# MeDevNet

# Capacity and Synergy building among NGDOs and LAs in Greece, Cyprus and Malta for development

**SDD℠ co-laboratory**

**Strovolos Municipality Nicosia, Cyprus**

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## Document Details

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# What obstacles prevent cooperation between Civil Society & Local Authorities in Cyprus towards achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)?

## A Structured Dialogic Design co-laboratory

# Executive Summary

This co-laboratory is part of a cycle of trainings and other activities organised within the framework of the European project "Capacity and Synergy building among NGDOs and LAs in Greece, Cyprus and Malta for development", MeDevNet in short.
The MeDevNet project is implemented in the target countries Greece, Cyprus and Malta.

The overall objective of the project is to enhance cooperation of NGDO platforms and LAs in the three countries, Greece, Cyprus and Malta in order to become efficient agents of development and to participate in the planning of and the debate over EU development policy.

The estimated results are: Increased networking, communication and structured dialogue among a broad range of actors involved in international development cooperation, NSAs & LAs in partner countries and EU institutions which will lead to the development of a concrete strategy of cooperation. Capacity built in each partner and associate partner organization on networking, lobbying and advocacy with a focus always on international development cooperation issues. Reinforcement of the communication with the developing world through the cooperation with the experts from UCLGA and the migrants forums.

# Table of Contents

## Introduction

This co-laboratory is part of a cycle of trainings and other activities organised within the framework of the European project "**Capacity and Synergy building among NGDOs and LAs in Greece, Cyprus and Malta for development**", MeDevNet in short.
The MeDevNet project is implemented in the target countries Greece, Cyprus and Malta. The project is 75% funded by European Commission and its duration is 18 months.

The **overall objective** is to enhance cooperation of NGDO platforms and LAs in the three countries, Greece, Cyprus and Malta, to become efficient agents of development and to participate in the planning of and the debate over EU development policy.

The **specific objectives** are to:
• Establish collaboration, networking and coordination among Development NGDO platforms and LAs across Greece, Cyprus, Malta with EU institutions and UCLGA
• Empower and build Capacity within Development NSAs and LAs to create effective strategic actions for Development and Cooperation
• Increase dialogue about Development issues

The **estimated results** are:
• Establish a platform to facilitate capacity and synergy building among NGDOs and LAs in Greece, Malta and Cyprus, as well as to facilitate exchanges of expertise between them in order to develop coherent strategies for Development through structured dialogue.
• Increased networking, communication and structured dialogue among a broad range of actors involved in international development cooperation, NSAs & LAs in partner countries and EU institutions which will lead to the development of a concrete strategy of cooperation.
• Capacity built in each partner and associate partner organization on networking, lobbying and advocacy with a focus always on international development cooperation issues.
• Reinforcement of the communication with the developing world through the cooperation with the experts from UCLGA and the migrants forums.

**Partners**:
• Development and Education Centre European Perspective
• Future Worlds Center (FWC) – Cyprus
• KOPIN – Malta
• Local Union of Municipalities and Communities of Attica – Greece
• Valletta Local Council – Malta

**Associate partners**:
• Greek Platform of Non Governmental Development Organizations – Greece
• NGO Platform 'The Development' – Cyprus
• SKOP (Solidarjeta u Koperazzjoni) – Malta
• Greek Migrants' Forum – Greece
• Migrants' Solidarity Movement – Malta
• The Association of Palestinian Community in Cyprus – Cyprus
• Cameroonian Diaspora in Cyprus – Cyprus
• Municipality of Leukara – Cyprus
• UCLGA – Panafrican

# Obstacles that prevent cooperation between Civil Society & Local Authorities in Cyprus towards achieving Millenium Development Goals

During the the co-laboratory, the participants engaged in a structured dialogue focusing on the following Triggering Question:

**What obstacles prevent cooperation between Civil Society & Local Authorities**

**in Cyprus towards achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)?**

During the SDD[SM] the participants engaged for several hours in a structured dialogue focusing on the above mentioned Triggering Question. The lead facilitator of the SDD[SM], Dr. Yiannis Laouris, served as the person coordinating the process. Cogniscope[TM] Operators were Ms. Tatjana Taraszow and Ms. Adira Zwelling.

