

Agora eBuzz

Institute for 21st Century Agoras

First Quarter 2010

The home page of AGORAS remodeled website is copied below. Click on the large blue underlined type below to go there. You are invited to make suggestions for improving this site.

**INSTITUTE for 21st
CENTURY AGORAS**

**Liberating
Democratic
Dialogue**

[Welcome to the Institute of the 21st Century Agoras](#)

People all over the world aspire to participative democracy, and yet the democratic planning and design of any social system from cities to national health care programs, is too often threatened by the inability to engage stakeholders in a meaningful and productive dialogue.

The use of dialogue for gaining understanding and building consensus on complex issues among interested and affected stakeholders necessitates the use of a new scientific paradigm to address these complexities. Over 30 years ago, a group of researchers made a commitment to the development and testing of a new scientific paradigm for enabling people to engage in meaningful dialogue today.

At this critical juncture of the evolutionary process of humanity, there cannot be conscious evolution without the capacity to explicate through dialogue the wisdom of the people in the Agoras of the 21st Century Global Village.

Alexander Christakis

Mission and Vision

We deploy Co-Laboratories of Democracy for assisting diverse groups of stakeholders address complex situations with competence of structured democratic dialogue. We facilitate participatory democracy, helping people identify underlying realities of

systemic wicked problems and to generate consensual action plans. In this way, our vision is to foster a participative democratic transformation of society.

- **21st Century Global Agoras**

"... validating ways to build capacity for participatory democracy through advanced socio technologies that engage, align, and mobilize action for sustainable civic initiatives across all cultures."

- **Affiliates**

- [CWA, Ltd.](#)
- [Dialogic Design International](#)
- [Future Worlds Center](#)
- [SoCo Design Studio](#)
- [Transformation Dialogues](#)

- **Agoras in the World**

- [Cyprus Civil Society Dialogues](#)
- [Design with Dialogue](#)
- [Local Authorities in Cyprus \(Greek\)](#)
- [Multicultural Cyprus](#)
- [Obamavision Dialogue](#)

- **Projects**

Service Mark

Structured Dialogic DesignSM is now a registered Service Mark (trademark) of the Institute for 21st Century Agoras.

AGORAS controls the use of the mark by the members in the following manner:

Licensed SDD practitioners understand the science of Structured Dialogic Design and follow its rules. In preparation, they:

- Read *How people harness their collective wisdom and power*
- Participate in previous SDD sessions under the supervision of experienced SDD practitioners in the roles of recorder, software operator, and lead facilitator
- Receive official written certification from the Executive Director of the Institute for 21st Century Agoras as authorized SDD practitioners

In addition,

- They provide their preliminary research and their main triggering question to AGORAS before running their SDD sessions.
- They also report vital statistics and results to AGORAS subsequent to their sessions
- SDD sessions must be implemented under the control of an individual who has been authorized to practice SDD.

- SDD practice will be approved by an audit of documents created during an SDD session.
- The Executive Director of the AGORAS will also approve distribution of software to support the practice of SDD.
- The *Harnessing* book is to be cited explicitly as the criteria for calling a practice SDD.
- The SDD mark will provide evidence that structured dialogic design has been implemented in accordance with the canons of the practice.

Structured Dialogic Design depends on faithful execution for its extraordinary success. Its structure separates it from less coherent facilitation and management methods. This service mark will maintain the integrity of the SDD brand by preventing the invocation of SDD by any slipshod applications.

A New AGORA in Israeli – Palestinian Dialogue

The Future Worlds Center of Cyprus has landed a 3 year EU-funded project (2010-2012) to foster Israeli-Palestinian dialogue using SDD; Excerpts from the Future World Center's website are copied below.

Human Rights and Reconciliation -
Civil Society Acts Beyond Borders



- 3 year EU-funded project (2010 – 2012)
- Takes place in Cyprus, Israel and PNA
- Lead applicant: Future Worlds Center (Cyprus)
- Partners: Palestinian Dialogue Centre
Association for Progressive Education in
Honour of Meir Yaari
Management Centre (Cyprus)



This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of Future Worlds Center and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.

1. Increase dialogue among civil society actors, youth, and local authorities in Israel and Palestine;
2. Increase capacity of CSOs in Israel and Palestine to promote Human Rights and Democratic Participation;
3. Enhance collaboration among civil society actors, youth, and local authorities across Israel and Palestine

Through a comprehensive set of structured dialogue workshops, civil society trainings, as well as multi-communal public debates, round tables and conferences, this project aims to empower civil society actors, youth, and local authorities in Israel and PNA to actively promote Human Rights and Democratization.

- Structured dialogue workshops
- Creation of multi-stakeholder Action Groups
- Five trans-national Action Plan support workshops
- 10-day Training of Local Trainers
- Series of Basic Civil Society Strengthening Workshops
- Series of non-formal civil society action workshops
- Series of Advanced Civil Society Strengthening Workshops
- Ten Panel Discussions/ Public Round tables
- Final Human Rights Conference in Cyprus

Training Sessions

Future Worlds Center, in collaboration with the 21st Century Agoras, have designed an annual series of lectures, presentations and co-laboratories which serve to train individuals who wish to learn more about the science of structured dialogic design and eventually become certified practitioners.

see also:

- [How can I take part?](#)
- [The Trainers](#)
- [When will the next International School take place?](#)
- [The Certification Scheme](#)
- [Reflections on the SDD process](#)

The SDD process is being utilized internationally in many different contexts and is thus under constant scientific scrutiny by its practitioners as well as its customers.

With the advent of the Information Age and the ever increasing complexity of our interconnected world, with the use of further technological enhancement supported by the Internet, SDD may provide the fundamentals of a methodology which can involve

stakeholders on a massive, global scale.

On a global scale, revisions of the SDD process may enable large and diverse groups of people to tackle global issues and work towards common solutions transcending the limitations of national boundaries. On a national scale, future versions of SDD will be enhanced to provide a methodology which can engage thousands of stakeholders, thus allowing for a more authentic and reliable approach towards the achievement of the democratic ideal in comparison to representative democracy.

see also:

- [Why SDD is important in a world in turmoil](#)
- [Cogniscope and WebScope](#)
- [Cogniscope \(Greek\) - Το Εργαλείο του Γνωσιοσκοπίου για Αποτελεσματικό Διάλογο και Δράση](#)
- [SDD Scalability](#)

The next training session will be later this spring. The Future Worlds Center, in collaboration with the Institute for 21st Century Agoras, is holding a two-day lecture series which will revolve around the SDDP methodology. The seminars will be the culmination of the Future Worlds Center's current efforts to identify, structure, and propose solutions to the leadership and management problems faced by the Local Authorities of Cyprus.

You can learn more about this project [here](#) (in Greek).

Although the seminars will reflect on the experiences of the stakeholders and facilitators of the aforementioned project, registration is open to whoever wishes to learn more about the SDD process. The lecturers will include Aleco Christakis, Yiannis Laouris, and Paul Hayes, amongst others. Please note however that the majority of the seminars will be in Greek.

For further information contact Lawrence Kalogreades at Lawrence@cni.org.cy or fax +357 22-873821.

Michigan's Integrated Mathematics Initiative (MIMI)

Below is an official announcement of a Michigan program utilizing SDD.

Alignment for Sustainability: The MIMI Program The goal of Michigan's Integrated Mathematics Initiative (MIMI) is: To braid and blend existing initiatives to promote a cohesive system of mathematics resources supported by MDE to ensure success for ALL students. On the basis of content and structural analyses of the responses to seven questions by a panel of content experts, we intend to design and conduct three co-laboratories with a group of approximately twenty-five stakeholders in accordance with the framework shown below:

The three preliminary triggering questions of the colabs, to be conducted in early 2010 are:

A) Co-laboratory I: "What ought to be": [March 17 – 18]

“What do you think Michigan teachers and schools “ought to do” for ALL students to learn math?”

B) Co-laboratory II: "What Can be": [April 15-16]

“What are barriers to what “ought to be done” for all students to learn math?”

C) Co-laboratory III: "What will be": [Virtual]

Core team reviews meta-components of feedback thus far – what issues need to be overcome from a state project standpoint (constraint will inform delivery medium, etc.); Bring back to larger group (transfer agents or entire group) to review and provide input –would it achieve “the ought”?

“What are action options which, if adopted and implemented by the community of stakeholders, will overcome the system of inhibitors (or close the GAP) identified in Co-laboratory II, and hence facilitate the establishment of a viable model for learning mathematics by ALL students in schools in Michigan by 2015?”

Establishing an Observatorium

A long-time dream of Aleco, John Warfield, Yiannis Laouris, and others is coming to pass in Cyprus. An observatorium is being established in a town of Cyprus. The following description is taken from an article by Warfield entitled The Corporate Observatorium

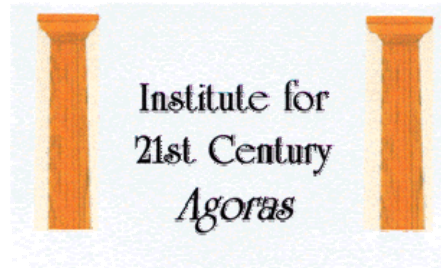
The observatorium is a physical (or virtual) piece of real estate, whose building interior can be loosely compared with that of the Louvre, in that it contains a variety of rooms, and facilitates rapid familiarization with their contents by the persons who walk through that property. The displays in the observatorium are tailored to help eradicate or minimize complexity in understanding, both broadly and in depth, the nature of the large organization, its problems, its vision, and its ongoing efforts to resolve its difficulties. Comparison with the planetarium for envisaging a broad swatch of the sky is self-evident.

The first step in resolving issues related to large, complex systems, is to provide a well-designed situation room, equipped to enable groups to work together effectively. The second step is to carry out whatever prolonged design work is required, using processes proven to be effective, yielding visual displays of the system patterns that hold understanding of the logic underlying the system. The third step is to embed the results of the second step in the corporate observatorium, where insight into the large, complex system comes both at overview and detailed levels, according to the efforts put forth to comprehend what is seen in the sequenced displays.

The first two steps have been accomplished in a variety of settings. It remains to take up the challenge to develop the first corporate observatorium which may then become a prototype for its successors.

An extended description of the observatorium and its importance will be given in the next eBuzz

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Institute for 21st Century Agoras
8213 Hwy 85 #901
Riverdale, GA 30274
www.globalagoras.org
info@globalagoras.org