during a most critical phase relevant think tanks and stakeholders who were involved in designing a peace process in Cyprus, using a bottom-up approach, with the aim of reunifying the island. While the Cypriot think tanks and stakeholders were using the science of dialogic design as their preferred method of practicing their deliberations, the UN retracted to traditional negotiation and decision-making methods. In this process, those whose lives would be affected were alienated. We compare this case to a currently on-going process, which attempts to explore options by engaging directly those who are primary stakeholders using the science of dialogic design. As second 'negative' example, we examine the recently announced educational transformation process in Cyprus. The President of the Republic 'announced' shortly after his election the decision of his government to transform the whole educational system so that it can meet the needs of our times. Four years after, there has been no tangible evidence of change, but when asked by a journalist, the President responded that 'the transformation process has not only begun, but it is almost half-way through!' We examine how sometimes politicians cannot appreciate the difference between 'making a decision', and actually 'achieving a transformation on the ground'. Again, to illustrate an alternative approach, we compare this to a 'positive' example in which the true engagement of those whose lives will be affected (i.e. pupils/students, educators, society at large) through the application of the science of dialogic design could facilitate an authentic, grass roots and permanent change of educational processes.

We have decided to use Cyprus as a case study, because the island provides multiple opportunities of social systems research. The long protracted ethnic conflict, past and current negotiations and the power of the peace movement provide multiple examples of various efforts to achieve large systems' changes.

Lessons Derived from the Cyprus Peace Process

Cyprus has been divided by military force in 1974. Until 1994, peoples' interactions between the two 'sides' remained sparse. Citizens of the two partitions were not allowed to cross the ceasefire line, controlled by the United Nations Force. The political peculiarities of the Cyprus problem are beyond the purpose of this paper (refer to: Markides, 1977; Denktash, 1982; Koumoulides, 1986; Clerides, 1989; Fisher, 1992; Hitchens, 1997; Joseph, 1997; Gumpert and Drucker, 1997, 1998; Calotychos, 1998; Loizos, 1998; Hadjipavlou-Trigeorgis, 1993, 1998; Laouris, 1998, 2000, 2004; O'Malley and Craig, 1999; Anastasiou, 2000, 2002; Ozgur, 2000, Droushiotis, 2005). Between 1994 and 1997, with the support of several diplomatic missions and the UN,² Greek (GC) and Turkish Cypriot (TC) peace pioneers engaged in extensive structured dialogue sessions (Wolleh, 2001; Broome, 1997, 1998, 2001, 2004, 2005; Anastasiou, 2002, Laouris, 2004). They pioneered not only in visualizing a future for their common homeland, but they also achieved a common framework of thinking based on consensus and shared understanding of the current state of affairs. Moreover, they developed a roadmap using more than 100 visualized projects mapped according to their capacity to achieve change (Broome, 2002). Between 1994 and 97, more than 2000 individuals used Interactive Management³ to develop a shared vision as well as a shared understanding of the obstacles preventing the materialization of that vision and options for their removal. This work has contributed enormously towards the formation,

²Cypriot peace builders were morally and logistically supported by various foreign facilitators, academicians and diplomats as well as by physical and virtual infrastructures. The UN made available spaces for bi-communal meetings within the Ledra Palace Hotel (abandoned after the events of 1974 currently used by UN military and located at the buffer zone) and Fulbright constructed a temporary building at the buffer zone to provide not only space but also basic services such as chairs, air-conditioning, photocopy services etc. The virtual electronic infrastructure of the www.tech4peace.org peace portal funded originally through USIP and later by the UN did not only serve communication needs. Moreover, it provided shared resources and experiences. Being a transparent platform it contributed towards the demystification of the process and removal of any distrust. Furthermore, it took care of many logistics and invited newcomers with the resources to quickly get introduced to the process and be able to participate.

³Term used in earlier years to describe the Structured Dialogic Design Process.

for the first time in the history of the island, of a *bi-communal non-partisan*⁴ *embryonic peace movement*. What is of relevance to the current discussion is the fact that it was the combination of structured dialogue with the true engagement of those whose lives would be affected by any political solution, which created the amazing positive momentum, and enthusiasm that served as magnet not only to other citizens but also to Track 1 diplomats to engage. The 'movement' was characterized by a clearly stated vision and clearly stated goals, which was entirely developed by the stakeholders, ordinary people in this case, and not by the UN or other 'Governments with political interest in the situation' (i.e. Greek, Turkish and British governments, the US, Canada, Russia, etc.), as it was the case in previous attempts to resolve the Cyprus problem. For the first time, it was the people on the ground, GCs and TCs that had the responsibility to discuss, debate, envision and design a future Cyprus in which they would all live. Within a few years, this process culminated into a strong and dynamic *bi-communal peace movement*. A summary map of groups created in 1994–1997 was published in various occasions (Laouris *et al.*, 2008; Laouris and Laouri, 2008).

