

The Hasan Özbekhan Planetary Dialogue Design and Development Frame

Current situation

In our 21st century revolution of the “Information Age” toward global virtual reality millions of citizens, in places located all over the planet, are deeply engaged in forming mutual interest groups to make a different world possible. They are bypassing traditional styles of social interaction, in an electronically wired but spiritually disconnected e-culture that is marked by superficiality, atomized, splintered and powerless.¹ This “movement” is described by Paul Hawken, in *Blessed Unrest 143-145, 165* (2007), derived it seems from a planetary “immune system,”² but “immune systems do fail” Hawken warns, “We will either come together as one global people, or we will disappear as a civilization.”

The political implications of this global trend are evident and dire. Even before the advent of universal Internet, University of Chicago Professor Allan Bloom depicted the situation in which Americans exist, in his seminal book *The Closing of the American Mind* 117-118 (1987): “This continual shifting of the sands in our desert--separation from places, persons, beliefs--produces the psychic state of nature where reserve and timidity are the prevailing dispositions.” “We are social solitaires,” Bloom observed. We are now a “**Lonely Nation**” the AP reported last Aug 6, 2006. Two decades after Bloom’s masterpiece, we can plainly see our civilization failing, increasingly vulnerable to savage political demagoguery.

Making a democratic citizenry

The free market of goods and services like the free marketplace of ideas, are so lovely in theory, but severely constrained in a highly developed technological civilization that can thrive only within a foundation of civil good will and genuine democratic government. The scheme for existence that evolved from prehistory brought forth: first, liberation of the spirit of humankind; and second, establishment of scientific knowledge as the basis for a viable worldview free from irrational dogma and ideology. However, the journey forth must be disciplined to be sustainable, we are not born free, as Benjamin R. Barber writes:

In real life, as every parent knows, children are born fragile, born needy, born ignorant, born uninformed, born weak, born foolish, born dependent -- born in chains. We acquire our freedom over time, if at all. Embedded in families, clans, communities, and nations, we must learn to be free ... citizens have to be made. Barber, Benjamin R., “America Skips School,” in *HARPERS* 39, 43 (Nov 1993).

1 **Wired but Disconnected E-culture**, Part I, Letter to the Chairman (August 20, 2008).

2 Id., quoting A. Gore, *The ASSAULT ON REASON* 94-95, 178 (2007).

The Normative Frame: Medium as Message

The existing situation reflects what Marshall McLuhan, the sage of culture and technology described in his famous metaphor "**the medium is the message.**" The "message" McLuhan was discussing was not in the narrow sense, namely, the explicit set of words or pictures built serially, block-by-block, and step-by-step. This is merely the concrete end of the process. In the world of electronic communications McLuhan understood, "we have been forced to move from the habit of data classification to the mode of pattern recognition." That message pattern is derived from the whole system of action that controls the medium. The intellectual foundation for this metaphor is found in general planning theory [H. Özbekhan, 1971, 1968]. In all such systems, Özbekhan theorizes, control is asserted: first, through the purposes and values of the system owners and managers (normative level), second, through the institutional goals that are derived from the latter (strategic level), and third, through the activities that are derived from the two higher levels of the system (operational level).

Whatever the metaphor, control over all systems is transmitted downward. Özbekhan concludes, "both in terms of control and in terms of meaning, it is the highest level in the plan's structure which dictates or determines the information content of the lower levels, whereas the contrary is not true." In short, to change the message or advance **The Transformative Paradigm**, citizens must first change the spiritual purposes and values of the systems at the normative level in which the message is transmitted.

Communicative literacy of citizens in dialogue under the foregoing conditions requires a grasp of the frames of dialogue, starting with the purposes and values that constitute the "mental maps" known as "**theories of action**" comprised of deeply socialized metaphors. These are the forms of control over the decision-making process that enable participants to "define the location of power in the current situation, as a basis for designing a new system." C. ARGYRIS AND D. SCHON, ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING, 1978); email message from J.N. Warfield to V. Schreibman, Feb. 19, 1998 (on Synergy Model). A comprehensive application of relevant *theories of action* may be organized under three pivotal components of the **Setting for decisions of the Information-age.**

The Design and Development Frame

Dialogue is initiated by a *triggering question* to insure careful focus of group interaction. Three Co-Laboratories, each with a *triggering question*, are proposed:

Co-Laboratory type I:

"What are the theories of action which, if adopted and used to guide decision-making will produce the ideal image of the desired future leading toward democratic sustainability?"

Co-Laboratory type II:

"What factors describe the 'wall of inhibitors' preventing realization of the desired future?"

Co-Laboratory type III:

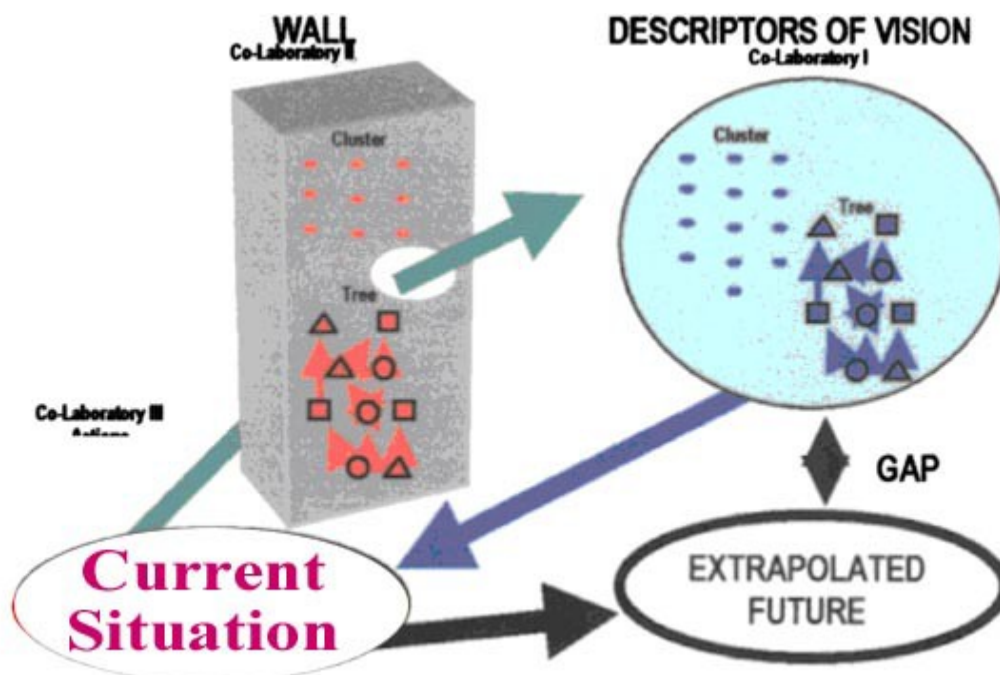
"What are action options which, if adopted and implemented by planetary stakeholders, will gradually tear down the wall of inhibitors?"

Each Co-Laboratory will support **Closing the “values gap”** between the current situation and the desired future as described in the **LoD Values Transformation Matrix**, using the Structured Design Dialogue (SDD) process, illustrated in the **Mind Map for Building the Democracy Tree**. This will include the necessary Knowledge Management Team (KMT) activities, and Participant activities in a combination of virtual and face-to-face interactions.

Three Co-Laboratories are required for these purposes, as follows:

- **Co-Laboratory I**, will be dedicated to painting a picture of the goals, on a Planetary Scale, for example, **to define the theories of action needed to shift the planetary paradigm of the Setting for decisions of the Information-age toward democratic sustainability**. Participants will generate a set of descriptors of the ideal images, clarify the meaning of their contributions, and follow the format of the Co-Laboratory process illustrated in the **Mind Map for Building the Democracy Tree**.
- **Co-Laboratory II** will focus on painting a picture of the wall of inhibitors that must be torn down or penetrated to achieve the ideal image from the current situation and its extrapolated future, as illustrated in [figure 2](#) below.
- **Co-Laboratory III** will focus on design of an action plan for tearing down the wall of inhibitors, similar to the wall of the infamous Green zone that was recently torn down by the **Cyprus Civil Society**.

Fig. 2: The Hasan Özbekhan Planetary Dialogue, Design and Development Frame



The systemic principle of “requisite variety” demands that the Design and Development Frame shown above must engage the stakeholders in constructing methodically, collaboratively, and systemically all the relational patterns of clusters and trees of the ideas, as shown schematically in figure 2 and as illustrated in the **Mind Map for Building the Democracy Tree**.

It is now anticipated that this Design and Development Frame will be constructed at a new LoD domain, which is now under construction.

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