The participants of the co-laboratory shared 33 ideas/obstacles in response to the question. Each idea appears with a detailed explanation in Table 1 - Ideas with Clarifications (p.10). All ideas and their explanations by the authors are also available online at YouTube with the example title 'MeDevNet SDDP idea#1' (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jshuv0RN6u8&feature=bf_next&list=UUL25RrkO xo8Y6v98XITSNBA&lf=plcp).

The participants then cast votes for the three ideas that they each felt were most important. The folllowing ideas received votes:

| Idea #4 | (2 Votes) | Lack of knowledge in Cyprus about the subject |
|---|---|---|
| Idea #5 | (2 Votes) | Lack of motivation and communication between citizens and LA |
| Idea #7 | (2 Votes) | Political interest |
| Idea #13 | (2 Votes) | Low level of cooperation between LA and CS |
| Idea #20 | (2 Votes) | Access to information and funding |
| Idea #23 | (2 Votes) | Lack of involvement of LA or CSOs in development issues |
| Idea #27 | (2 Votes) | Lack of vision |
| Idea #32 | (2 Votes) | We don't realize in general how we can contribute to MDGs on local and individual level |
| Idea #33 | (2 Votes) | Physical and mental distance of us from the MDGs, from Africa, from development issues ... |
| Idea #2 | (1 Votes) | Lack of incentives for collaboration between CS and LA |
| Idea #3 | (1 Votes) | Lack of sufficient knowledge about the work that municipalities and CS are conducting |
| Idea #6 | (1 Votes) | Different mentalities between CS and LA |

| Idea #8 | (1 Votes) | Lack of opportunities for CSOs and LAs to engage in dialogue |
|---------|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Idea #15 | (1 Votes) | European standards haven't yet been well established in LA |
| Idea #16 | (1 Votes) | Limited resources |
| Idea #21 | (1 Votes) | Awareness of the MDGs |
| Idea #24 | (1 Votes) | LA do not realize how NGOs can contribute |
| Idea #25 | (1 Votes) | Lack of proper communication and lobby channels |
| Idea #28 | (1 Votes) | Local mentality in general |
| Idea #29 | (1 Votes) | Lack of information about best practices |
| Idea #31 | (1 Votes) | Difficulty in following up due to overloaded schedules |

Out of the population of 33 proposed ideas, 21 received one or more votes. This is described scientifically by the parameter of **Spreadthink**[4] or divergence (ST or D respectively), whose value in this case is 63% of disagreement. According to numerous studies, the average degree of spreadthink is 40%. Spreadthink is defined as $(V-5)/(N-5)$ where $N$ is the total number of ideas and $V$ is the number of ideas that received one or more votes.

Based on experience we can conclude that the participants showed divergence in their ideas regarding the issue which is higher than the average. This suggests that the participants do not yet demonstrate a high amount of consensus and they might continue to interpret the issue in a different manner.

The results of the voting procedure were used in order to select ideas for the following structural process. The participants were able to structure 9 ideas/obstacles, out of the 21 ideas which received votes. The resulting "Tree of Influences" demonstrates the most influential ideas, i.e. those which could be most threatening for cooperation between CSO's and LA's towards achieving MDG's . The tree or map is constituted by 3 levels of influence.

# Tree of Influences

The 'tree of influences' or influence map is made up of three different levels. Ideas/Obstacles at the bottom are considered to be the most influential. Making progress or achieving results in the bottom ideas/obstacles makes it a lot easier to address those that lie higher in the map.

In summary, almost all participants agreed that the following ideas/obstacles are the most influential and agreed that further actions on these root causes will achieve the desired results.

Idea #20: Access to information and funding

Idea #32: We don't realize in general how we can contribute to MDGs on local and individual level

The way this tree should be interpreted is that the actions which aim to support these two obstacles will have the greatest influence in achieving large-scale organisational change. Progress made in these two obstacles will create a positive chain of facilitation because they are influencing directly or indirectly practically all obstacles that lie above them.

