



Summer 2008

[for a well-formatted version pleas go to www.globalagoras.org]

Cyprus Tipping Point

Agoras believes that by extending many experiences of SDD in a specific community we can hope to reach a “tipping point” where SDD will become the design option of first preference. This will move a community away from the back-office, expert design and public advocacy tradition into a new world of authentic democratic design. The standing guess is that when 20% of the community activists have experienced SDD, the community will come to request and then demand SDD for complex problem resolution.

A small but growing group of Turkish and Greek Cypriots put this hope to the test. They have been working towards national unification for over 10 years using SDD to identify obstacles to unification and work collectively to overcome them. About 4 years ago the United Nations took notice and decided to further this ;push for unification. In the timeworn procedure for these sorts of things, Kofe Annan commissioned a team of experts to draft a unification plan. This plan was put to a vote. Cypriots viewed the unification measures as alien, not what they had been discussing, and as imposed by outsiders. The vote failed.

To its credit, the UN did not give up. In 2006, it funded a Civil Society Dialogue project. The project focused on the peace and reconciliation of the two divided communities. To accomplish this goal, it funded public events and a series of SDD co-laboratories dealing with economic, communication, relations to the European Union, and other topics that need to be addressed before unification would be possible. Those co-labs did their job admirably. Earlier this year, the UN recognizing this progress proclaimed that it was not taking any position regarding unification plans. It thus left unification completely up to the Cypriots and the plans jointly worked out in the co-labs. This is exactly what the Cypriots both Turkish and Greek wanted.

At the end of July, the Greek president and the leader of the Turks sat down to work out the details of that unification. Below is a 7/27/08 Omphalos report on the unification effort.

News from Cyprus
Straight in your inbox

1. Settlement in sight

“I consider that we have taken a step forward towards the solution of the Cyprus problem,” President Christofias told reporters yesterday after his meeting with Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat. “There are many issues we have agreed on and many other issues we do not agree on. Consequently, it is a matter of a constructive stance by both communities, based on basic principles and good will, in order to reach a settlement.” He also clarified that there were no ‘stifling” timetables attached to the new talks’ process.

Britain welcomed yesterday's outcome. "It is for Cypriots themselves to agree on the shape of any eventual settlement but the UK stands ready to offer support to all parties," a statement from the British High Commission said.

2. Opinion Poll

Politis publishes an opinion poll which shows wide support for President Christofias' decision to start direct talks. Especially among Akel and Disy voters, 4 out of 5 respondents was in favour, while 75% of Diko supports were also positive, and only 16% against.

3. What the working groups really achieved

Makarios Drousiotis writing in Politis outlines the work that has been achieved at the six technical committees and working groups. From information from reliable sources he says that in two there has been complete agreement, in another three there was agreement in part, and only in one was very little work done. He says the greatest degree of convergence was on the economy and the EU, while on the issue of government there is agreement on the general competencies of the central government but disagreement as to the executive in so far as the g/c side proposes a presidential system with a president, vice president and council of ministers, while the t/c side proposes a presidential council. There is also disagreement as to the rotation of the presidency. He says the property question is the greatest challenge. While it is generally accepted that the problem will be solved by a combination of return, exchange and compensation, t/cs prefer overall exchange and compensation, whereas g/cs prefer the right of return or that the owner should have first say. Nevertheless ownership is acknowledged. Security and guarantees is another thorny issue yet there was significant agreement in the role of Cyprus in the new world order as well as the UN's role in implementing the solution. Disagreement exists in the role of the guarantor powers with the g/c side calling for a review of the Treaties and the t/c side wanting a return to the 1960 setup. No progress was made on territory. The t/cs agree that there will be territorial adjustments but nothing was discussed on a map. The writer says that the job of the committees and working groups was to write down the points of agreement and disagreement, not to solve the Cyprus problem. Yet, looking at the work achieved overall, one can only say it has been positive. It was obvious that on the big issues the two sides would come with their original positions. But if we compare today's positions with the positions the t/c side brought to the negotiating table in 2004 (separate sovereignty, permanent derogations, ethnically clean areas etc) it is clear that today the gap is much smaller. And of course the climate today is different. In 2003-2004 Papadopoulos and Denktash went to talks with the aim of clashing. Christofias and Talat are going with the intention of reaching an agreement.

