

Agora eBuzz

Institute for 21st Century Agoras










In the dialogue business...for real -Aleco Christakis

April 2009

Obstacles to the Obama Vision of Bottom Up Democracy

An international team of practitioners of the science of Structured Dialogic Design (SDD) met online off and on this past December and January. They worked together to discover the roadblocks facing President Barack Obama in realizing his vision of a bottom-up democracy for the people and with the people of the United States of America. (For a full and transparent view of their activities go to: <http://obamavision.wikispaces.com>.)

List of Members and Time Zones As Posted in the Wiki

 Roy	 Larry	 Heiner
London	Cyprus	Berlin
01:13 AM '08	03:13 AM '08	02:13 AM '08
 Janet	 Paul	 Norma
Australia	Japan	South Africa
11:43 AM '08	10:13 AM '08	03:13 AM '08
 Laura	 Peter	 Reynaldo
New Mexico	Toronto	Mexico
06:13 AM '08	08:13 AM '08	07:13 AM '08

There were 15 active participants and several observers. They were located in Canada, United States, Mexico, England, Germany, Cyprus, South Africa, Australia, and Japan. The team participated asynchronously (different places at different times employing the Webscope wiki) <http://obamavision.wikispaces.com> for the beginning stages of SDD. The group then met synchronously (different places at the same time using web conferencing) for the influence structuring sessions.

The triggering question addressed was:

"In the context of Obama's vision for engaging stakeholders from all walks of life in a bottom-up democracy employing Internet technology, what factors do we anticipate, on the basis of our experiences with SDDP, will emerge as inhibitors to the actualization of his vision?"

The participants generated 59 inhibitors and clarified them with 60+ messages. They gathered the inhibitors into 13 clusters and then each participant cast 5 votes for the inhibitors they deemed most important. 15 inhibitors received 2 or more votes.

In round 5, the participants engaged in synchronous interaction to construct a relational map displaying the influences among factors of higher relative importance, as determined from the voting results of Round 4. This "root cause map" draws distinctions between factors that exert strong leverage, appearing at the roots of the relational tree (map), and factors that are less influential appearing at the branches of the tree. Drawing these distinctions is critical in the design of a solution to the roadblocks for actualizing bottom-up democracy. Without diagnosing the roots of the issue the stakeholders run the risk of allocating resources to the symptoms and not the causes of the problem.

The deepest drivers, the inhibitors with the greatest leverage, identified by the participants are:

Corporate control of the means of democracy emerged as the most influential inhibitor to the realization of the bottom-up democracy vision. In other words, in accordance with the majority vote of the team, the initiative that exerts the highest leverage in inhibiting the practice of bottom-up democracy is the corporate control of the means of democracy.

