

The Conscious Evolution of History: Creating an Environment for an Emergent History of North East Asia

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Abstract

One of the goals of creating global agoras is the conscious evolution of society and this must include a conscious attempt to engage with history. The North East Asian Dialog which is in its second year is an attempt to begin such a global agora. In the first boundary spanning dialog a year ago, barriers to communication in the region was the main topic. Lack of a common understanding of history was identified as a key barrier to communication. So, 2006 ICU North East Asian Dialog focused on the diverse understanding of the history of North East Asia by all the peoples living in the geographic region. There are obvious disputes at the governmental level over history textbooks in public schools focusing on what happened and the magnitude of various events. There are also hidden and personal histories that are unknown across the wide range of the territory. From open dispute to private story, there is no common view of the region for all of the regions people. This paper describes the focus on history and the conceptualization of history that is emerging from the dialogues and through the virtual history space being created. It describes the creation of a global agora to support an emergent history of the region

The participants gathered for three days at the International Christian University campus in Tokyo, in January 2006. There were representatives from 7 countries and various cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The majority language was Japanese, although the common language of the conference was English. Participants gathered in four groups to share their narratives and all the presentations were videoed. Additionally, a web design team participated and developing the virtual space as the physical presentations were going on. This allowed participants to give instant feedback and critique the virtual space that was being created. This provided great synergy for both the participants and the technical team. This is important since the intent was to create a virtual space that extended the face to face discussions.

The dialog developed a view of history as the sum of all the personal experiences or stories of all the individuals. Rather than taking a broad look at the political movements, wars, social errands and such that are the fodder of most histories, we are providing a space where individuals can share their stories of the times. By sharing our personal stories, we come to a larger understanding of the region and its history. The idea is to create a web of narrative that builds a common understanding. As this understanding grows, it can counter the history imposed by experts or authorities. The history is emergent from the experiences of the participants.

There are a variety of technological issues. The narratives are presented in five languages: Chinese, English, Japanese, Korean and Russian. Some of the narratives are submitted in two languages. Various versions of a narrative must be linked as well as links between the various narratives within languages. The intent is for readers of one script can search through the various narratives pace using their own language first. Later, as links are established for key topics,

geographical places, and major events across the narratives and the various languages, a network of connections will begin to emerge.

The history of the region can then be explored through the narratives of the citizens. Students can read history through data mining the narrative space and the historical web that emerges from that space. With a common understanding of the complexities of history, the foundation of a global agora for the region becomes possible.

Keywords: global agora; history; emergence; conscious evolution

Introduction

One of the greatest barriers to resolving conflicts is gathering the stakeholders (Hays and Michaelides). When conflicts often involve thousands or millions of people, getting them all to the table can be daunting. Often representatives are used so that the key issues that are important to the various stakeholders are presented at the table even if all the stakeholders cannot be physically present. This is a workable solution and often yields good results. However, modern technology offers the potential to gather all the stakeholders into a virtual space and greatly expand the participation. From the very beginning of the North East Asia Dialog it was anticipated that there would be a corresponding virtual space that would compliment the face to face dialogs. This has provided a laboratory in which to explore the potential of virtual spaces in the structured dialog process for conflict resolution. The focus of the Second North East Asian Dialog on history also led to the possibility of redefining history itself from a single, linear story into a web of diverse experiences from many individuals.

We are using the term virtual space rather than web site intentionally. While at the moment most of us are familiar with web sites, the technology is advancing every day and expanding into new uses and forms. Focusing on web sites locks any discussion into the present level of technology and hinders an open-ended exploration of the potential for this technology. The term virtual space also implies a parallel to the real spaces in which conflicts arise and are resolved. The agora was a real place where one could buy onions as well as discuss the issues of the day. The internet has become a sort of super-agora where one can buy anything or say anything and even find a lot of interesting information. It is a reality that is pervasive in our modern world and virtual only in the sense of physical space.

Creating a virtual space to compliment a face to face dialog must begin with the basic principles of that dialog. These underlying principles must then be adapted to the constraints, or lack thereof, imposed by current technology. From there extensions may be made in the goals and aims of the dialog. By enabling ever larger numbers of stakeholders to participate in the process, the creation of virtual spaces must then also feed back into the original principles. The first section of this paper describes the origins of the North East Asian Dialog Project and the original meeting in 2005. Then we present the initial conceptual frameworks and the details of the meeting in February of 2006 which forms the basis of the virtual space. Finally we discuss the realizations of the underlying principles in the virtual space, the conceptual structure of the virtual space as it was designed and implemented and as we anticipate it will grow.

Origins of the North East Asian Dialog Project

Over the past two decades Wasilewski has been involved in the creation of social spaces where diverse participants can all be themselves together and collectively address the complex problems which face human beings at this time in history. One of her main concerns is how people can effectively participate in the decisions that affect them. Much of this work has been done with indigenous people around the world working on various governance, leadership, and education issues along with people from their respective mainstream societies.