Board Member Honored



Yiannis Laouris with his Turkish and Greek Cypriot collaborators is deeply involved in Cypriot reunification efforts. For his systemic work in Cyprus and with the European Union, he was recently awarded the Hellenic Society for Systemic studies award. Dr. Yiannis Laouris is Senior Scientist and Chair of the Board of the Cyprus Neuroscience and Technological Institute. In addition to the Cyprus

unification work, he has conducted successful SDDP session for the EU on topics such as Accessibility to all Services, Safer Internet initiatives, and Youth Initiatives.

Americans for Indian Opportunity

AIO and their Maori partners are working to form a Bolivian counterpart for their Indigeneity partnership. They also held an Indigenous Peoples' Summit in Hokkaido, Japan on behalf of the Ainu tribe.

United States

Gayle Underwood and Aleco recently conducted a successful mixed SDDP on the dropout problem in western Michigan. Everything was done at a distance and asynchronously except the final 3-hour face-to-face ISM session.

Tom – who is currently serving as the president of the AGORAS advisory board – has been using SDDP in Southern New England with his non-profit SoCo Community Collaborative Design Studio. He has just closed on a joint venture with the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth to work within the education arena. He is also using SDDP and related decision support tools in classes that he and Kevin Dye have been teaching at U Mass. His report on using SDDP to enable narrative management – based on work that he and Kevin have done in the “creative economy” sector in the City of New Bedford – will appear in Design Management Review this summer. He has composed an Elevator Speech which simplifies sharing an understanding of what makes SDDP special {BELOW; and he has created a PowerPoint presentation to communicate the mission and tactics of the AGORAS that is now available on globalagoras.com.

Elevator Pitch

“Structured dialogic design shares many of the benefits of more familiar processes and avoids one of their key shortfalls. Everyone works with groups to help groups construct lists and forge some agreement on what they feel is important. Our empirical research has shown that when groups are guided to a collective decision, they are almost universally wrong when they first set their priorities. We call this “erroneous priorities.” The reason that we are able to make this statement is because we have tested group preferences when they vote for priorities in an unstructured list, and then also when they have had the opportunity to build a structure from that list. Our breakthrough is that we provide a means for folks to connect the dots and capture new insights about what is really most important. Some are familiar with this as a systems view. Very few folks are currently even attempting to construct systems views with live audiences, and of those who are trying this far fewer can actually do this well. Our sweet spot is in guiding a discussion so that groups are prepared to co-create a systems view, and then allowing them to consider that view BEFORE they set priorities. We save time, resources, and group confidence by helping groups set their priorities with authentic systems thinking. We are unique in this way.”

Corporation Business

Our fiscal cupboard is bare. To this point we have had only one major grant for \$90,000 to help the USDA draft their 5-year plan for controlling Invasive Species. The \$15,000 we netted from this grant has now been expended.

*“Old mother Hubbard
Went to the cupboard
To get our director a dress.*

*When he got there
The cupboard was bare
And so was our director,
I guess”*

Necessity has goaded us to be much more active in our fund-seeking efforts. Aleco, Tom, and Ken met with an old friend [a younger friend, actually] who is now the head of Rockefeller Philanthropy Associates. He has experienced the CogniScope and really values it. For all of his concern and wanting to help, his basic message is that foundations as a rule do not fund things that look like start-ups.

As a result of that message, we are now mounting a campaign to court compatible persons with recognized financial credentials as board members and possibly to find a sugar daddy or momma who might fund our program budget, which on a pro forma basis is \$100,000 per year if AGORAS is to have a growth plan. We continue to seek project funding, and we are actively exploring affiliation with more established organizations.

The success of the Cypriots right now was enabled by United Nations sponsorship of their reunification efforts. They have now arrived and bid on projects on an even basis with other design teams. We aim to follow their model.

We have recently affiliated with the Socio-Ecological SIG of ISSS. We are in active communication with the New Agoras project (commGAP) sponsored by the World Bank.

There are a number of websites that document the SDDP activity that is going on, such as www.blogora.org, www.cwawiki.wikispaces.com, <http://effectiveteaching.wikispaces.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
Riverdale, GA 30274
www.globalagoras.org
info@globalagoras.org