Cyprus's final path towards its European integration presented a unique opportunity to bring an end to the protracted conflict. In the years that followed (and especially between 2001 and 2004), UN Secretary Kofi Annan exploited this opportunity and invested profoundly on a negotiation process with the goal of reaching a comprehensive agreement to the Cyprus problem. During the initial phases of that process, the relevant stakeholders (i.e. the pioneers of the citizens' movement) were regularly consulted, involved and engaged. For example, the UN adopted two of their think tank's ideas that aimed to break the intractability. The first idea was to engage the negotiators in a process that had a fixed deadline. The second was to propose to the leaders to put any proposal for a solution to a referendum, thus bypassing 'foreign' influences (i.e. Turkey). A special Think Tank, known as the 'Harvard Group', actually developed the

⁴Left parties of both communities maintained contact throughout the years.

principles of the first versions of what became known as the Annan Plan. Subsequently, the UN gradually excluded the relevant stakeholders from the process. When the final version of the Annan Plan was put to a referendum, almost no Cypriot felt to be part of it. We argue that because of the lack of citizen's engagement there was no buy-in by the people and therefore the plan was doomed to fail.

Its opponents portrayed the plan as being created by 'foreign' powers thus primarily securing their interests. Those who contributed over the years felt alienated and disempowered to argue any differently. We conclude that the reason for the breakdown of the process partly lies in the failure of the UN to continue the authentic and extensive engagement of the people of Cyprus.

Dialogue and Breaking Down the Wall in Cyprus

In contrast to the above approach, a recent initiative currently being implemented mainly through a UN funded project, aspires to engage stakeholders' bottom-up in a way analogous to the 1994–1997 process described above. The distinction that we want to make is that similarly to the 1994–1997 case, the primary stakeholders, that is citizens and specific groups from the two conflicting societies are truly engaged using structured dialogue.

The initiative, which has become known as the 'Peace Process Revival project', encompasses a number of complimentary projects with diverse supporters. Two Turkish Cypriot NGOs: The Cyprus EU Association and the Cyprus Policy Center. Two Greek Cypriot NGOs: The Cyprus Peace Center and the Future Worlds Center. Three American-based institutions: The 21st Century Agoras, the Department of Peace & Conflict Resolution of Portland State University and the HasNa Inc. The Cyprus Intercultural Training Initiative (CITI), a bi-communal association of facilitators trained to apply the structured dialogic design process (SDDP). For a complete description of the method refer to

Christakis and Bausch (2006). CITI facilitators are experts who participated in dozens of structured dialogue co-laboratories and were extensively trained in the theory and practice of the science of dialogic design. Pioneers from all the above organizations are collaborating in the context of 'Civil Society Dialogue', aspiring to re-mobilize peace builders across the borders and in order to support groups of stakeholders to participate in structured dialogue sessions that aim to envision and design their future worlds. In practice, these initiatives take formats that range from pure think tanks to action groups. For example, structured dialogue sessions have been organized for business people who wish to understand how the current political impasse harms everybody on the island and especially how it harms business, and explore options to break out this *status quo*. Similarly, journalists collaborate to develop a detailed vision of a new media landscape for Cyprus (NML Wiki), citizens of Famagusta (Turkish Cypriots currently living in the city together with Greek Cypriots who were displaced in 1974) explore options to enable the opening of the abandoned city, which has been a ghost town for over 33 years (Famagusta Wiki), and environmentalists work together to come up with ideas, proposals and solutions that treat the environment in Cyprus as one and not divided by invisible political lines (Famagusta Revival Report, 2008). As an example, we present the influence tree created by the people of Famagusta (Figure 1). Interestingly, they have 'voted' the creation of a 'common think tank to provide policy advice to everyone involved', as their most influential factor, thus confirming our thesis that their true engagement is a necessary condition for meaningful action to emerge. In all the above examples, factors that relate to the engagement of the stakeholders end up being most influential (refer to their respective reports). In sum, the current initiatives satisfy the thesis that the capacity of a community of stakeholders to implement any plan of action effectively depends strongly on the true engagement of all stakeholders in designing it, and that disregarding the participation of stakeholders on the ground is unethical and any plans are bound to fail, because of their lack of involvement.