As a part of this work there have been various experiments with various dialogic processes, ranging from highly structured, consensus-constructing, computer-assisted processes for complex problem-solving (Christakis and Bausch, 2006; Wasilewski, 1997; Wasilewski and L.D. Harris, 2004; Wasilewski and L. Harris, 2004) to very unstructured, open processes (Bohm, Factor and Garrett, 1991). Most recently, with Center of Excellence funding from the Japanese Ministry of Education, two dialogues have been organized that have brought together people from North EastAsia to discuss issues facing their region (Wasilewski, 2005;2006).

In February of last year (2005)the first Northeast Asian Boundary-spanning Dialogue (Wasilewski, 2005;Wasilewski and Hays, 2005) brought together Japanese, Chinese, Korean and Russian students and civil society members to identify major obstacles to intercultural communication in North East Asia. Using the Christakis/Bausch (2006) consensus-constructing, computer-assisted structured dialogue process in a form that has been in use by indigenous communities around the world since the late 1980s (Christakis and Bausch, 2006, see especially 111-113 and 118-119; L.D. Harris and Wasilewski, 2004; L. Harris and Wasilewski, 2004), 78 obstacles to intercultural communication in the region were identified. Eleven were selected as being of fundamental importance, and of these, the issue of contested history was seen as the “root cause” or fundamental obstacle. If this obstacle could be addressed, it would positively affect the ability to address all the other obstacles. However, addressing this obstacle is further complicated by two facts. First, there is no common language of wider communication in the region. None of the state languages (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Russian) serve that function and neither does English. Second, there are not many occasions when people from throughout the region gather together to engage in any activity together, much less the collective management of challenging issues. Civil society relationships in the region are very thin.

In February of this year (2006) a second Dialogue took place, and participants began to address the historical issue by trying “to map” out the historical territory of the North East Asian region as a whole through sharing historical narratives. What we found out last year was that the participants were often familiar with some dyadic issues (like those between, for instance, Japan and China), but few participants had a comprehensive awareness of the history of the region as a whole. It is this comprehensive historical terrain that we began “to map” this year. We also wanted to include, not only the master narratives of the nation-states of the region, but also personal and family narratives, as well as the “hidden” narratives of the different groups of people making up each nation-state, for instance, those of Buryat, Evenki and Khanmigan people in Russia, of Ainu and Okinawans in Japan, of Korean-Chinese, etc.

This year each of the 36participants and nearly as many observers, divided up into four Dialogue Circles, each of which represented the diversity of the overall group. Each participant (and a few of the observers) contributed twenty-minute historical narratives generated from their specific

personal socio-cultural-historical points of view. The other participants in the Circle had an opportunity to ask clarifying questions about the narrative. All the narratives were video-taped and are being archived (eventually with translations of the texts into five languages - Japanese, Korean, Chinese, Russian and English) on a website that is being developed by students at Kwansai Gakuin University to accompany this project.

The aim of this Project is to create both face-to-face and virtual spaces where all the peoples of the North East Asian Region may continue to encounter each other in mutually supportive environments. It is hoped that this will provide a basis for transforming and transcending challenging issues, both historical and contemporary, and that such Dialogues may eventually lead to an international day of reconciliation.

Initial Conceptual Frameworks

This project's initial conceptual frameworks are thoroughly articulated and discussed in L.D. Harris and Wasilewski (2004). They emerged out of Native-American cultural assumptions about productive dialogic processes and those of systems scientists (see also, Christakis, 2004).

At the beginning of our efforts, on the Native-American side, we were looking for a culturally neutral process through which to have more productive discussions with mainstream U.S. public and private sector actors. However, we discovered that no process is culturally neutral. However, we also discovered that one could construct dialogic spaces that were culturally inclusive, in the sense that all participants would be able to feel comfortable interacting in the space. Accomplishing this involves creating a space that requires at least a little adaptation on everyone's part, but a space with very clear, and rather simple, social rules. It was the overlap between the simple social rules for productive dialogue identified by both Native-Americans and systems scientists that captured our attention. This overlap between very ancient social process "technologies" and those suggested by high tech knowledge researchers struck both communities as perhaps identifying a fundamental human process for resolving difficult issues. We all thought that this overlap might provide clues (Wasilewski, 1997) for the reliable construction of Habermas' (1971) "ideal speech situation."

The simple rules identified were the following:

1. there is an order of speaking (one does not have to fight for the floor to speak);
2. each perspective is received respectfully (no debates, evaluative comments or "cross talk" are allowed, but clarification can be sought);
3. each person speaks without being interrupted;
4. the discussion continues until no one has anything else to say;
5. as many perspectives as possible are incorporated into a comprehensive concept of the issue under discussion ;
6. a strategic action plan is created based on this comprehensive concept in which each participant understands his/her roles and responsibilities for the implementation of the plan.

The fact that these rules of the dialogue space are stated explicitly is perhaps the most different aspect from traditional systems. The fact that the rules are so simple is perhaps the most

different aspect from most modern parliamentary systems.