The two ideas that lie at the root of the roadmap can be addressed firstly by acknowledging these obstacles and working towards a plan/solution by investing in research for access to information and funding and then educating the individuals on ways to contribute to MDG's on local and individual level.
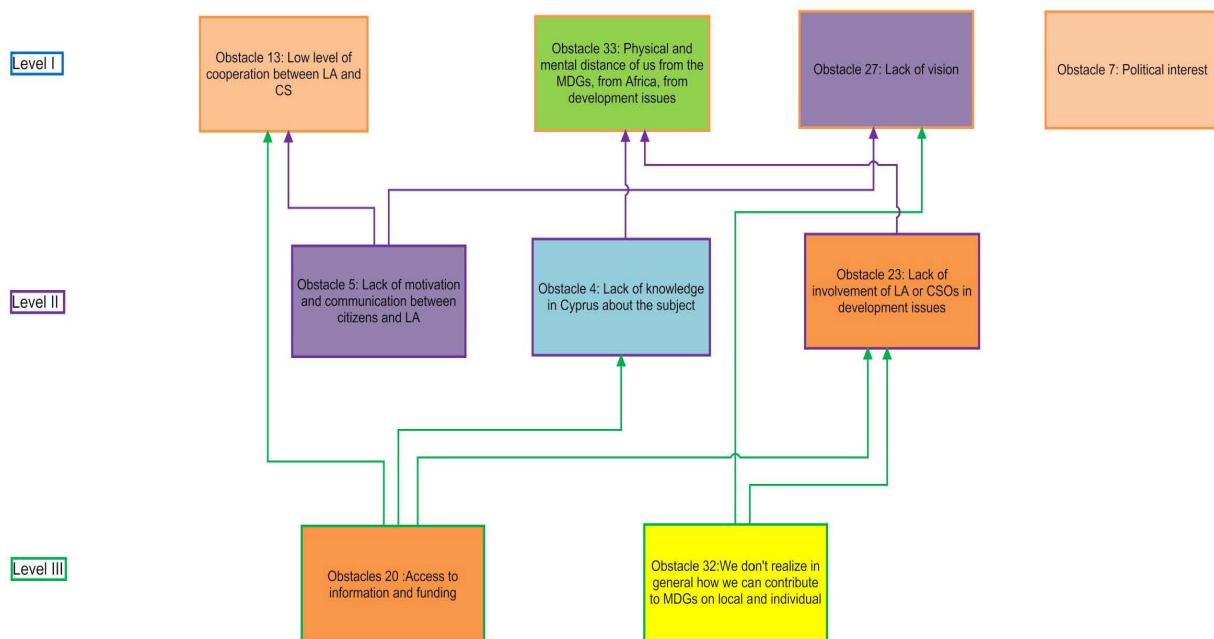
## Conclusions

With respect to the goals of the co-laboratory from the perspective of the implementation of the SDD^SM process, the following is noted:

1. A list of 33 ideas/obstacles was generated in response to the Triggering Question. This is considered satisfactory, even though the average reported in the literature is 64, but based on the fact that there was a small group of participants these ideas are adequate.

2. The ideas/obstacles were clarified and discussed throughout the SDD^SM, thus enabling participants to achieve a better understanding of the views of other members and greatly expand their own and others'.

4. Participants voted for 21 of the ideas/obstacles that they considered most important. They subsequently managed to "structure" 9 of these ideas and produce an influence map.

5. The influence map produced in response to the Triggering Question, containing 9 ideas/obstacles in the form of the Tree of Influence or roadmap comprised of 3 levels.

6. The participants had time to discuss and reflect on the influence map and in general agreed that the arrows in the map made sense to them.

7. More importantly, the structured dialogue process empowered the consortium team to identify the most influential mechanisms in overcoming the obstacles preventing cooperation between Local Authorities and NGO's.

In sum, the application of the SDD^SM process supported the Consortium to identify potential mechanisms that when addressed accordingly and productively will bring new perspectives and approaches to the given problem. Of course the methodology itself will only generate the raw data in the form an 'Influence Tree" or roadmap and further input and analysis is needed from the participants to find a way forward.

## Table 1: Ideas with Clarifications

1: An effective action plan which is beneficiary to both CS and LA

To move forward with the MDS you need a plan of action which should be brought together by both LA and CS. If both sides know the resources and what the benefits are of what doing this, then they would be more effective. If both work together as hard as they can they will achieve it.

2: Lack of incentives for collaboration between CS and LA

There are no real incentives obvious to either NGOs of why they should collaborate with LA, no clear benefit for NGOs to collaborate with LA and the other way around.

3: Lack of sufficient knowledge about the work that municipalities and CS are conducting

NGOs do not know aht LA are working on and vice versa. There is vagueness, they know there are European programs etc., however they cannot recognize how their work intercepts and how their work is interlinked.