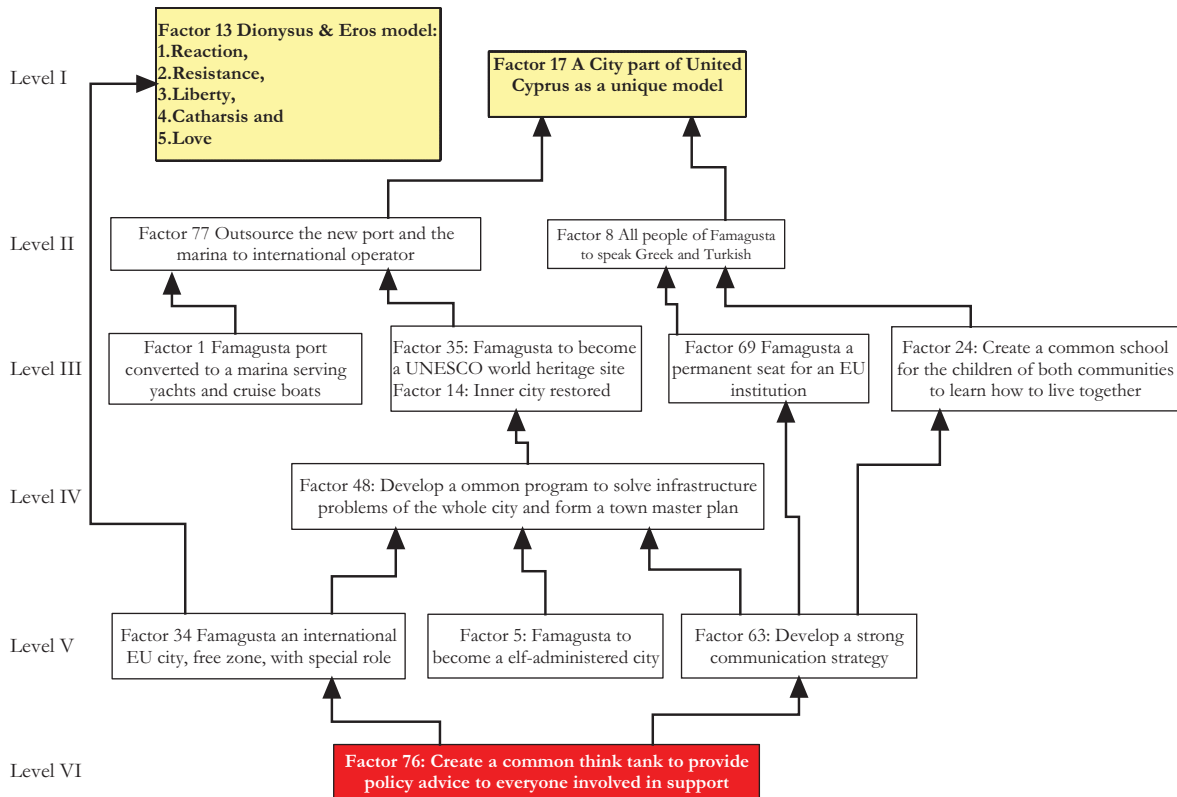


Figure 1. Vision map of Famagusta co-laboratory

Transforming the Educational System in Cyprus Top-Down

Upon his election as President of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr Tassos Papadopoulos announced the commitment of his government to transform the Cyprus educational system (speech 30.1.2005). His declared vision was 'I call all who are interested for the future of our children and the re-definition of the structure and goals of a future educational system to engage actively in this dialog, which beyond a dialog among organized bodies it must become a dialog among citizens' (Papadopoulos, 2008).

In order to launch the process, his government hired what became known as the team of the 'seven wise' experts to design on paper the transformation process. A web page was launched where the public is invited to participate. However, a poll conducted by an intern of the

Future Worlds Center involving over a 1000 pedestrians in Nicosia's main streets almost 5 years after the official launch has shown that less than 2% (19 people) were aware that the educational system was being 'transformed' and even less (seven people) knew of the possibility of 'ordinary people' to participate in the process. The approach adopted by the government came to many as a shock. The European Commission has published a detailed report that also summarizes some of these data:(<http://www.deeep.org/english/europe/school/cyprus.pdf>).

A political decision for an extensive educational transform has been taken and relevant laws were passed through the House of Representatives. However, this process focused on rather technical, logistical and legal dimensions. Characteristically, Minister of Education, Mr. Kleanthous, responding to general questions on progress achieved, declared more than two years

later (28/9/2007) 'the Ministry's proposal envisages the gradual termination of the appointment of teachers based on a waiting list. In the first phase 60% of teachers will be appointed after written examinations and personal interviews and 40% will be appointed out of the waiting list'. The Ministry also proposed to increase the number of students in state universities by 2,000 by 2010 so that the total number will reach 10,000 (Financial Mirror 28/9/2007). The relevant stakeholders like parents, children, NGOs and educators on the ground are not invited to participate authentically. Predominantly Educators' Unions are more interested in their financial benefits, their office hours, full-versus half-day schooling issues, etc., are currently part of what is called 'social dialogue'. This is also reflected in the numbers and types of contributions posted on the relevant website: Educators training - 2 articles; Restructuring of the Pedagogical Institute - 2 articles; Full-day school - 8 articles; Parallel education - 1 article; New system for entrance in universities - 2 articles; Opinions regarding the experts' report - 5 articles (Cyprus Educational Reform Web site; Section: Stakeholders' opinions).

This initiative must be explored within the larger context. Cyprus has struggled for decades because of the unresolved Cyprus problem. The strongest argument of the Turkish Cypriot Community has been that the Greek Cypriot community, who monopolizes power, completely disrespects their presence not to mention their needs. Following the accession of Cyprus to the EU, the number of European citizens who live permanently on the island has risen dramatically to approach 20% of the total population. Previously, it has been 5%. According to statistics published by the Ministry of Education, one in five children in our schools has at least one parent who is of non-Cypriot origin. Still the President and his government consider it fair to launch a website named 'Public Dialogue for the Educational Transformation' which is available only in the Greek language thus excluding almost 30% of the people who live on the island from contributing. The webpage does not have any provision for dialogue or uncensored contributions. In contrast, if one wishes to participate, the only option is to

send an email to the contact person through an unfriendly form in which the communication box measures less than 3×2 inches.