These behavioral process rules are in turn embedded in a simple set of principles:

1. all interested stakeholders are involved;
2. the point of view of each participant is valued and respected without fear of confrontation or ridicule;
3. all participants really “hear” where “others” are coming from;
4. the process of “selecting preferences” avoids dividing the group into winners and losers;
5. all participants go away feeling good about their contribution to the overall outcome and so have a sense of ownership and responsibility for the outcome.

The resulting meeting proceeds in six stages:

1. ceremony/awareness/introductions/bonding;
2. idea generation;
3. idea assessment/selection;
4. option generation;
5. option assessment/selection;
6. ceremony/closure/commitment.

The importance of the ceremonial/social “frame” around the proceedings is a distinct contribution from indigenous communities around the world (see L.D. Harris and Wasilewski, 1992; Olsson,1987).

The ICU-COE 2006 North East Asian Open Dialogue Process in Detail

Thus, the second North East Asian Dialogue dealing with the contested history of the region invited diverse stakeholders from Japan, Korea, China and Russia, across generation, gender, socio-economic class, and ethno-linguistic group. Each person was invited individually, and the list of participants was written alphabetically with no hierarchy implied in the order of listing. The first gathering of the meeting, on the Friday night, was purposely held in a modest campus house, where nearly fifty participants and observers squeezed into a small space to break bread together. In that space, grace before the meal was said by one of the Japanese participants, a Christian, who had begun his life in North Korea, a short video was shown from the Museum of the American Indian on the nature of history, that the past is one thing and that the stories we tell about the past are another. Each of these stories, no matter what the story is, has a point of view. Thus, the purpose of this Dialogue is to begin to construct a point of view which can encompass all of our narratives. And finally, one of our students with a particular interest in Okinawan music played the song that Okinawans traditionally played to welcome Chinese ships.

To develop a sense of “deep” as well as “wide” history, Saturday morning began with intentionally raising awareness of the history of International Christian University’s (ICU’s) historical space, the space in which we were holding our discussions, a space which is simultaneously a Jomon archeological site, an agricultural space, a former aircraft company from the Pacific War era, and a university which is an artifact of the immediate post-WWII period in

Japanese history. The day began with the Ainu participants, as one of the peoples carrying one of the longest histories in the Japanese archipelago, doing a ceremony for the auspicious beginning of anew project.

Next we all gathered in a big circle on the second floor of the Yuasa Museum in the middle of an exhibit of children's clothing and other textiles, like bath towels, associated with children from the turn of the 20th century. To reach this exhibit the participants had to walk through the exhibits of Jomon artifacts. Emerging on the second floor we were surrounded by these beautiful textiles, some very elegant ones of silk, some modest ones of patchwork, but all beautiful, indicating how much these children were valued. Most of these objects had auspicious symbols on them, cranes, carp, turtles ... all symbols of energy and long life ...to protect the children whose bodies were touched by these textiles from succumbing to the high rate of infant mortality at the time.

As we gathered in the circle, Wasilewski asked the participants to look at the objects and consider the following. Children in Japan no longer suffer high rates of infant mortality. There is another problem ... low birthrate. In biological systems when an organism ceases to reproduce itself, that is usually a sure sign that something is wrong. What is the malaise that is affecting society so that its young people do not want to reproduce?

Perhaps the best luck we could wish the future generations of children would be to transform the contested history of the region. Also, if we look around, all these objects are textiles, fabrics, which are made of threads. Perhaps we might consider each of our narratives as a thread, and that our task is to reweave these narrative threads into a fabric which is both strong and beautiful for all the peoples of the region. What would such a beautiful historical "fabric" look like? Hays suggested that before we could re-weave our threads we might have to disentangle them from already existing narrative constructions.

Next, one of the participants from Siberia read a greeting from an Evenki woman who had participated in last year's Dialogue but who was unable to participate this year. There are three groups of Evenki in the Siberian realm , reindeer or horse pastoralists and also farmers. As part of her greeting she explained the symbolism of a fur rug that she had presented to the Project. The circular rug symbolized the foundation of a traditional Evenki dwelling which in turn represents the Evenki cosmos.

This was followed by a brief presentation by a group of ICU students who had gone to Okinawa on ICU's Peace Research Institute's fall study tour . They had gone to one of the bomb craters on the ICU campus with the university's archeologist, Professor Richard Wilson. Standing in bottom of the World War II bomb crater, they found themselves standing on the Kanto Loam, the threshold of human habitation in this area. Digging around in the dirt, within a few minutes they were able to locate several Jomon artifacts, pottery shards, grinding stones, etc. Then they found a golf ball from the 1960s when one of the university's golf fairways was located adjacent to the crater. Finally, they found the roots of some legumes, artifacts of the long practice of agriculture in this particular place. And Professor Wilson shared the story of an old farmer who, as long as he lived, maintained a garden on the land that had once been his family's farm before the land was alienated from his family's use for use as an aircraft factory and then as a university (talking about contested history). Passing around their bowl of artifacts they asked participants to muse on the number of different narratives that could be constructed from this historical "evidence".

