

# A HOLISTIC MODEL TO EMPOWER HUMANITY

*Most politicians polarize society through the direction, the values, and the words they use; in other words, they do not unite. Instead, they play up ethnic, religious, and nationalist sentiments, as well as other concepts that can be easily inflamed, in order to ensure specific voting outcomes. This process summarizes a violent vicious cycle that has been in use for centuries. In this article, the author lays out a vision for a holistic model that combines a direction, a set of values, and a language that can unite everyone. According to the author, experiences built around this model can empower humanity, which will in turn root out systems that breed prejudices and begin the process of healing.*

D. Hakan Habip\*



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\* D. Hakan Habip is the Chairperson of *Bilim Kahramanları Derneği* (Science Heroes Association), a Turkish non-profit organization.

**I**t is time we embrace what unites all of us and it is time we celebrate what empowers us. It is time we imagine holistic models that both unite and empower everyone at the same time. I have stumbled upon a “model” by coincidence. In this article, I will share the model, the story of how it evolved, and the path I have chosen to walk since. The model is about building humanity anew.

On 20 July 2015, 32 youngsters perished in a suicide bombing attack in Suruç, Turkey. One hundred or more were wounded. The youngsters were about to head to Kobani, Syria to show solidarity with the border town’s inhabitants, to plant fruit trees, and to rebuild the hospital, among other efforts. To me, these young people represented some of the best aspirations of our race.

In Suruç, those who perpetrated the suffering were those who would like to enslave humanity, and those who suffered were those who would like to empower humanity. The common tool of empowerment is showing empathy and being equidistant to any identity. The main tool of enslavement is fear. The latter has been in use for centuries and cannot be attributed only to this region. A mirror held up to human history would reflect how fear has been leveraged for more votes in political rhetoric, in media bias, and in education systems that nurture prejudices. So what happened in Suruç can be perceived as part of a perpetual struggle for the soul of mankind.

With increasing violence, multiple economic and climate-ecology related issues, and the myriad of political leadership hurdles countries around the world are facing, one may say a perfect storm is in the making. If all of these problems hit humanity together, massive migrations and devastating confrontations may follow. After such a shock, rebuilding civilization as we know it today may take generations.

Possibly, the magnitude of the problems we face, coupled with the speed of the Internet in sharing information, may help raise awareness levels faster and may convince many to act in harmony. I am hopeful. Since 2004, I have been involved in organizing scientific tournaments for young people. Thanks to what I do, I observe thousands of young people who engage themselves in increasing the quality of life for their communities every year. The mere sight of them gives hope to everyone.

This hope inspired me to write this piece. In summary, the model I propose has three parts: a one-word direction for all, a set of “universal” values, and a preferred language (a table with a set of words and concepts “to emphasize less” and another “to emphasize more”).

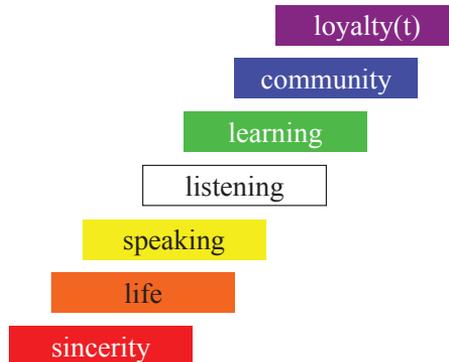
Obviously, there may be other models. I, however, am not aware of any other holistic approaches, let alone one that works. That being said, I am aware of what does not work: we will never unify our race through ethnicity, or religion. As most would agree, historically, these concepts have been the main causes of conflicts. A quote by Jiddu Krishnamurti summarizes my position: “When you call yourself an Indian or a Muslim or a Christian or a European, or anything else, you are being violent.”<sup>1</sup> Any type of identity declared is a concept imposed, and it carries its own seeds of contradiction and confrontation. Once we define a set of those who belong to a specific identity, with our own hands, we are also defining its complement, “the other”: the set of those who do not belong. Therefore, how can a concept that is supposed to unite, begin with separation? Would we not prefer to use a notion that unites all?

### ***The Direction***

In 2000, after about six years of experience in the IT industry, I initiated a project to develop a better business plan for an ISP (Internet service provider.) As any business, an ISP is as financially valuable to the extent of its loyal stakeholders. Therefore, developing a better business plan meant developing a method for building a loyal community. The IT industry likes to focus. So I said, “building a loyal community” is equivalent to “building value” (two words), and building value is equivalent to “building” (one word). Regarding the business plan, I had a single word to start with: “building.” I noticed that these concepts would also be meaningful in life, to social organisms of any size: an individual, a family, an enterprise, a country, or a race. This is what I call the direction. It can unite all.