The 55-page synopsis of suggestions proposed by the 'seven wise men' for the educational reform in Cyprus includes 89 reform ideas that correspond, practically one-to-one, to 87 descriptors of the 'problematic' current situation (Synopsis, 2004). Both, the descriptors of the current situation, and the suggestions for corrective actions are clustered into the same 28 categories. According to Özbekhan, Jantsch and Christakis, who conceptualized the original prospectus of the Club of Rome⁵ (CoR) titled 'The Predicament of Mankind' (Christakis, 2006), the premature proposition of corrective actions to problems (using a one-to-one paradigm) leads to an extrapolated future, which differs significantly from an ideal vision. The reason is because an attempt to resolve the *problematique* (Özbekhan's thesis explained in Christakis, 2006) founded on traditional analytic engineering fails to capture and to address the inter-relations, inter-connections and interactions between individual aspects (sub-problems) of the problematic situation. Trying to solve sub-problems in isolation exacerbates the intensity of the *problematique*. What we get is another state of the *same* problematic situation simply extrapolated into a future point in time.

Schools Transforming into Multi-Cultural Entities Bottom-Up

A UNDP funded initiative running under 'Building a multi-ethnic and multi-national Cyprus to promote European values and regional and international peace' uses structured dialogue in five elementary schools in Cyprus to support

⁵The Club of Rome (CoR; refer to Club of Rome, Wikipedia) was founded in April 1968 by Aurelio Peccei, an Italian industrialist, and Alexander King, a Scottish scientist. Hasan Özbekhan, Erich Jantsch and Alexander Christakis were responsible for conceptualizing the original prospectus of the Club of Rome titled 'The Predicament of Mankind.' This prospectus, founded on a humanistic architecture and the participation of stakeholders in democratic dialogue, incorporated the seeds for a paradigm shift in designing social systems. The prospectus introduced the concept of the *Problematique* as the 'enormous problem' of the 20th Century.

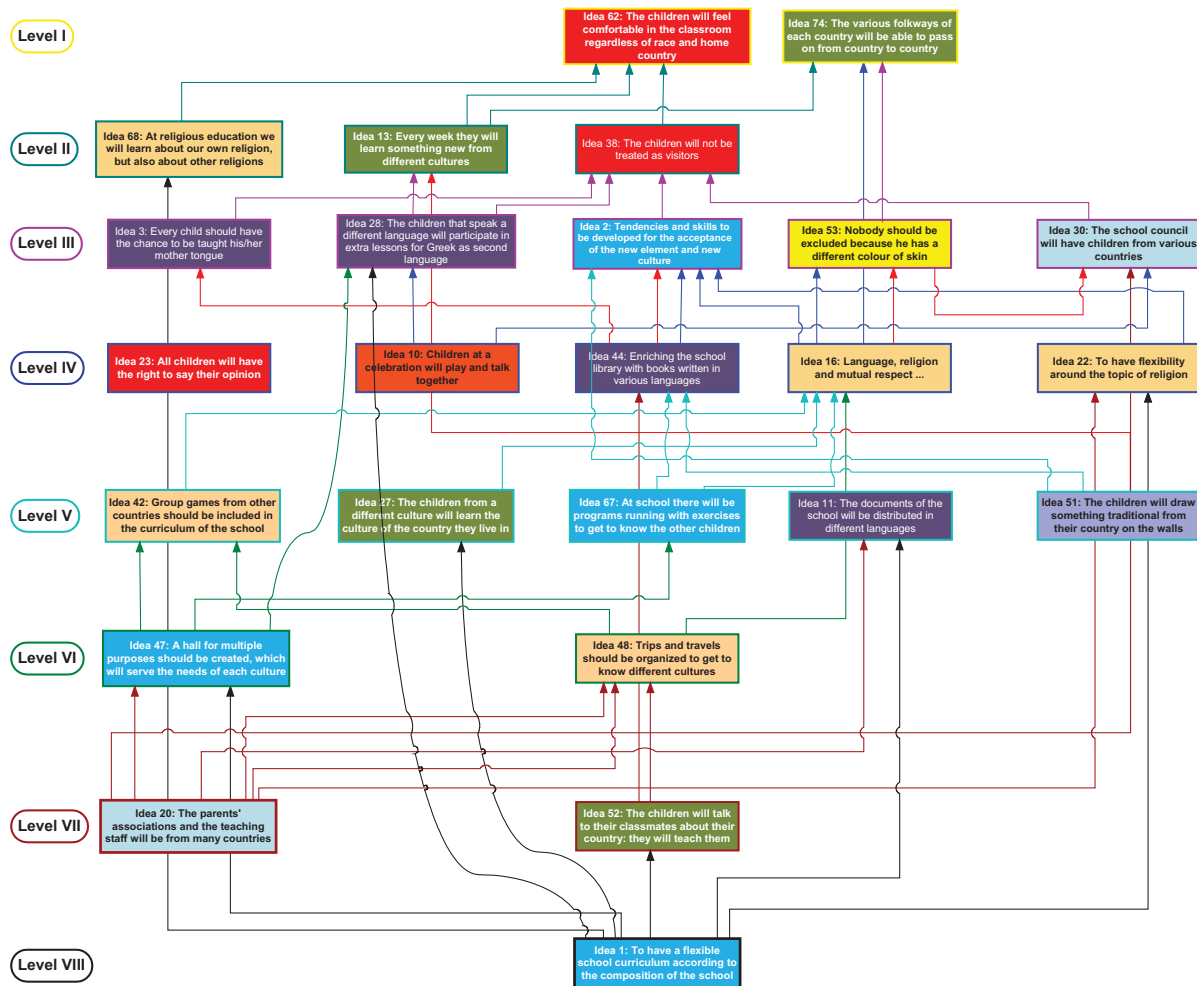


Figure 2. Vision map of an ideal multicultural school developed by pupils, teachers and parents of the Deryneia school in Cyprus. To distinguish arrows' connections, lines originating from a particular level have the same color