Next we began one by one to go around the circle and do self-introductions, our names, where we came from, what brought us to the Dialogue. There were more than 60 people in the circle. It took quite some time to listen to each other. However, Wasilewski remarked that it was important, before we divided into smaller groups, that we had at least heard each other's names, that we knew of each other's existence.

Then, finally, Wasilewski called everyone's attention to a small rug in a case in the middle of the room. It was a blue rug featuring a design of human footprints in white. I remarked that yet another way to think about what we were going to be doing over the next two days was that we were going to be tracing the footsteps of the people who had walked across this terrain. What kinds of tracks had they left on the landscape?

We then divided into four Dialogue Circles each of which reflected the complexity of the group at large, students, academics, civil society members, from Japan, Korea, China and Russia, male and female, young and old, with different ethnic and regional affiliations. These four Dialogue Circles each had a facilitator and a language resource person who could interpret between Japanese and English, but each group had to insure that those who preferred to speak in Korean, Chinese and/or Russian would be heard and understood using informal resources within the group. Each group had two main tasks over the next two days: 1) to video tape each person's narrative and 2) on the afternoon of the second day to collectively construct a graphic representation of what they had experienced in their group to share with all the Dialogue participants. Appendix I gives the information/instructions participants received before the dialogues began, the most important of which was the admonition that each participant had two main responsibilities, to share and to listen.

To begin the participants in each group introduced themselves to each other, decided on their main languages of communication depending on the linguistic resources of their particular group and decided on their order of speaking (round robin, volunteer, thematic, etc.) In one group, to introduce themselves, each member chose an object which represented him or her self and threw it into the circle and explained why that object had symbolic importance to them.

For a day and a half the four Dialogue Circles functioned as small communities accomplishing their two tasks. Breaks were taken in an organic fashion that matched the needs of each Circle.

It was during the breaks that participants could visit the room where the students from Kwansai Gakuen University's Information Science Program were creating the website that will support this dialogic process into the future. Participants being able to see their texts on line and students being able to incorporate elements from the discussions into their design of the site (like the image of the Evenki rug that was shared at the opening) was an interesting process for both sides. [Paul, please expand on this.]

Saturday night we had a collective dinner in the university's Alumni House to which some special guests who were not able to attend the Dialogue during the day were invited. We had Okinawan singing and dancing, an Ainu song, a song about the Japanese nostalgia for one's home town and two of the facilitators singing John Lennon's song, "Imagine."

Each group was successful in video taping each person's narrative. We have about 30 hours of

narratives from 40 participants and some observers. We have texts for most of the narratives in either English or Japanese.

A preliminary analysis of the narratives reveals some very interesting dynamics. There are narratives towards constructing a new cosmopolitan concept of global citizen. There are parallel experiences of destruction and loss. There is the emerging, previously untold, comprehensive story, of the Korean diaspora. There are the hidden histories of Ainu, Okinawans, Evenki, Khanmigans, Buryats, Japanese “returnees” from Siberia, Manchuria and North Korea, and of people left behind in all three areas. And there are the generational stories of people who actually experienced events versus those who have just read about them in books.

After the video taping was finished, each Circle constructed a graphic representation of what they had experienced in their group and presented it to all the Dialogue participants. Some of these presentations were chart-like, some like paintings and others like sculptures. These presentations were also video-taped.

The final closing was in three parts. First, since it was the beginning of February, we did a mini *Setsubun* Festival and drove three volunteer *Oni* out of the room, only to welcome them back into the Circle when they decided to be human beings again (after all we are promoting reconciliation!). Then we had a final Circle of Appreciation where each of us circled around and paused before each person silently acknowledging them through eye contact alone. Finally, there was an Ainu closing ceremony, bringing us back full circle to where we had begun our Dialogue, once again acknowledging and being acknowledged by the people in the room with the longest history in the Japanese archipelago.

What was remarkable was the quality of human relationships that emerged from the work of the Dialogue Circles. Once again, just as my pioneer ancestors found and just as we found in the work of desegregating schools in the United States, when people have tasks to do together which require the integration of all their skills, this functional necessity seems to enable people to create productive relationships. For this project, it will be these real relationships that carry on the work of the Circles after government funding for the activity has ended, and this is why the virtual space being created by Professor Hays and his students at Kwansai Gakuen University is so important as a space for the continuation of the relationships so recently established. Furthermore, this virtual space may expand so that participation in the dialog of histories may be extended to many more stakeholders, all the people of the region.

Basic Principles for a Virtual space

Creating a virtual space that mirrors the process and facilitates the goals of the dialogue is a challenge. Beginning with the principles on which the original dialog was founded:

1. all interested stakeholders are involved;
2. the point of view of each participant is valued and respected without fear of confrontation or ridicule;
3. all participants really “hear” where “others” are coming from;
4. the process of “selecting preferences” avoids dividing the group into winners and losers;

5. all participants go away feeling good about their contribution to the overall outcome and so have a sense of ownership and responsibility for the outcome.