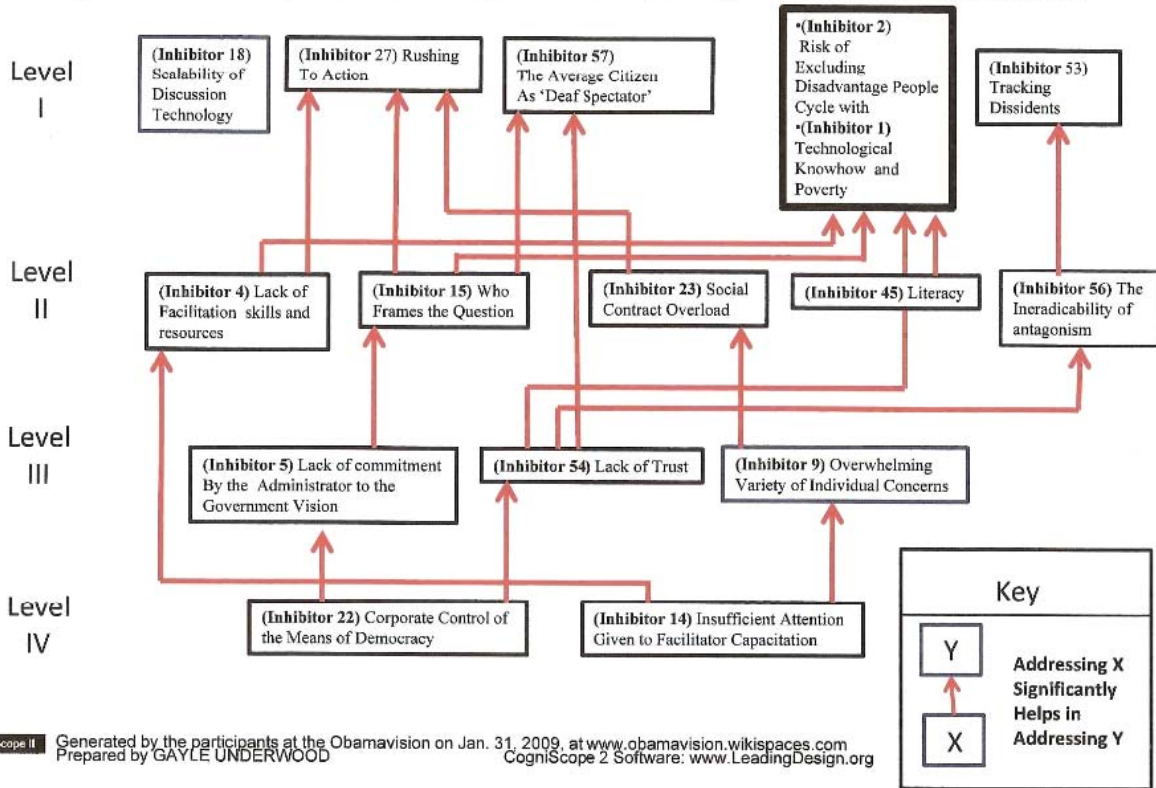
Insufficient attention given to facilitator capacitation emerged as the second most influential inhibitor. Dr. Tom Flanagan provides a narrative regarding this inhibitor.

“It is perhaps no great surprise that when a panel of systems scientists from across the globe pull their heads together around challenges that President Obama is likely to face...the most influential factor underlying the success of such an outcome was judged to be the commitment that government leaders and agencies actually hold in supporting a grassroots effort. The global design team phrased this as ‘insufficient attention given to facilitator capacitation.’

“Enabling pathways for many, many voices with many, many ideas to flow in an orderly fashion toward the highest summits of national thinking is not going to be an easy process.”

Figure 2 Influence Pattern of Inhibitors

Triggering Question: In the context of Obama's vision for engaging stakeholders from all walks of life in a bottom-up democracy employing Internet technology, what factors do we anticipate, on the basis of our experiences with SDDP, will emerge as inhibitors to the actualization of his vision?



CogniScope II Generated by the participants at the Obamavision on Jan. 31, 2009, at www.obamavision.wikispaces.com Prepared by GAYLE UNDERWOOD CogniScope 2 Software: www.LeadingDesign.org

NCDD's Principles for Public Engagement

The National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation (NCDD) has pulled together suggested criteria for public engagement from many of its members. The following document is a condensation of the principles proposed. We are interested in your opinion whether AGORAS should endorse these principles that seem to be necessary but not sufficient for the kind of engagements we engage in. Please read over these principles and then vote YES if you think we should endorse these principles. If you think we should not reply and say NO. Your comments are also welcome.

There are many ways that people can come together to deal with issues that affect their lives. We believe that public engagement involves convening diverse yet representative groups of people to wrestle with information from a variety of viewpoints, in conversations that are well-facilitated, providing direction for their own community activities or public judgments that will be seriously considered by policy-makers and/or their fellow citizens.

It is our stance that quality public engagement must take into consideration seven core principles if it is to effectively build mutual understanding, meaningfully affect policy

development, and/or inspire collaborative action among citizens and institutions. The following seven principles overlap and reinforce each other in practice. They serve as ideals to pursue and as criteria for judging quality. Rather than promoting partisan agendas, the implementation of these principles generates authentic stakeholder engagement around public issues.

The Seven Core Principles

1. **Planning and Preparation** - Plan, design, and convene the engagement specifically to serve both the purpose of the effort and the needs of participants.
2. **Inclusion and Diversity** - Incorporate diverse voices, ideas, and information to lay the groundwork for quality outcomes and democratic legitimacy.
3. **Collaboration and Shared Purpose** - Support organizers, participants, and those engaged in follow-up to work well together for the common good.
4. **Listening and Learning** - Help participants listen, explore and learn without predetermined outcomes -- and evaluate public engagement efforts for lessons.
5. **Transparency and Trust** - Promote openness and provide a public record of the people, resources, forums, and outcomes involved.
6. **Impact and Action** - Ensure each participatory effort has real potential to make a difference.
7. **Sustained Participation and Democratic Culture** - Promote a culture of participation with programs and institutions that support ongoing quality public engagement.