participants develop a vision for a multi-cultural transformation of their schools. The process engages not only teachers and parents but also young pupils. It is probably the first time that under aged children (12 years old) have participated on an equal footing in designing their schools of the future. The preliminary results have shown that structured dialogic design was instrumental in empowering and liberating such young participants to contribute quite significant ideas. More specifically, Tsivacou's (1997) Law of Requisite Autonomy in Decision and the implied protection of the authenticity of their ideas were

responsible for this encouraging result. The map in Figure 2 illustrates that four of the most influential factors (in layers 5 & 6) can be implemented at the level of the school. The mere internalization of this finding by the participants of the co-laboratory represents a very important step in the transition from truly understanding the problem and envisioning its solution to taking action in order to materialize their vision. If the schools involved manage to take these steps, develop procedures and launch activities that respond to these factors, they will contribute to a permanent and sustainable

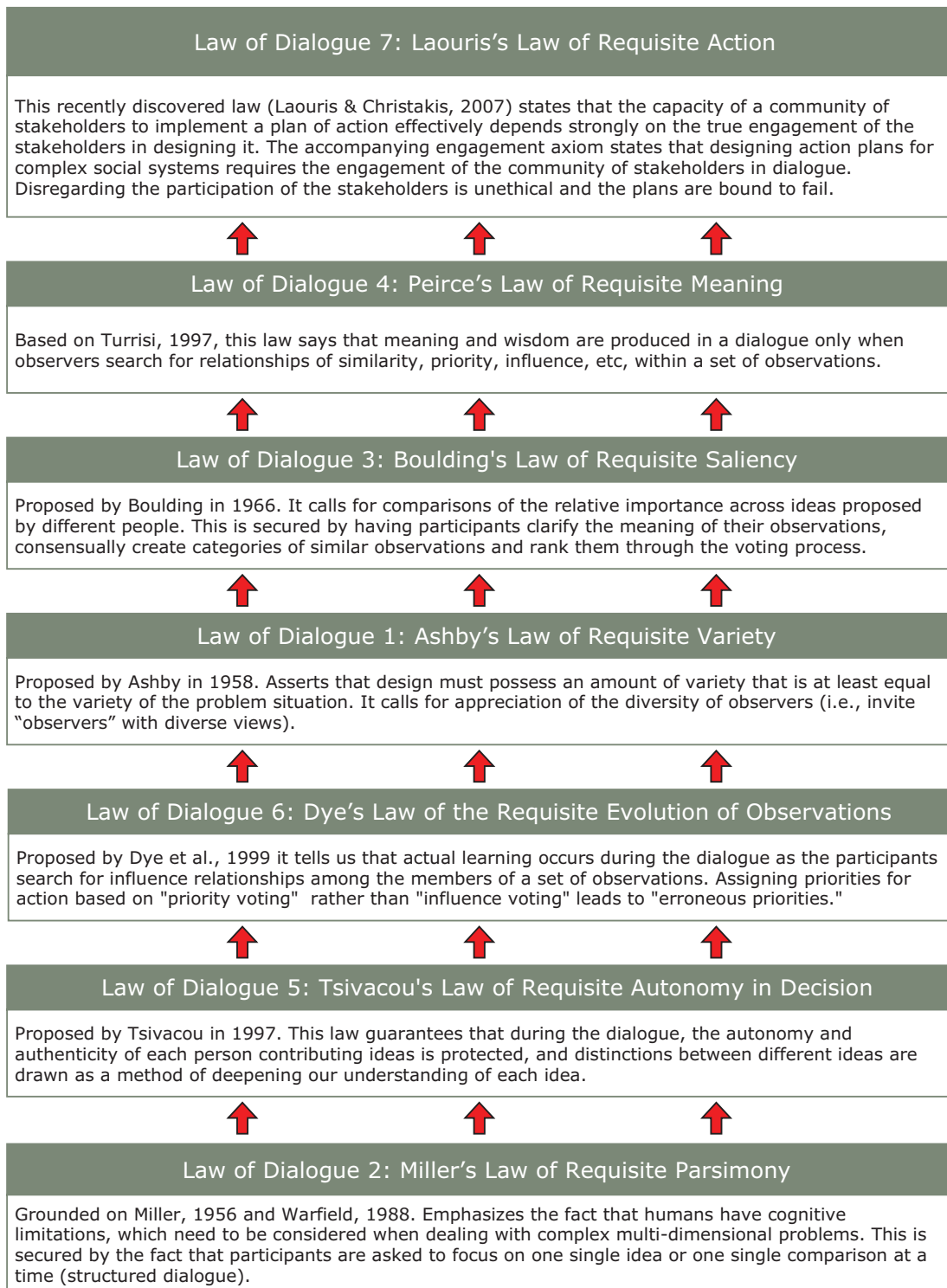


Figure 3. The Tree of Action. The Laouris Law of Requisite Action requires that all six Laws of the Tree of Meaning be satisfied for action to emerge

change of the educational system, which will not be imposed by the Ministry of education but will be based on a culture that evolves bottom-up. By the time of publication, the number of participating schools increased to five, all of which have taken practical steps to implement factors that came out of the deliberations to be the most influential.

FORMULATING THE LAW OF ACTION

We have recently formulated the Law of Requisite Action, which encompasses the conclusions we make in this report (Laouris, 2008). The law states *'the capacity of a community of stakeholders to implement a plan of action effectively depends strongly on the true engagement of the stakeholders in designing it. Disregarding the participation of the stakeholders the plans are bound to fail'*. Christakis has proposed the expansion of the 'Tree of Meaning' to incorporate this law as well as the 'Engagement Axiom', attributed to Özbekhan: *'Designing action plans for complex social systems requires the engagement of the community of stakeholders in dialogue. Disregarding the participation of the stakeholders is unethical'*. We studied how this new law fits into the scheme of the 'Tree of Meaning' using senior scientists during the 3rd International Conference of the Hellenic Society of Systems Sciences, which took place in Pireus in May 2007 as participants in a co-laboratory. We applied the structured dialogic design process to examine the influence of one law on another. The result is shown in Figure 3.

We concluded that, if all requirements of the previously discovered six laws of structured dialogic design are fulfilled, the next logical phase is for stakeholders to transcend into the action phase. We claim that the magical transition from the cognitive part (which is to truly understand the problem and to envision its solution) to the action part happens automatically. This is what we believe is the greatest contribution of the structured dialogic design process. Participants are always willing to assume some kind of responsibility and take action. The process creates the conditions for this to happen in the most educated and efficient

manner. It is thus becoming obvious that this transition happens only when the power of structured dialogue is experienced in the arena. We have no power to require participants of a co-laboratory to take action. But through our adherence to the laws of structured dialogic design, we set up the stage. We compel parsimony, autonomy, evolutionary learning and assist them to achieve *meaning and wisdom*. Out of these, largely cognitive processes, action emerges as a natural consequence. The recent applications described above and many other throughout Europe provide support to this thesis (Laouris, 2008).

DISCUSSION

Participation in decision-making is the key to democratic decision-making. We do not all have to participate in every decision. Not only is that not practical, but also there are many arguments that speak against such a horizontal and practically infinite system. People have to be able, however, to participate in decisions that affect them, or their families and various communities of belonging. According to Wasilewski (2007), what has to emerge is a dynamic, multi-centred *and interlinked* system ... not isolated circles but overlapping circles, like the interlinked circles in a Plains Indian hoop dance, where each of the interlinked hoops represent a different created realm ... the Two Leggeds, the Four Leggeds, the Swimming People, etc.⁶ What enables such a system to interlink is *dialogue*, which is translated as 'the creation of mutual meaning through words'. Unfortunately, no existing parliamentary or congressional governance structure is

⁶The Hoop Dance is based on a myth of the Plains Indians about creation. According to the legend, a dying man wanted to leave something important behind. The Creator presented him a single hoop made of wood and told him that for each living thing he could create, one more hoop would be added. As he added more hoops, the man became stronger and could create more and more forms of living things. In its earliest appearance, the Hoop Dance is believed to have been part of a healing ceremony designed to restore balance and harmony in the world. Contemporary hoop dancers use as many as 40 reeds or wooden hoops to create many shapes, including butterflies, turtles, eagles, flowers and snakes. Each of the interlinked hoops represent a different created realm ... the two-leggeds, the four-leggeds, the Swimming People, etc. They represent living things that grow and change all the time. What emerges is a dynamic, multi-centred and interlinked system ... not isolated circles, but overlapping circles. The dance demonstrates how all the living things are interconnected and interdependent.

capable of adequately representing today's world's diversity. We have to use our imagination to create new dynamic forms of governance, which more adequately allow the true aggregation of opinion/meaning in our world. Moreover, we must find a way to include, the voices of those that have no voice, such as the natural environment, animals, young children, the disabled, etc. This is a principal ethical obligation we have towards humanity and towards nature.

Ethical Inquiry in the Context of Social Dialogues in Cyprus

The referendum on 24 April 2004 was a Grand milestone for the recent history of Cyprus. The international community, the UN, the political leaders and the public at large failed to bring an end to the long struggle for peace in Cyprus within the European context. They also failed to lead the way on a global scale by breaking new ground on how peace is achieved. If Cyprus had managed to resolve its problem through a process combining political peace negotiations and citizens' contributions and participation, the UN would have been significantly empowered to take analogous action in other regions of the world. We argue that the reason for the breakdown of the process partly lies in the failure of the UN to continue the authentic and extensive engagement of the people of Cyprus. If Cypriots were truly engaged, the final version of the Annan plan could have been different in terms of content. Moreover, Cypriots would have developed ownership over the plan and responsibility to promote it. We therefore conclude that the exclusion of the people on the ground was not only unethical (based on Özbekhan's Axiom of Engagement), but it also contributed to the failure of the effort (according to the Laouris Law of Requisite Action).

In response to international pressures, as well as honoring EU expectations for educational reforms, NGOs and research centers within Cyprus pioneer in seeking change. For example, the Association for Historical Dialogue and Research is a bi-communal NGO, which seeks to train teachers across the divide in the new

methodological approaches of critical thinking and multi-perspectivity. Another NGO, AKTI, who examined the textbooks in 2004 found that while previously, textbooks published by the Ministry of Education in Greece were used, as Greece modified its textbooks to fit in line with the educational directives of the EU, Greek Cypriot textbooks, now published by the Cypriot Ministry of Education, did not change (Clark, 2008). Unfortunately, those involved in the reforms did not seek any contributions from these Initiatives. As Clark recommends, local actors must be engaged and supportive linkages must be made within the community among teachers, parents and politicians (Clark, 2008; page 28). Their engagement and ownership of the proposed change is not only of ethical importance. It is a requirement of the success and the sustainability of the envisioned reform. The 'seven wise men' succeeded to come up with 87 descriptors of the current problematic situation of the Cyprus educational system. Had they engaged further stakeholders, they would have probably identified different descriptors. Moreover, they failed to appreciate and capture the entire breadth of the problematique, because they did not explore *interrelations between sub-problems*. Complex social (and other) problems of the 21st can of course be broken down to sub-problems. However, these sub-problems cannot be tackled in isolation and cannot be solved by simply assigning responsibility to various committees of 'experts' or relevant government bodies, ignoring all those whose lives will be affected. Nor can they be solved using analytic methods or technologies based on a single scientific discipline. This is why they are referred to as *complex problems*; sub-problems are heavily coupled and their interactivity is so strong that a holistic/systemic approach becomes an absolute necessity for their resolution. Moreover, any attempt to resolve the problematique founded on traditional disciplinary approaches excluding those whose lives will be affected is not only doomed to failure; it is also unethical.

According to van Gigh, infractions are committed when norms are broken. An Ethical Inquiry is meant to detect infractions to morality, that is where actual behaviour of individuals departs

from the norm established by society or by the community. If we use the Law of Requisite Action and Özbenkhan's Axiom of Engagement as our norms when designing social systems, then infractions were committed in both examples elaborated above, norms have been violated and Cypriots have paid a weighty penalty.

In conclusion, if we truly wish to transform our social environments in democratic and enduring ways, we should extend the notion of 'expert' when dealing in the social systems designing arena; not only include all those who have a stake, but all whose lives will be affected by the change should be invited and encouraged to participate. Moreover, we must secure their *authentic* and *democratic* participation. The recent change in government in Cyprus opens a new window of opportunity for democratic processes to prevail. The newly elected president, Mr. Christofias has partly won the elections because he is respected for the importance he puts in humane values, ethics in governance and participation of the people.

The Way Forward

It is worth mentioning that UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon requested from the UN General Assembly an increased budget for 2008, to cover the requirements to emerge from a possible appointment of a new Special Adviser on Cyprus in the event of a fresh negotiating round for a Cyprus settlement in 2008. According to the UN Report (2007), he also set a target of 150 conferences, seminars and other relevant events organized by civil society organizations engaged in the search for a comprehensive settlement and finally the 'restoration of full-fledged negotiations to reach a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem', with substantive issues agreed as the basis for a comprehensive settlement. The engagement of civil society organizations and people on the ground in the search for a comprehensive settlement is a significant step in the right direction. Hopefully, and assuming that UN Secretary's request is granted, the engagement of the people will be truly authentic. Clearly, if the UN and other

relevant actors are concerned with justice and wish to invest towards a successful outcome, all those who might be affected by a political decision should be invited to deliberate. Needless to emphasize that the content upon which they will be invited to interact should not be predetermined and/or biased in favour of any particular positions. Of course, we know that it is practically impossible (with today's methods of democratic participation) to engage hundreds of thousands in a negotiation. We also know that there are many reasons why such infinite horizontal model would fail. However, it is important to set up a stage in which everybody who is a stakeholder is encouraged in an authentic way to contribute. At the same time, everyone participating in the deliberations must also be prepared to listen actively and with respect what other people have to say, open to consider counter arguments and willing to learn and even transform his/her ideas in the spirit of constructive dialogue. The only approach to dialogue that can satisfy such conditions is the type of deliberation that is implemented through the application of the science of dialogic design.

Rawls (1971) and Habermas (1990) furnish us with the philosophical foundations for deliberation. According to Khan and Schneiderhan (2007), there are two central conditions for Habermasian deliberation: '...first, that actors offer up reasons in attempts to provide "justification of norms", and second that all those affected are "participants" in a practical discourse'. The science of structured dialogic design satisfies both conditions. In accordance with Dye's Law of the Requisite Evolution of Observations (Dye and Conaway, 1999) while participants search for influence relationships between distinct observations they engage in arguing and justification of their ideas, a process that greatly enhances their learning. Boulding's Law of Requisite Saliency (1966), which calls for comparisons of the relative importance across ideas proposed by different people, enhances their appreciation of other peoples' point of view. The fourth law of dialogue: Peirce's Law of Requisite Meaning and Wisdom (based on Turrisi, 1997), states that meaning and wisdom can only be achieved when the participants search for relationships of

similarity, priority, influence, etc. Collectively, these laws satisfy the first condition for optimal deliberation as put forward by Khan and Schneiderhan. The newly discovered law of Requisite Action demands that all those whose lives will be affected must be truly engaged in the dialogue. This law satisfies the second condition for optimal deliberation as put forward by Khan and Schneiderhan. As a consequence, we argue that the science of dialogic design is optimally positioned to guarantee quality deliberations. It not only satisfies the central conditions for Habermasian deliberation, but also Özbenkhan's Axiom of Engagement and the Law of Requisite Action (which some stakeholders participating in co-laboratories have called the 'Tree of Life') in the context of the Tree of Action of Figure 3.