These get slightly modified for the virtual space. For one thing, the people who participated in the dialog accepted the basic principles. The texts presented on the site are a much more public offering and not all those viewing the site will have accepted the principles.

1. All interested stakeholders are encouraged to submit a text to the site
2. The story or text from each participant is valued and it remains their own. Any participant has the right to edit or even withdraw their text at any time. They may even ask that their identity not be publicly revealed.
3. In order that each story or text be “heard” as widely as possible, each should be presented in at least two of the target languages.
4. The texts are presented in such a manner that none has precedence over any other. All are equal.
5. All participants should have a sense of ownership and responsibility for the site and so are encouraged to participate as equal members of a web site editorial board.

Looking at each of these in depth reveals some of the issues that need to be addressed in order to create a virtual space and helps give a basic structure to the website. Understanding these and how they interact with various technical issues was the focus of the work by the team from Kwansai Gakuin University. Work on resolving these issues is on going and pushes the envelope in many areas including technology, community building and history.

First, all interested parties are encouraged to submit a story or text to the site. This is an extension of the idea that all interested stakeholders should participate. One of the problems of the contested histories that are problematic for this region is that governments cherry pick various incidents and use them to promote a particular view. The purpose of this site is to go beyond any one view, political or personal and to encompass all views so that every story is available for public viewing. History is a summation of the individual experiences of all the people who lived through the events of a particular time. We are trying to create a space that will grow into a web of stories and experiences that can give rise to a shared understanding of the history of the region.

Second, the story or text from each participant is valued and it remains their own. Any participant has the right to edit or even withdraw their text at any time. They may even ask that their identity not be publicly revealed. This principle leads to two issues: 1) the authenticity of texts and translation and 2) the preservation of the identity of authors who may post stories that may involve personal or public risks. One of the issues for authorship is the authenticity of a possible translation. Is a translated story the same story and would the author approve of the translation and still accept ownership of the story? This is a difficult question. Certainly each author should have editorial control. Some authors are multilingual and can provide their own story in multiple languages. Where stories must be translated, ideally, the community would keep translations authentic. If there are many multilingual members reading these texts, then we can trust the texts in translation. A second issue is the public nature of the texts and the private nature of the stories. In the protected space with supportive group members, some things were revealed that are not for public release. However, these may be critically parts of the collective story that are important to share. One way to do this is to allow authors to withhold their names

from publication. Stories are not accepted anonymously, but if the web masters are convinced that the text is from a real person, then they may allow the text to be included in the history space anonymously. Authors may choose to reveal little or no information about themselves. The guiding principle is that each author owns their own text and its translations.

Third, in order that each story or text be “heard” as widely as possible, each should be translated into at least two of the target languages. One of the problems for dialog in the Northeast Asian region is the lack of a common language. The basic languages for the region are Chinese, English, Japanese, Korean, and Russian. There are also several indigenous languages, such as Ainu and Evenki, however the speakers of these languages are usually fluent in one of the five widespread languages. Of course, some of these indigenous languages are not literate languages with no orthography, or only a borrowed orthography. Issues of participation of people from oral traditions on the internet and virtual sites, such as this one, is beyond the scope of this dialog, but it is important none the less.

In the two dialogues, many of the participants were university students studying in a foreign country. They understand these language issues and have some fluency in more than one language. As a result, both of the face to face interactions have used translators who were often themselves participants in the process. A willingness to listen and to work through language issues was one of the founding principles of the dialog. No such restriction is imposed on visitors to the web site. And yet, in order for the site to create a public space for citizens of the region, it must be functional in several languages. A Chinese speaker must be able to access the stories in Russian or in Japanese. Ideally, all the stories should be told in all five target languages. This would entail a massive translation project, especially if the goal is to collect hundreds of stories. As a first step, because most of the participants are fluent in more than one language, we are asking that they submit their stories in more than one language. This gives enough overlap that the web of stories can begin to be created.

Fourth, the texts are presented in such a manner that none has precedence over any other. All are equal. This is one principle where the technology gives some suggestions for implementation. In thinking about the visitors who will come to the site and explore the history space, how will they move through this space and read these texts? Readers may want to randomly explore or they may want to search for stories on a particular topic. For those wanting just to randomly explore, the texts have been arranged in a ring. This is similar to the way photos are often displayed on the web. Each of the stories is on a single webpage and there are buttons that allow the reader to move to the next text or the previous text in the ring. In this way, readers can step through the stories one at a time. Because the readers may not be fluent in multiple languages, there are actually five parallel rings, one for each of the five basic languages. Links are also made between the versions of a text that are in multiple languages. This allows readers to see what languages have been used for each story and to move between the various text rings. Of course, the basic interface, the top pages and such are also translated into the five languages. In a sense, it is like five web sites with a consistent design and links between all of them. Maintaining such a site is difficult and taxes the abilities of the technical team, not the least because we are not fluent in all of the five languages. However, if the technology cannot be made to serve the higher purposes of the dialog, then what hope can there be for building communication between the various peoples of the region?