### ***The Values***

I then questioned how loyal communities can be built. If the final step is loyalty, then what are the first and intermediate steps? Over the course of a few months, this ladder developed:



<sup>1</sup> Jiddu Krishnamurti and Mary Lutyens (ed.), *Freedom from the Known* (San Francisco: Harper, 10 March 2009).

A verification of the above ladder is as follows: the sincerity between a couple results in life; the life speaks (gives), listens (receives), learns, forms a community, and, by staying loyal to this community, builds value or simply builds.

*“I am aware of what does not work: we will never unify our race through ethnicity, or religion.”*

Once again, I noticed that these concepts would also be meaningful to social organisms of any size. And not only that: the ladder appears to be an interface for all relations. This is what I call a set of “universal” values. What is unique about these values is when followed, they construct the direction, i.e. “building.” Verify all of your good deeds, and

do not be surprised if you find the same values used. I have tested both the direction and the values on hundreds of individuals in face-to-face conversations. Everyone found meaning in them.

### *The Language*

While working on the direction, the values, and the business plan, I attended a conference on education. Tınaz Titiz, the former Turkish Ministry of Culture and a person of many constructive ideas, questioned during his speech the choice of the very words used in education. He explained that the word “education” comes from “*educare*” in Latin: “that helps stand upright.” The Turkish noun for education, “*eğitim*,” originates from the verb “*eğmek*,” meaning “bending into shape.” Implicitly, he questioned the top-down nature of the word. I had always questioned the submissiveness of the masses in Turkey and thought it could well be a consequence of the word we use for education. We all learn to kneel in front of a perceived authority from the first day of school if not earlier. Let me remind you of a quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson:

*Watch your thoughts for they become words,  
watch your words for they become actions,  
watch your actions, for they become habits,  
watch your habits for they become your character,  
watch your character for it becomes your destiny.*

Could the choice of the very words and concepts we use today be affecting the future of mankind? Many believe so. Since I had started looking at all choices in terms of building loyal communities, I began questioning the choice of concepts and

words we use in daily life. I started employing positive discrimination to concepts that “unite and empower” and negative discrimination to concepts that “separate and enslave.” Below is a table with the words and concepts that I have gathered over the years.

Emphasize less	Emphasize more	Why?
Top-down	Bottom-up	Top-down approaches reduce initiative and meaning; the loss of meaning results in implicit enslavement.
Hierarchical organizations	Flat organizations	Flat organizations listen better; most learn & react faster. Thanks to the Internet, many hierarchical organizations are now being replaced.
Knowledge	Idea	Knowledge introduces hierarchy based on haves and have nots and reduce initiative. The word <i>idea</i> unites all regardless of age, gender, education, background, etc.
I, me	Us, we	The latter underlines the concept of a community and de-emphasizes the ego.
Education	Learning	Education is top-down, while learning is bottom-up.
Ownership	Sharing	The former builds physical and mental fences; the latter nurtures the feeling of solidarity.
Competition	Solving together	The former builds ego and walls; very few actually win, most lose; the latter nurtures the feeling of solidarity.
Fate	Willpower & responsibility	The concept of fate is often used to enslave people; the latter two concepts empower.
Conquering by force	Building by good-will & mutual trust	Many books used in history classes are filled with celebration of conquests; there are very few instances when building by good-will is ever mentioned.
Result	Process	Putting an emphasis on the result often condones any means necessary to achieve the result; rather, the process needs to be emphasized.
Creativity	Trial & error; perseverance	Most people interpret creativity as an instantaneous act that only a few can perform. But for example, Thomas Edison was not creative: he achieved success through trial and error. Instead, perseverance should be emphasized.

Culture as a static state	Culture as an action	Politicians, education systems, and the media (PEM) worldwide use the word culture mostly as a static state; the static state is often an ethnicity or a religion. On the other hand, the word culture comes from the French word “ <i>cultiver</i> ,” to grow; it is an action. Ethnic or religious identity is often a coincidence; humanity is facing violent confrontations daily (based on coincidences,) instead of embracing each other to build meaningful solutions through deliberate actions.
Identity, as a unifying concept	Scientific endeavor, as a unifying concept	Politicians rarely use scientific endeavor as the unifying concept: for example, an injection that cures Ebola would unite everyone. On the other hand, using identity to unify is often less expensive, but clearly more divisive.
Individuality	Community	Hollywood has taught us the importance of individuality; the Internet is reminding us that we find meaning in communities.
<b>Summary: lack of meaning</b>	<b>Summary: presence of meaning</b>	In the absence of meaning, our choices enslave us.

Even a simple awareness of the concepts in this table would empower each of us. