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Addressing Cypriots' Voice: Obstacles and Actions

Civil Society Dialogue Project
Cypriots' Voice Co-Laboratory Report

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All 20 participants were willing to dedicate the time necessary to work together with understanding to address obstacles for the Cypriots' Voice group, external, internal and organisational, and design an action plan. Their hard work, perseverance and humour made the workshops experience both richly diverse and productive. The participants are the primary authors of views expressed in this document.

Participants included: Ahmet Hidiroglu, Alecos Tringides, Ali Erel, Alpay Durduran, Andros Karayiannis, Derya Beyatli, Didem Erel, Dimitra Karoulla Vrikki, Dina Moustერი, Gius Bayada, Hasip Erel, Kyriakos Djambazis, Maria Hadjipavlou, Michalis Papapetrou, Mula Rasih ..., Mustafa Damdelen, Perikleous Chrysostomos, Takis Hadjidemetriou, Yiannis H. Ioannou.

The Facilitation Team of these Cypriots' Voice co-laboratories consisted of: Ilke Dagli, Sarper Ince, Tatjana Taraszow and Yiouli Takis.



Executive Summary

Twenty stakeholders who were all members of the Cypriots' Voice with diverse perspectives and experiences participated at the two successive bi-communal co-laboratories on 7 and 8 June 2008. During the first co-laboratory, which was dedicated to jointly diagnose and describe the obstacles, i.e. the problematique with respect to Cypriots' Voice's ideal organisation and objectives of the declaration and their vision. The participants identified the current situation with its obstacles stopping them or slowing them down in achieving their ideal organisation, objectives and vision. The Cypriots' Voice members identified 51 of obstacles.

The second workshop aimed at designing an action plan where participants proposed 31 actions to overcome the diagnosed obstacles and therefore, achieve their ideal organisation, objectives and their vision.

The stakeholder representatives were engaged in dialogue sessions that were designed and conducted employing the Structured Dialogic Design Process founded in systems sciences.

Identity

CypriotsVoice is a socio-political group consisting of active members of the Cypriot civil society sharing the vision of a common multicultural Cyprus where all inhabitants of all communities could live in conditions of freedom, democracy, equality, social justice, and respect of human rights and in accordance with the principles of the European Union.

CypriotsVoice aims to address all Cypriots by expressing an alternative, prudent, and credible political voice, and by undertaking concrete socio-political projects for the benefit of Cyprus.

CypriotsVoice was initiated in April 2007 by a small group of Cypriots during a workshop hosted in Brussels with the participation of representatives of the European Parliament and the European Commission. The members nominate new candidates who may join the group in their personal capacity pledging their contribution towards achieving the common goals.

1. Methodology: Structured Dialogic Design Process

The Structured Dialogic Design Process (SDDP) is a methodology that supports *democratic* and *structured* dialogue among a heterogeneous group of stakeholders. It is especially effective in resolving complex conflicts of purpose and values and in generating consensus on organizational and inter-organizational strategy. SDDP, which has been rigorously validated in hundreds of cases throughout the last 30 years, is scientifically grounded on seven laws of cybernetics/systems science and four axioms:

1. Ashby's Law of Requisite Variety;
2. Miller's Law of Requisite Parsimony;
3. Boulding's of Requisite Saliency;
4. Peirce's Law of Requisite Meaning⁹;
5. Tsivacou's Law of Requisite Autonomy in Decision;
6. Dye's Law of the Requisite revolution of observations;
7. Laouris' Law of Requisite Action.

1. COMPLEXITY: We live in a world that is very complex. Problems are complex and interconnected.
2. PARSIMONY: Human cognition & attention is limited. Attention and cognition is usually overloaded in group design.
3. SALIENCY: The field of options in any evaluation is multidimensional. "Salient synthesis" is difficult.
4. ENGAGEMENT: Disregarding the participation of the stakeholders in designing action plans is unethical and the plans are bound to fail.

The SDDP methodology was chosen to support the Cypriots' Voice workshop sessions of the Civil Society Dialogue Project in structuring the members' i.e. the partners, ideas on the current situation and an action plan regarding Cypriots' Voice's ideal organisation and objectives of the declaration and their vision..

The SDDP is specifically designed to assist inhomogeneous groups to deal with complex issues, in a reasonably limited amount of time. It enables the integration of contributions from individuals with diverse views, backgrounds and perspectives through a process that is participatory, structured, inclusive and collaborative.

A group of participants, who are knowledgeable of the particular situation are engaged in collectively developing a common framework of thinking based on consensus and shared understanding of the current or future ideal state of affairs. SDDP promotes focused communication among the participants in the design process and their ownership of and commitment in the outcome.

1.1 Structure and Process in a typical SDDP Workshop

When facing any complex problem, the stakeholders can optimally approach it in the following way:

1. Develop a shared vision of an ideal future situation. This ideal vision map serves as a *magnet* to help the social system transcend into its future state.
2. Define the current *problématique*, i.e., develop a common and shared understanding of what are the obstacles that prevent the stakeholders reaching their idealized vision.
3. Define actions/options or a roadmap to achieve the goals.

The three phases are done using exactly the same dialogue technique. Each phase completes with similar products:

1. A list of all ideas [SDDP is a self documenting process].
2. A cluster of all ideas categorized using common attributes.
3. A document with the voting results [erroneous effect=most popular ideas do not prove to be the most influential].
4. A map of influences. This is the most important product of the methodology. Ideas are related according to the influence they exert on each other. If one is dealing with problems, then the most influential ideas are the *root causes*. Addressing those will be most efficient. If one is dealing with factors that describe a future ideal state, then working on the most influential factors means that achieving the final goal will be easier/faster/more economic, etc.

In the following, the process of a typical SDDP session with its phases is being described more precisely:

First The breadth of the dialogue is constrained and sharpened with the help of a *triggering question*. This is formulated by a core group of people, who are the Knowledge Management Team (KMT) and is composed by the owners of the complex problem and SDDP experts. This question can be emailed to all participants, who are requested to respond with at least three contributions before the meeting.

Second All contributions/responses to the triggering questions are recorded in the CogniScope II software. They must be short and concise, hence contain one idea in one sentence. The authors may clarify their ideas in a few additional sentences.

- Third The ideas are clustered into categories based on similarities and common attributes. A smaller team can do this process to reduce time (e.g., between plenary sessions).
- Forth All participants get five votes and are asked to choose their favourite (most important to them) ideas. Only ideas that received votes go to the next and most important phase.
- Fifth In this phase, participants are asked to explore influences of one idea on another. For example, they might be asked to decide whether solving problem x will make solving problem y easier. If the answer is yes (great majority) an influence is established on a map of ideas. The way to read that influence is that items at the bottom are root causes (if what is being discussed are obstacles), or most influential factors (if what is being discussed are descriptors of an ideal situation or actions to take). Those root factors must be given priority.
- Sixth Using the root factors, participants develop an efficient strategy and come up with a road map to implement it.

1.2 Further information about SDDP

One can begin a search on the Internet with:	Lovers of Democracy, Ozbekhan, Christakis, Club of Rome
Book by Dr. Alexander Christakis; a must for beginner or advanced practitioners:	http://Harnessingcollectivewisdom.com
Wiki for dialogue community support:	http://blogora.net
Institute for 21 st Century Agoras:	http://www.globalagoras.org/
Lovers of Democracy; description of the technology of democracy:	http://sunsite.utk.edu/FINS/loversofdemocracy/technologyofdemocracy.htm
New Geometry of Languageing And New Technology of Democracy by Schreibman and Christakis:	http://sunsite.utk.edu/FINS/loversofdemocracy/NewAgora.htm
Applications of SDDP in the Cost219ter & Cost298 networks of experts from >20 countries by Laouris, Michaelides, Roe and Sapio:	http://www.tiresias.org/cost219ter/inclusive_future/(19).pdf http://www.cost298.org

A methodological paper describing the application of synchronous/asynchronous SDDP:

http://sunsite.utk.edu/FINS/loversofdemocracy/Laouris_Christakis_VirtualSDDP_2007_04_28.pdf

Cypriot applications with diverse stakeholders and complex situations:

1. Information technology in the service of peace building; the case of Cyprus. *World Futures*, 60, 67–79:
2. A systemic evaluation of the state of affairs following the negative outcome of the referendum in Cyprus using a structured design process:

http://www.cnti.org.cy/CNTI_research/Publications/Full%20Papers/TFP_World%20Futures2004.pdf

http://www.cnti.org.cy/CNTI_research/Publications/Full%20Papers/RevivingPeaceArticle2007_04_13.pdf

2. Declaration

- Consists of a broad spectrum of citizens who value finding a solution to the Cyprus issue as constituting a necessity that cannot be postponed or delayed any further.
- Notes that fruitless lapse of time aggravates the situation in Cyprus with tensions and crises both at the internal and the international level, resulting in further stabilization of the status quo, which is widely perceived as containing the danger of permanent division of our country.
- Faces positively actions and positions that contribute to strengthening relations between the communities thus creating the necessary preconditions for a solution of the political problem. It will develop relations of understanding and cooperation between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots with the view to shaping common targets and undertaking common actions for effective and immediate intervention aiming to promote the course of an overall solution of the Cyprus problem.
- Believes that the only prospect remaining open is contained in the principles discussed and agreed upon in the long consultations between the two communities and which are summarized in the “federal structure of a united Cyprus with two geographical and state zones and a political parity as defined by the United Nations, in the context of the European Union”. The reference of two communities does not imply lack of recognition of the Maronite, Armenian and Latin communities which equally contribute in the configuration of the society and cultural form of modern Cyprus.
- Envisions a Cyprus that will depend on cooperation and mutual trust between the communities, without tensions, conflicts, and racial confrontations. Working for peace and democracy, for cooperation rather than confrontation, it is possible to build together a multicultural society in the context of the European Union, away from nationalisms and chauvinist elations.
- Works for the development of a creative, constructive, and mature dialogue for the deepening of democracy, away from anachronistic slogans and prejudices, doctrinal attitudes, surly approaches and antidemocratic behaviors. It will decisively fight divisional tendencies, divisive perceptions, racist positions, and chauvinist attitudes which can have only one result, the completion of the destruction of our country.
- Supports policies of reconciliation, consistent sociopolitical action, transparency, democratic dialogue, and a rational evaluation of the international factor all of which are essential preconditions that can define our course for a better future.

3. Results

The work products will be presented for each workshop session, i.e., (1) current situation and (2) actions separately. When conducting the SDDP with the Cypriots' Voice group, the facilitators and the KMT decided to skip the first stage – desired situation (envisioning) because the group already had a commonly agreed vision and mission declaration.

3.1 Results of the First Workshop: Current Situation

At Venus Beach Hotel, Cypriots' Voice members engaged in a structured dialogue for over ten hours in two consecutive days focusing on the following triggering question:

‘What are the obstacles that prevent us/Cypriots' Voice from reaching our ideal organisation and our objectives of the declaration and to fulfill our vision?’

Cypriots' Voice members generated and clarified forty-seven factors during dialogue with the entire group (see Appendix 1, Table 2, ‘List of Factors with Clarification’). Some participants who volunteered along with the Knowledge Management Team categorised these obstacle factors into 6 clusters based on common attributes among the factors identified by the Cypriots' Voice members. These clusters were named as following: **(1) Lack of cooperation culture; (2) Turkey related issues; (3) Lack of economic integration; (4) Perceptions; (5) Current political environment; (6) Cypriot’s Voice organizational weaknesses**. For more detailed information, refer to Appendix 2, Figure 1 ‘Classification of Factors’.

Once the clusters were finalized, the Cypriots' Voice members used five votes each to prioritize among the 47 obstacles that were generated. The obstacles which received the most votes were:

(6 votes) Factor 34: Worries among the group that financial needs are too difficult to overcome.

(5 votes) Factor 43: Lack of economic integration and interdependence between the two communities

(4 votes) Factor 2: People have got used to the de facto situation – difficult to persuade them for a change

(4 votes) Factor 6: Lack of a registered organization with professional staff

(4 votes) Factor 7: A misleading mindset that a settlement will come from a negotiated settlement without pressures and encouragement from civil society

(4 votes) Factor 27: insufficient effort to reach the public opinion in both sides and to enlarge the group

For a more detailed voting list, please see Appendix 3, Table 3, ‘Voting Results on the Relative Importance of the Factors’.

Factors which received three or more votes were than structured through making pair wise judgments by the participants with the help of the KMT and the cogniscope software. The following generic question was asked in order to explore the inter-relationships among the most voted factors and their influence on each other:

‘Suppose we were able to make progress in addressing Factor X, will this help us SIGNIFICANTLY in addressing Factor Y, in the context of searching for root causes?’

According to the root cause map created by the Cypriots' Voice members, the root obstacle came out to be Factor 43: Lack of economic integration and interdependence between the two communities (See Appendix. 4, Figure 2, ‘Influence Pattern of Factors’)

3.1.1 Interpretation of the Results

As shown in Table 3 ‘Voting Results on the Relative Importance of the Factors, 23 factors received one or more votes. If the same five factors had received all the votes, then there would be a 100% convergence among the Cypriots' Voice members in terms of relative importance of the proposed factors for the obstacles that prevent Cypriots' Voice from reaching their ideal organisation and their objectives of the declaration and to fulfill their vision. Because 23 factors received at least one vote, there exists a perceptible disagreement. The degree of disagreement in terms of preference voting, i.e. in terms of relative importance of the proposed factors, is an indicator of the complexity of the situation, which leads to a need to engage a stakeholder group in a structured dialogue.

On the other hand, level of agreement on the above factors (factor 34, 43, 2, 6, 7 and 27) is undeniable, when considering that that participants had only 5 votes to prioritise among those 47 factors generated and that 33.3% of the participants (6/18) in the first session had voted for factor 34, whereas, 27 8% had voted for factor 43 and 22.2% had voted for factors 2, 6, 7, and 27. This level of convergence is in fact a starting point for a common root cause map to be built upon.

Moreover, figures show that 48.9% of 47 factors received 1 or more votes, 27.7% received two or more votes and 19.2% received three or more votes.

In Appendix. 4, Figure 2, ‘Influence Pattern of Factors’ displays the relationship among the nine factors of higher relative importance. As Figure 2 shows, four levels of obstacles exist in achieving ideal organization for Cypriots' Voice and their objectives of the declaration and to fulfill their vision. A directive arrow in the figure is indicative of a linear relationship between those two factors. Two or more factors in a bolded box, like Obstacle # 34, Obstacle # 6 and Obstacle # 27 indicate a cyclical relationship among those three obstacles. As seen in Figure 2, there are two cycles containing more than one factor, one at level I and the other at level III. Such cycles are indicators of the complexity of the situation being addressed and usually require special treatment during the design of an action plan for attaining the ideal organisation for Cypriots' Voice and their objectives of the declaration and to fulfill their vision.

The factor that emerged as the root cause of the current situation for Cypriots Voice with regards to attaining their ideal organisation and objectives of the declaration and to fulfil their vision is:

Factor # 43: *Lack of economic integration and interdependence between the two communities*

It is also very interesting to observe that various trees of influential obstacles end at Factor 7: a misleading mindset that a settlement will come from a negotiated settlement without pressures and encouragement from civil society and Factor 23: lack of powerful and independent NGO movements on both sides acting as pressure groups

An effective action plan needs to attempt to deal with the root causes first with the aim of reaching the idealized vision. Thus, the root cause which came up in the first session and which is the main cause preventing the Cypriots' Voice reaching ideal organisation and objectives of the declaration and to fulfil their vision.

Here, within the methodology’s limits and with careful assessment, one can chose to trade off between the most yielding and the most influential factor when tackled. (to be elaborated by the participants)

3.2 Results of the First Workshop: Action Plan

At Venus Beach Hotel, Cypriots' Voice members engaged in a structured dialogue the next day to design an action plan via answering the following triggering question:

‘What specific action plan / action tools could the organisation / Cypriot's Voice adopt in order to overcome the diagnosed obstacles to fulfill its vision?’

The summary of the work done by the Cypriots' Voice members included:

- List of 25 the action items generated with their clarifications (see Appendix 5, Table 5, ‘List of Actions with Clarification’)
- A prioritization list of the action items after the voting results (see Appendix 6. Table 6, ‘Voting Results on the Relative Importance of the Actions’). The action items that received the most votes were:

Action 4: (7 Votes) formalise the group and set up a management system with a website with an electronic discussion platform among the members and regular meetings of the executive board

Action 26: (7 Votes) lobby against the violation of constitutional (RoC) and human rights of all Cypriots

Action 8: (6 Votes) act as a think tank on issues like security, property, power sharing etc. and try to find win-win solutions

Action 19: (6 Votes) set up a meeting to discuss the political differences among the members of the group

Action 5: (5 Votes) set up three working groups to examine the financial/organisational, political issues, and how we exert pressure and influence on the leaders

Action 14: (5 Votes) promote bi-communal confidence building measures and events and lobby for them (e.g. church services in the north, attitudes of the police at check points on both sides, streamline the admissions for historical places etc.)

Action 21: (5 Votes) keeping in mind the time constraints the group needs to lobby for a memorandum of understanding to stop actions relating to sensitive issues e.g. settlers, property development etc.

Action 28: (5 Votes) encourage the understanding amongst both communities about the other side's interests, emotions, moral values (develop empathy)

Action 11: (4 Votes) be alert, work on concrete proposals and interventions to make possible economic integration and interdependence of the two communities

Action 31: (4 Votes) promote respect to the cultural heritage as a unifying factor in a multicultural society

- An action map with 11 action items(see Appendix 7, Figure 5, ‘Influence Pattern of Actions’)

3.2.1 Interpretation of the Results

As shown in Table 6 ‘Voting Results on the Relative Importance of the Actions, 20 Actions received one or more votes. Once again, the degree of disagreement –as 20 Actions out of 31 received at least one vote- indicates the complexity of the situation.

However, convergence among the group is apparent especially on Factors 4, 26, 8 and 19 and when considering that even though participants had only 5 votes to prioritise among those 25 actions generated, 38.8% of the participants (7/18) had voted for Factor 4 and 26, 33.3% had voted for Factors 8 and 9, whereas Factors 5, 14, 21 and 28 got 27.7% of the votes each. This level of convergence is in fact a good starting point for a common action plan to be built upon. Moreover, figures show that 60% of the 25 factors generated received two or more votes and 40% received four or more votes.

One can easily see with regards to the actions that the level of agreement very similar to the agreement level in the problematique session. Once there is a common vision, a defined situation and diagnosed obstacles, it is easier to draw an action plan aimed at solving identified obstacles or threats. Thus, one should not assume that lack of agreement is a failure in the dialogue or understanding. Rather, it underlines the complexity of the problem.

In Appendix 7, Figure 5, ‘Influence Pattern of Actions’ displays the relationship among the eleven actions of higher relative importance. As Figure 5 shows, six levels of action items exist in achieving ideal organization for Cypriots' Voice and their objectives of the declaration and to fulfill their vision. As seen in Figure 5, there are two cycles containing more than one factor, one at level III and the other at level VI. Such cycles are indicators of the complexity of the situation being addressed and usually require special treatment during the design of specific project proposals or plans for attaining the ideal organisation for Cypriots' Voice and their objectives of the declaration and to fulfill their vision.

The factor that emerged as the root action for Cypriots Voice with regards to attaining their ideal organisation and objectives of the declaration and to fulfil their vision is:

Factor 4: formalise the group and set up a management system with a website with an electronic discussion platform among the members and regular meetings of the executive board. *Cycle with*

And

Factor 5: set up three working groups to examine the financial/ organisational, political issues, and how we exert pressure and influence on the leaders

An effective strategy plan needs to attempt to deal with the root actions first with the aim of reaching the idealized vision. Here, within the methodology's limits and with careful assessment, one can chose to trade off between the most yielding and the most influential factor when tackled. (to be elaborated by the participants)

4. Conclusion

(to be elaborated by the participants)

5. Appendices

Appendix 1:

Table 2, ‘List of Factors with Clarification’

Appendix 2:

Figure 1 ‘Classification of Factors’

Appendix 3:

Table 3, ‘Voting Results on the Relative Importance of the Factors’

Appendix. 4:

Figure 2, ‘Influence Pattern of Factors’

Appendix 5:

Table 5, ‘List of Actions with Clarification’

Appendix 6:

Table 6, ‘Voting Results on the Relative Importance of the Actions’

Appendix 7:

Figure 5, ‘Influence Pattern of Actions’