Fifth, all participants should have a sense of ownership and responsibility for the site and so are

encouraged to participate as equal members of a web site editorial board. While the technical team from KG were accepted as full members of the dialog and participated in the various ceremonies, they view themselves as facilitators of the technology for the participants. The team members did not give personal stories in the groups, but gathered ideas from various individuals and tried to create a web space that is as much a consensus as the dialog itself. As designers and technicians, they view the dialog members as their clients and seek to bring the clients ideas, concepts, content and desires into life on the web. So, part of the web will function as a technology advisory group. Any contributor will be eligible for membership, limited only by their desire to actively participate. An irregular e-mail newsletter will help connect the members of this advisory group. Due to the limitations of the technicians, this group will function mainly in English with some work being done in Japanese.

Creation of the Virtual Space

As mentioned above, the members of the technical team are all from Kwansai Gakuin University and are specializing in web design and internet technology under Professor Hays. They were selected because all of them expressed a desire to learn this technology in order to change the world for the better. The North East Asian Dialog Project seemed a good chance for them to do just that.

At a preliminary meeting at Kwansai Gakuin University, all the students watched a film of the first dialog. Explaining the dialog and the structured dialog process is often difficult. The students were unsure of exactly what was going to happen and how it could be reflected in a virtual space on line. Still, they were enthusiastic about the possibility of trying something practical.

At ICU, the technical team were welcomed as full members of the dialog. They participated in the breaking of bread and the opening ceremonies by the Ainu elders and the first gathering of all the participants. During the first day, a technology center was set up for the technical team and we spent the day brainstorming a basic design for the virtual space. The students also took the time to listen in on several of the groups to see what was actually going on in the sessions. They also took photos of the process. Only one text was available for the students to begin the history space.

Saturday evening, after the dinner, the technical team began crafting the web site in earnest. Working until early in the morning, Sunday, they combined the photos, preliminary documents and ideas into a functioning site. At 9 the next morning, they were ready to show the site to all the participants. All that day in the technical workroom, participants stopped by to view the site and make comments. As people came in, they often brought their narratives and these were quickly uploaded to the site. As the day progressed, the site grew. People were able to give feedback as they saw the site and interacted with it. It was a very fruitful process. The basic site map of the original site is in figure 1.