4: Lack of knowledge in Cyprus about the subject

5: Lack of motivation and communication between citizens and LA

I am working with municipality. And the motivation is zero. It's not good for the citizens. No vision of something to gain, therefore they lose interest and they won't cooperate. If as citizen they don't have motivation and won't gain anything they are not going to work with joy.

Q: people see LA as something external?

A: what i said for employees of LA its the same for citizens employees and citizens have diff motivations

Q: money?

A: anything

6: Different mentalities between CS and LA

They don't think the same way. To work in an NGO you have to be a specific type of person with a specific type of thinking and mentality and vice versa. The two mentalities clash and are not at the same level for working together.

7: Political interest

Politics has played a big role in forming society. Politicians might look at it: "what will I do to get elected." If society sees MDGs as something important then the politicians might take it up.

8: Lack of opportunities for CSOs and LAs to engage in dialogue

CSOs work in their own little field/bubble and LA do the same and there's not much space to interact and opportunities to talk and envision interest and projects.

9: Preconceptions regarding working culture of municipality personnel

People who work in CSOs have the preconception that municipality personnel will not be so much committed for some common work together. CSO people assume LA people don't want to spend more time. So there's a lack of trust. Thus, chances to get together is even smaller.

10: Obsession with local issues

Preoccupation with local issues.

11: Culture of the LA and human behavior

Organization culture is complicated and sometimes it is therefore difficult to pass on ideas.

12: External factors make it hard to bring them together

External factors for example working conditions, different working hours, LA work until 2.30 which makes it difficult to commit to come together in the afternoons.

13: Low level of cooperation between LA and CS

We should try to encourage to collaborate in various projects. if they have more projects and work together they can help each other to promote MDGs.

14: Lack of links between LA and CS in the 'Global South' with which they could collaborate

Most of Cypriots CSOs don't have partnership with LA in other parts of the world. MDGs might not seem very close because direct link is missing.

15: European standards haven't yet been well established in LA

LA haven't really incorporated the European standards, maybe they don't realize the values yet. This part of thinking has not yet been established. They don't see how CSO can be involved with them. There is a lack of knowledge of what value there is.

16: Limited resources

Limited resources of LA and especially CSO, including human resources and funds; especially for MDGs which are not visible in daily work or life.

17: Different needs and priorities between CS and LA

Municipalities have different priorities and lack resources. They fail to deal with problems, especially when no money is involved.

18: Lack of individuals/personnel involved in European programs or in MDGs

Physically only very few persons are involved on both sides. Very few LA personnel is dealing with MDGs.

19: Municipalities are convinced to collaborate only when there is money involved

NGOs come across this issue when LAs need to be involved. LAs only see value of engagement when funds go directly to them.

20: Access to information and funding

Both is not straight forward or easy for either party. LA lack information. CS lack funding.

21: Awareness of the MDGs

The majority of people doesn't know about MDGs. so they are not able to get involved.

22: Find more common grounds between LA and CS

CSO and LA should work towards same goal but both of them have private agendas. If they could keep private agendas aside and look for common ground they could work towards MDGs.

23: Lack of involvement of LA or CSOs in development issues

At the moment very few LA or CSO's are involved in MDGs issues. Most are not, so MDGs are not on the agenda. Makes it difficult to get them involved because it's not part of their daily work.

24: LA do not realize how NGOs can contribute

CS not very well established in Cyprus. Most don't really know what NGOs are dealing with. Maybe this is the same for LA, they don't realize how NGOs can be useful for them in their projects. This has to do with lack of training, culture, joining in projects. It can change with time.

25: Lack of proper communication and lobby channels in Cyprus there are no... LA don't know how to reach CSOs maybe due to lack of knowledge re working methods/procedures.

26: Too busy or overloaded with other stuff everyone is busy in general so they don't feel need to give specific time or priority that is necessary.

27: Lack of vision widespread mentality in cy society. too much obsession with political problem which makes us blind to other issues or more hesitant to realize the global interdependencies and what we can do on local level. generally there's a stagnation due to politics. its something that influences also different sections of the society. it becomes an obstacle to collaboration.

28: Local mentality in general all types of collaboration, esp between LA and CSO. Cyprus attitude towards CSOs, LA, last minute...

29: Lack of information about best practices even if LA want to get involved in MDgs, they will fail to do it.....

30: Lack of motivation as the MDGs look like an unrealistic task MDGs have a deadline which expires in 2015which is a big obstacle because lots of work has to be done. many don't see that this is possible. should one get into it if one is not able to finish it? or should one not get into it at all?

31: Difficulty in following up due to overloaded schedules to make something happen we need the momentum going and get things moving asap. we have to realize this with other projects we have to run after which sometimes stops the momentum and stops the dynamic of the work we are doing.

32: We don't realize in general how we can contribute to MDGs on local and individual level many times we think that MDGs are away from us, they happen somewhere else. Outcomes of decision are on high level policies and from higher bodies and we don't really understand how we as individuals or society can make it better. we don't know how to contribute and to change something. we tend to look at the situation in Africa and blame the local decision makers.

33: Physical and mental distance of us from the MDGs, from Africa, from development issues ...stakeholders are not getting involved in anything that is far away from Cyprus.

# Facilitator Team

## Main Facilitator

**Dr. Yiannis Laouris** is a Senior Scientist and President of the Cyprus Neuroscience and Technology Institute. He heads the "New Media Lab". Neuroscientist (MD, PhD) and Systems engineer (MS) trained in Germany and the US. Publishes in the area of neuroscience, learning through computers, the web and mobile phones and about the potential role of IT to bridge the gaps (economic, gender, disabilities etc.) in our society. He is a senior SDD[SM] Facilitator and has several publications about the theory of the science of dialogic design also together with its Founder Prof. (emeritus) Aleco Christakis. He collaborated with Prof. Patrick Roe to implement SDD[SM] co-laboratories for COST219ter and COST298. He also collaborates with the EDEAN and DfA projects.

## Assistant Facilitators

**Tatjana Taraszow** holds an MSc in Psychology with emphases on media, educational, and organizational psychology (University of Tübingen, DE & McGill University, CA). Trained mediator, trained facilitator of structured dialogue, and being trained in non-violent communication. Coordinated two bi-communal projects in Cyprus and published a number of papers, which discuss the results of SDD[SM] co-laboratories between Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot stakeholders. Research team member of the Cyprus Safer Internet Center - CyberEthics, the EU Kids Online Project. She coordinates the Moblang.eu project. Other research tasks include: study of teenagers' behavior in social networking sites, validation of video-game-like interfaces, and development of research questionnaires for children, parents and educators.

**Adira Zwelling** is currently pursuing a Masters degree in Conflict Resolution at Portland State University with an emphasis on divided communities and dialogue. She has worked extensively with at-risk youth in the United States and in Northern Ireland. Coordinated and implemented a daily program for youth and their families offering educational and emotional support as well as trainings on early literacy. She is a trained mediator and worked at a community mediation center in Portland, Oregon.

## Organizer

**Anna-Maria Drousiotou** has organized and participated in many SDD[SM] co-labs for FWC. In 2007 she was the project coordinator to set up and run the CyberEthics awareness node and the CyberEthics Hotline. She has an Economics degree from the University of Thessaloniki in Greece. She began her career in advertising and media working with top International brands for 10 years. In 2007 she left the media world to actively become involved in Future Worlds Center and its various projects. Today she is involved in several projects including "MedevNet" "Civil Society Acts Beyond Borders", "Teaching MDG's", and "Accessing Development Education".

# Methodology: The Process of Structured Dialogic Design

The term "Structured Dialogue" is sometimes used to simply denote a dialogue more organised than the simple "talking" and exchange of ideas. In contrast the Structured Dialogic Design[1] (SDD[SM]) process is a methodology, which supports the generation of truly democratic and structured dialogue amongst teams of stakeholders with diverse views and perspectives. It is particularly effective in the resolution of complex conflicts, interests, and values, and in achieving consensus based on a common understanding and strategy. It is grounded on 6 complex systems and cybernetics axioms and 7 laws from systems science; it has been grounded both scientifically and empirically in hundreds of settings on a global scale for the past 30 years. Scientists and practitioners worldwide are guided by the Institute of 21st Century Agoras[2].

The Cyprus team has extensive experience in the application of the methodology. They have utilized it in many public debates in order to facilitate organizational and societal change. For example, they have utilized it in many European networks of experts. The COST219ter[3] is a network of scientists from 20 countries (18 European, the USA, and Australia) who were interested in exploring the question of how new technologies ambient intelligence and next generation networks can make their services more useful to people with special needs. The COST298[4] network also aims to make broadband technologies more accessible to the wider public. The scientific communities of Cost219ter and Cost298 utilized SDD in order to outline the obstacles, which inhibit the application of the above technologies on a wider scale. Based on the results of the SDDs, they designed corresponding strategies for the next 3 years. Insafe[5] is a European network of 27 Safer Internet Centers who used SDDs in many meetings in order to identify the inhibitors, produce a vision of the future, and agree on a plan of action. More information is available on the CyberEthics Cyprus Safer Internet website[6].

The UCYVROK[7] network utilized SDD[SM] in order to determine the reasons for which young people in Europe do not participate in European programs. The results were presented to the European Parliament. The SDD[SM] methodology was also used in order to ease the dialogue between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots since 1994. This dialogue culminated in the creation of a peace movement. Many reports are still being utilized by the network, and are available on the program's page[8].

SDD[SM] was designed especially so that it can assist non-homogenous groups in tackling complex problems within a reasonable and restricted time frame. It facilitates the annexation of contributions by individuals with vastly different views, contexts, and aspirations, through a process that is structured, conclusive, and the product of cooperation.

A team of participants who are knowledgeable of a particular situation, generate together a common outline of ideas based on a common understanding of the current problematic situation and a future ideal one. SDD[SM] promotes the focused communication between participants and supports their ownership of the solution as well as their actions towards implementing it.

# Structure and Process in a typical SDD Co-Laboratory

When facing any complex problem the stakeholders can ideally 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 *problematique*, also known as the wall of inhibitors i.e., develop a common and shared understanding of what are the obstacles that prevent the stakeholders' system from reaching its ideal state.

3. Define *actions/options* and produce a roadmap to achieve the goals.

The three phases are implemented using exactly the same dialogue technique. Each phase leads to similar products:

1. A *list* of all ideas and their clarifications [SDD$^{SM}$ is a self-documenting process].

2. A *cluster* of all ideas categorized according to their common attributes [using a bottom-up approach].

3. A document with the *voting results* in which participants are asked to choose ideas they consider most important [erroneous priority 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 we are dealing with problems, then the most influential ideas are the *root causes*. Addressing those will be most efficient. If we deal 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 SDD$^{SM}$ session, with its phases, is described in more detail.

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 SDD$^{SM}$ experts. This question can be emailed to all participants, who are requested to respond with at least three contributions before the meeting either through email or wikis.

Second  All contributions/responses to the triggering question are recorded in the *Cogniscope II*$^{TM}$ software. They must be short and concise: 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. If time is short, a smaller team can do this process to reduce time (e.g., between plenary sessions).

Fourth  All participants get five votes and are asked to choose ideas that are most important to them. Only ideas that receive votes go to the next and most important phase.

Fifth    In this phase, participants are asked to explore influences of one idea on another. They are asked to *decide whether solving one problem will make solving another problem easier*. If the answer is a great majority an influence is established on the 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, stakeholders develop an efficient strategy and come up with a road map to implement it.

# Further Information on the science SDD[SM]

The interested reader who might want to find out more about the underlying science of structured dialogic design may begin by researching the terms "Lovers of Democracy", "Hasan Ozbekhan", "Aleco Christakis", "Club of Rome", "Structured Dialogic Design", "Cyprus Civil Society Dialogue", etc. Available are also two books co-authored by the Father of the science[9, 10]. A number of wikis are aslo dedicated to the science[11, 12, 13]. Selected publications include a Description of the technology of Democracy[14].

There are several publications of the Cyprus group, which describe the application of SDD[SM] in the Cyprus peace-building process[15, 16, 17].

Furthermore, two recent publications provide an easy-to-comprehend introduction to the methodology and the ethical considerations associated with its application[18, 19].



Part of the SDD[SM] process (Mapping)

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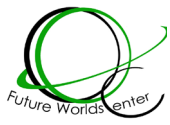
Part of the SDD<sup>SM</sup> process (Mapping)

# Acknowledgements

# MeDevNet

## MeDevNet
The MeDevNet project is a EuropeAid project
www.medevnet.org

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