Ethical Considerations as SDDP Shifts in Digital Dimensions

It is erroneous that in an era in which massive digital media communication networks can transfer text, sound and video instantaneously to any part of the globe and provide direct access to any type of stored information instantly, the world is confronted with the most serious communication crisis. In a world characterized by vast global changes and enormous technological progress, the dawn of the 21st century is loaded with countless political conflicts both across and within states. The matrix of on-going international, inter-ethnic, inter-religious and possibly inter-civilization conflicts demand effective and meaningful communication methods for their resolution (Laouris and Laouri, 2008). The instantaneous access and unlimited transfer capabilities of information is not a sufficient condition for meaningful communication to emerge. The Athenians interacted in their *agora* and trusted that *demosophia* would enable *democracy* to be enacted. According to Wasilewski (2005), the question is, 'how can we guarantee effective dialogue in open conceptual (as distinct from open physical) spaces about contemporary complex issues with more people of ever more varied backgrounds participating in the conversation?' She uses Slater and Bennis' (1990)

definition of democracy⁷ to argue that the Boundary-Spanning Dialogic Approach as implemented by the structured dialogic design and assisted by technology is the only currently available model of dialogue that can guarantee meaningful dialogue.

Until recently, structured dialogic design was implemented during exclusive face-to-face meetings of the participants. Our group has investigated in four co-laboratories the option to collect responses to the triggering question by email (Laouris and Michaelides, 2007; Laouris *et al.*, 2007; Planetary dialogue Report) thus harnessing the power of Internet. We concluded that with the combination of asynchronous and synchronous communication tools for engaging stakeholders at different places in a disciplined dialogue, SDDP can deliver reasonably effective and useful results at a shorter time and at a lower cost to the participants and the sponsors of the dialogue (Laouris and Christakis, 2007). However, in at least one of the co-laboratories (which was politically loaded), participants were hesitant in the beginning to submit their ideas through email. Although not explicitly stated, their reluctance was presumably grounded on the fear that statements could be propagated uncontrollably (emails are easy to hack or forward), misunderstood and even deliberately misinterpreted. The responsibility of the facilitators to protect not only the authenticity but also the confidentiality of the ideas of participants becomes imperative when discourse shifts in cyberspace. We have shown that the new model improves compliance of the SDDP with Ashby (1958) and Tsivacou's (1997) laws and

⁷Slater and Bennis' definition of democracy in their prophetic 1990 paper, *Democracy is Inevitable*, is as follows:

- Full and free communication, regardless of rank and power.
- A reliance on consensus rather than coercion or compromise to manage conflict.
- The idea that influence is based on technical competence and knowledge rather than on the vagaries of personal whims or prerogatives of power.
- An atmosphere that permits and even encourages emotional expression as well as task-oriented behaviour.
- A basically human bias, one that accepts the inevitability of conflict between the organization and the individual, but is willing to cope with and mediate this conflict on rational grounds.

improves our possibilities to counteract group-think. Ashby's law is enhanced because the combination of synchronous and asynchronous phases enables diverse participants to contribute independent of their geographic location or time limitations. Tsivacou's law is also enhanced because rank, power, linguistic skills and other differences between participants become less visible in the digital dimension. Boulding's (1966) and Dye's (1999) laws on the other hand might suffer slightly by the design. The ability of participants to assign relative importance to elemental observations (Boulding), as well as their ability to distinguish the difference between 'importance' and 'influence' (Dye) heavily depends on the time spent to make these distinctions during the clarification and clustering processes. Since these two activities take place asynchronously, participants miss some opportunities to consider small distinctions between different ideas. Finally, the synchronous/asynchronous model introduces threats for violating the cognitive limitations axiom if technology becomes dysfunctional. Shifting dialogue in the digital arena poses new ethical issues with which the Knowledge Management Team must deal.

For example, in a current experiment, we have introduced a Wiki for participants to not only publish their responses to the triggering question but also to request clarifications from others. While this experiment is still ongoing, the preliminary results again show great reluctance of participants to share their ideas in a public digital sphere. Similarly to the case described above, this co-laboratory involves participants loaded with distrust and fear that others might misuse their statements and ideas. The project involves a group of Greek and Turkish Cypriot journalists committed to envision and design an ideal media landscape for future Cyprus (NML Wiki).

Ethical considerations within cyberspace will become even more serious when such discourse takes place in future ambient intelligent environments. One of the great benefits of Ambient Intelligence is its versatility, and the many uses that the same information can have in interacting with various digital environments. The future

application of ambient intelligent agents within a structured dialogue context will require participants to 'trust' the information technology systems around them. It is this trust that could be the root of potential difficulties. For ambient intelligence to work, information must be shared over multiple networks. This implies that data must be made available to 'trusted' networks, or that data must be replicated across multiple databases. If data are replicated, then the accuracy of the information could come into question. The authors are currently designing experiments in Second Life (www.secondLife.com) and developing theory to address some of these issues. Satisfactory resolution of the ethical dimension of the problem is necessary in our effort to develop ability to scale-up by ten to a hundred fold the number of participants in face-to-face and eParticipation modes of democracy and peace building. To shorten the time required by a society to explore an important issue, cultivate policy options and achieve social transformation is a major goal of our research.

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