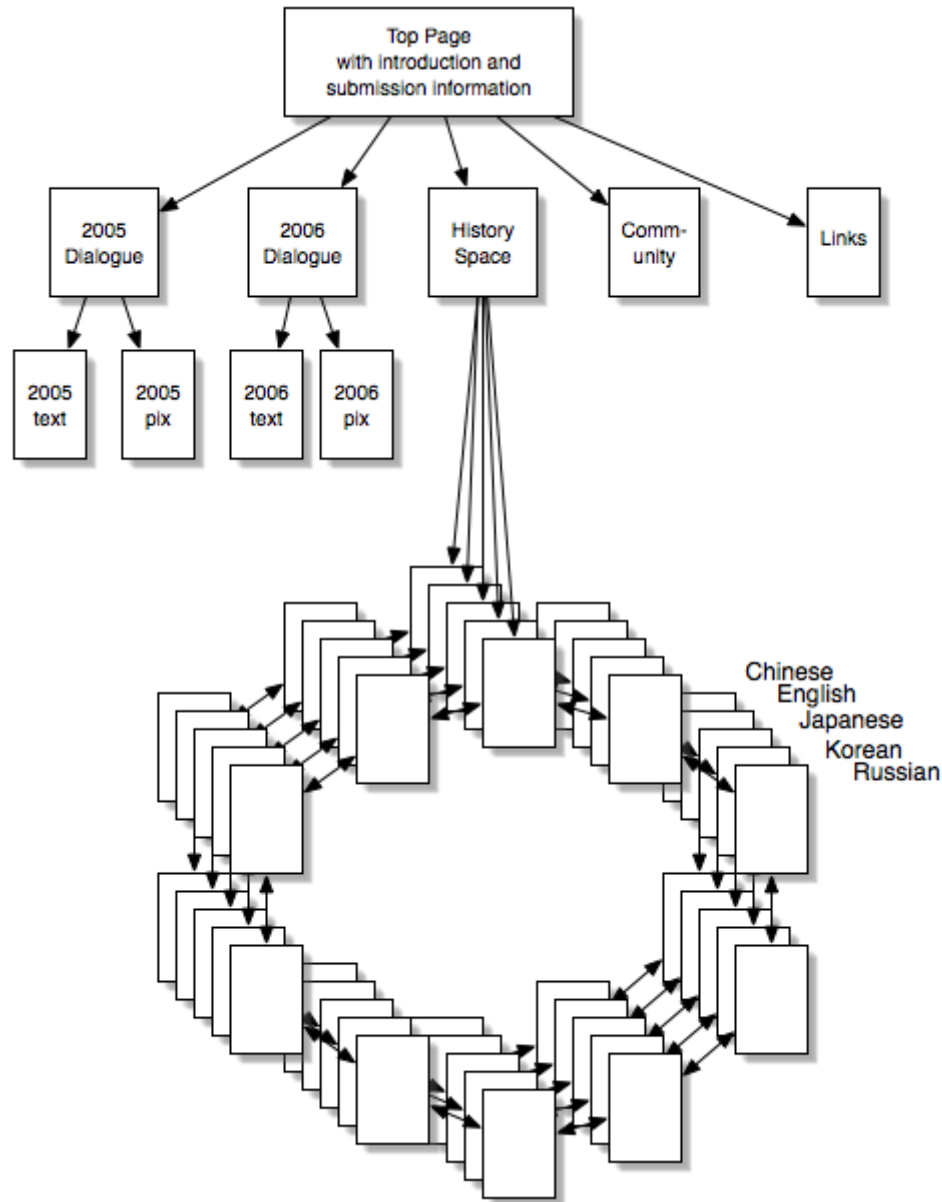


Figure 1. The site map of the original site created at the 2006 dialog.

On returning to the university, the work continued. In further consultation with Wasilewski, it was decided to reformulate the site to reflect the four discussion groups. There were two reasons for this. First, the site was seen as cementing and furthering the relationships that had been created in the face to face dialog. Using the site as a way of building on those relationships was a primary function. Secondly, there were various ancillary materials that fit the structuring of the site into the four groups. These materials included the video of the dialogs as well as photos of the final graphic representations of the groups work. In order to display this visual information in context, the four groups had to be a prime organizing structure for the site. The site map of the current virtual space is given in figure 2.

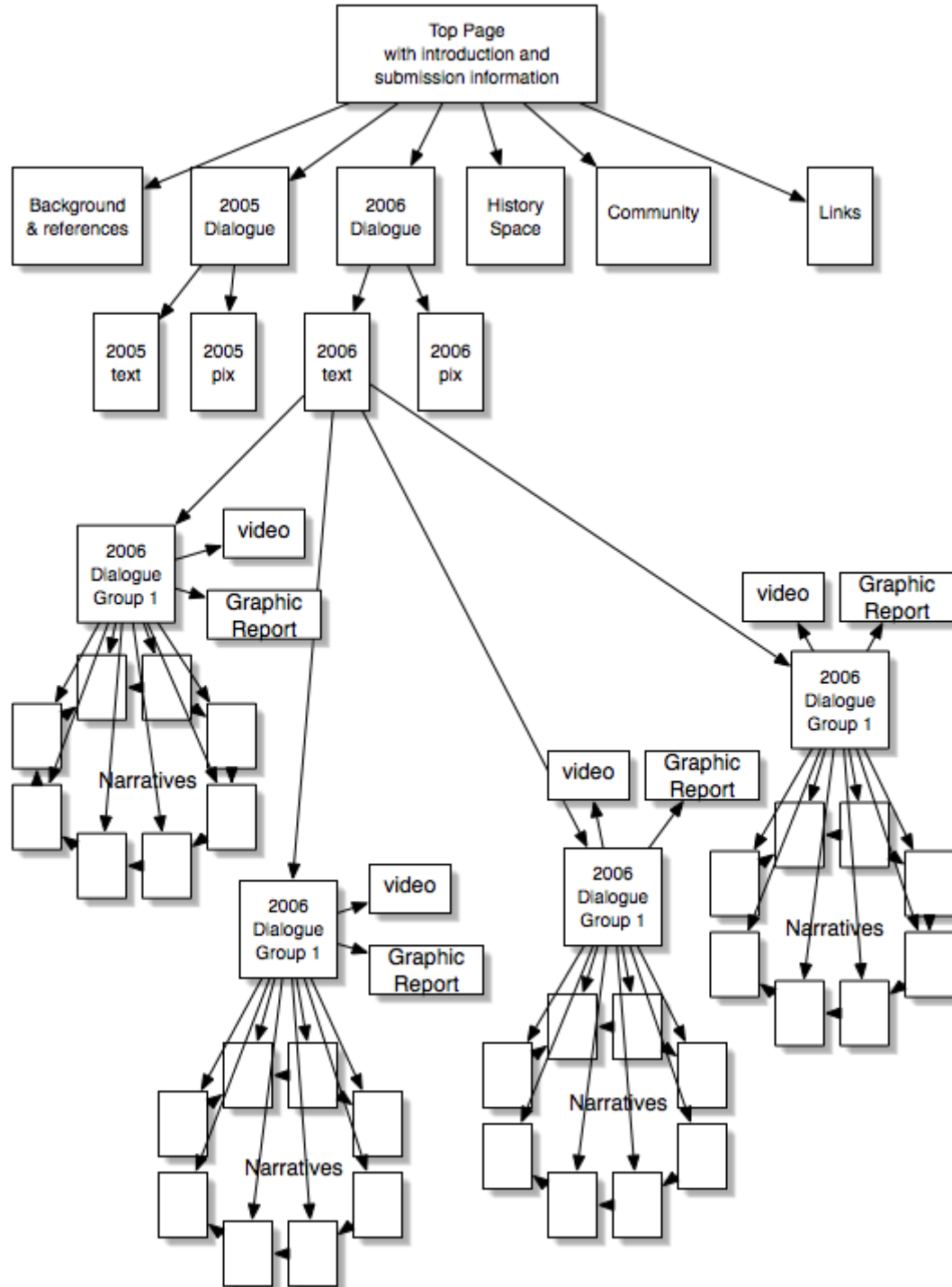


Figure 2. The site map reflecting the four discussion groups.