This list represents a consensus in the field of dialogue and deliberation, but most practices tend to emphasize or apply these principles differently or to reach beyond this basic consensus in one way or another. To learn more about such diverse understandings and applications, consult the online version of these guidelines at www.thataway.org/2009/pep_project.

Now, please vote. Email to info@globalagoras.org saying YES if you think we should endorse these principles and NO if you think we should not. Your comments are also welcome.

Two SDD Classes

Future Worlds Center and 21st Century Agoras are co-organizing the **second International School for Structured Dialogue**. The school is interesting for active Facilitators and Mediators as well as for young experts who want to learn more about the science of structured dialogic design and eventually become certified facilitators. Dr. Aleco Christakis, Ms. Gayle Underwood, Dr. Yiannis Laouris and Mr. Marios Michaelides will teach the theory and facilitate the co-laboratories. Upon completion of the course, all participants will receive a participation certificate. The dates are July 2 to 5.

For further information, go to

<http://cwaltd.wetpaint.com/page/2nd+International+Facilitators+Training+School>

Turkish and Greek Cypriots Toasting a Successful SDD Co-Laboratory



The interactive online course at Flinders University in Australia will convene in July. This course deals with Reducing Our Carbon Footprint and uses Structured Dialogic Design to organize and prioritize the obstacles faced in this quest. SDD will enable the student participants to identify the Root Causes of our mushrooming Carbon Footprint and to devise a practical plan for reducing it. If you are interested contact Janet McIntyre at Mcintyre@flinders.edu.au.

LaDonna Harris Award

Rob Capriccioso Indian Country Today

Board member **LaDonna Harris** was honored for her lifetime political achievements with a plaque presented by Michael Nephew, president of AIS. The honor was recognized during the gourd dance ceremony Jan. 19.

For a formatted version of this article with picture go to

<http://www.indiancountrytoday.com/national/38225089.html>

WASHINGTON – The inauguration of President Barack Obama was not simply a time to recognize a history-making milestone of an African-American politician, but also to honor the many achievements of American Indians on the political stage. One Native politico in particular, LaDonna Harris, received special recognition during Indian inaugural festivities.

At a Jan. 19 gourd dance ceremony, hosted by the American Indian Society of Washington D.C., several friends and relatives of Harris gathered to pay homage to a person that many attendees called “a living legend.”

Wallace Coffey, chairman of the Comanche Nation, was at the event to pay tribute to his “big sister,” as he affectionately referred to Harris.

“LaDonna has devoted her entire life to service of Indian people. When she came up to Washington, she found a void among her Indian nations. ... there were Indians here, but they needed to see each other. ... she helped make that happen.”

Harris’ name is quite familiar to many knowledgeable of 1960s and 1970s federal politics. Her marriage to Fred R. Harris, a Democratic U.S. Senator from Oklahoma from 1964 to 1973, has been seen by many as helping propel Native issues on the national level.

When her husband ran unsuccessfully for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1976, he placed what some political observers have deemed an unusually strong emphasis on Indian issues. Many who know the Harris family have said this was due partially to his wife’s Comanche background, and the strong influence she held behind the scenes.

After her husband’s Senate service, Harris herself jumped head first into the political arena. In 1980, she ran unsuccessfully as the vice presidential candidate for the Citizens Party as the running mate of Barry Commoner. Her views then, and now, have largely focused on strengthening federal Indian policy. She has also developed a strong record on issues involving civil rights, environmental protection, the women’s movement and world peace.

Since the 1970s, Harris has presided over the Americans for Indian Opportunity organization, which aims to create culturally appropriate initiatives that enrich the lives of indigenous peoples.

Former Republican Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell, also at the gourd dance, said Harris became his “patron saint” after he was elected to Congress.

“She took me under her wing. ... she knew the connections to help a fish out of water.” He noted with a smile that Harris was wearing a friendship ring he gave her many years ago in thanks for her help.

Michael Nephew, president of AIS, said at the Jan. 20 American Indian Inaugural Ball that Harris has inspired younger generations to get involved in their communities and to make their voices heard. He noted that she helped put on the first Native inaugural ball in 1969.

“She is the best,” said Nephew, a member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, before presenting Harris with a plaque commemorating her legacy.

“She means so much to so many.”

:

Publications

Board member **Dr. Yiannis Laouris** aided by Dr. Alexander Christakis and members of several Cypriot task forces has published several journal articles in the past year. A representative article^{3e} can be viewed at: <http://sunsite.utk.edu/FINS/loversofdemocracy/CyprusCivilSociety.htm>

A short summary of the work in Cyprus with leads to related sites can be viewed at <http://blogora.wetpaint.com/page/Cyprus+Civil+Society+Dialogue>.

The Darwin Anniversary Book Cycle

Here are six new books being published by Board member **Dr. David Loye** to honor the 200th Anniversary of the world's greatest scientist and long ignored moral revolutionary, Charles Darwin. An unprecedented publishing event.

Bankrolling Evolution: A Program for a President. Can Barack Obama and new progressive leadership for America help get us back on track to the better future? Using the new approach of evolutionary action science foreshadowed by the moral sense of Darwin's long ignored completion for his theory of evolution, this first book focuses on four key questions facing Americans and our concerned world: What happened to us? How and why did it happen? What can we do about it? How do we prevent it from ever happening again?

Measuring Evolution: A Leadership Guide to the Health and Wealth of Nations. The gripping story of the development of a new measure of local, national, and global health and wellbeing based on Darwin's completed theory and the findings of thousands of modern scientists that corroborate it. This new measure, the Global Sounding, has been designed to put the power of progressive science behind the new power to the people offered by a new partnership between progressive American leadership and a world of people ready to work together for a better future.

Darwin's Lost Theory: Who We Really Are and Where We're Going. This is the core book uncovering Darwin's revolutionary, yet strangely ignored, "second half" for his theory of evolution. It tells of how Darwin's observations of the primacy of mutual aid, education, love, and moral sensitivity for human evolution were "buried in plain sight" during 100 years of our fixation on "survival of the fittest" and "selfish genes" - even though Darwin specifically insisted "other agencies" are more important at our level of evolution. It shows how recognition of this "lost" Darwinian theory could have changed the 20th century for the better - and can still help us save the 21st century.

Darwin on Love. Long scattered throughout Darwin's writings are ninety five stories of the love and sex life of an intriguing range of animals. Through the charm and delight of Darwin's own love story - and the insights and humor of these ninety five stories of love and sex for the first time brought together here - this book provides an engaging introduction to the new story and theory of Darwin for readers of all ages.

The Derailing of Evolution. Detailing the dramatic, century-long, battle of progressive scientists against the distortion of Darwin's theory, this book reveals the astonishing power of how our minds can be seized by an over-riding paradigm that - with the best intentions of even the brightest of minds - can blindly drive us toward destruction. It underlines the importance of a new Darwinian model combining both parts of Darwin's original vision of what

drives us ahead, checks us in place, or drives us backward in evolution.

Telling the New Story. The first of a series on a new updating and expansion for the science and story of evolution by innovative educators. From grade school through graduate studies - with crucial attention to the media-the series will provide teacher's guides and curricula designed to accelerate a shift in education from the fixation on old model Darwinism to the new science and story of "a place for every one of us in evolution."

Internationally known evolutionary systems scientist David Loye is the award winning author of *The Healing of a Nation* and other acclaimed books on evolution.. As published throughout 2008 into 2009, the books of this unprecedented publishing event honoring Charles Darwin are globally available through online book sellers worldwide. Through the world's largest book distributor, the Ingram Book Company, for book stores. And through Benjamin Franklin Press—see website.

Benjamin Franklin Press
www.benjaminfranklinpress.com

If you wish to receive a seasonal eBuzz, please go to www.globalagoras.org/optin.html and sign in. You will quickly receive an opt-in e-mail. When you respond to it, you will be on the eBuzz mailing list.



Institute for 21st Century Agoras
8213 Hwy 85 #901
www.globalagoras.org