The Future of the Virtual Space for a History of North East Asia

While the current site is a reflection of the four discussion groups of the 2006dialog, there is

greater potential for a truer redefinition of the regional history. The current 20 to 30 narratives is only a beginning. Plans are being made to collect narratives from a wider range of stakeholders. Several NPO groups and numerous individuals have expressed interest in submitting narratives. With the help of the NPO's there is a possibility of collecting hundreds if not thousands of narratives. This is the beginning of a true virtual historical space. With all of these narratives available, the people of the region can begin to explore the richness and variety of the region's history and begin to create a shared vision of that history.

Beyond just collecting and archiving hundreds of historical narratives, the function of the virtual space must be to provide access to the narratives. Once we have created or begun the creation of this virtual history space, then readers should be able to search the space for various topics. In the beginning, the web site will use google search. This technology is given away by google and can be used by a reader to search within the site or even out into the world wide web. Google search is useful for several reasons. First, the technology is well developed and supported and extended by one of the largest companies in the technology field. Second, google allows search in many languages. This allows readers to search for Japanese, Russian, Korean or Chinese words and topics, not just English terms. Going beyond separate searches in a multiple languages, it is hoped that the site will eventually incorporate across-linguistic lexicon that will allow search across the various languages. A search for "Shanghai" will also bring up texts with the Chinese character or Russian word. Of course, if all texts are translated, this feature might seem redundant. However, if this site encompasses hundreds of personal stories, then translating all of them will not be practical. Cross-linguistic search would be practical. Eventually, the hope is that key topic terms will be highlighted and linked across texts. If we read a text that mentions Shanghai, it will have a link that will bring up a list of other texts in various languages. Perhaps clicking on a search term could reorganize the reader's history ring so that they can click through a series of texts referring to a single topic.

This searchable space will have the potential to recreate the notion of history. Rather than history as the summation of events by an authority, whether an academic, a novelist or a government, history will be the shared collective virtual history space. Rather than reading a single text for a view of history, any interested person can search for a topic and read through various narratives to understand the experiences of the people for whom it was a real experience, not just a story. As these narratives are shared across a larger audience, a shared vision of the history of the region can develop. And, as with any search, people will find new things, things unlooked for in their search. They will not be restricted by pre-selection of events by an authority. What we search for may not be what we find, even if we find what we need. As Moreville (2005) said, "the journey transforms the destination." We may begin by seeking the truth and find ourselves with a shared awareness of and respect for each others experience. In the end, this virtual web of personal historical narratives will be a true global agora.

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Appendix: Summary of Dialogue Information for Participants

1. Each of you should reflect on your *intention* in participating in the Dialogue Project. What would you like to accomplish through this participation? If you wish to “capture” or symbolize your *intention* in an object, then please bring that object with you to share. We will have a table on which the objects can be displayed.

2. Each participant has three responsibilities:

- a) To tell your story as vividly as possible;
- b) To listen actively to the narratives of others; and
- c) To ask clarifying* questions ONLY.

[*Clarifying = “Could you explain that again, I didn’t understand,” etc. These questions should be driven by true curiosity, truly wanting to understand the other person’s narrative.]

3. The narratives will be shared in four Dialogue Circles, each reflecting the overall composition of Dialogue participants coming from Japan, Korea, China and Russia. You will be with your Circle for one and a half days forming a small community.

4. Each narrative should be 15-20 minutes long with 10-15minutes for clarifying questions from other members of your circle.

If you give your presentation in Japanese or English it is more convenient for us.

If you give your narrative in Japanese, then please provide a text in English (and vice versa).

If you give your narrative in Korean, Chinese or Russian, then please provide an English or Japanese text.

And all participants should provide a brief outline for the interpreters in whichever language he/she presents (it is easier for interpreters to work from outlines than from full texts). Consecutive interpretation will be provided when necessary.

5. When you give us your text, our web designers from Hays’ Media Studio at Kwansai Gakuin University have requested the following:

We are going to test several methods for putting our stories and histories on the internet. In order to do this, we will need a copy or copies of your stories in whichever languages you choose.

- 1) *Please save them in a simple .txt or .html file.*
- 2) *Please bring them on*
 - a) *CD-rom or*
 - b) *USB memory or*
 - c) *send them to Paul Hays at paulrhays@mac.com.*

(Please do NOT use 3.5floppy disks.) We will try to get at least some of the narratives on-line so everyone can see some of our ideas about how they might look on the web.

Don't worry about your text being perfect. There will be many opportunities to edit it. You are

in complete control of what eventually appears on the web.

Looking forward to seeing you at the Dialogue!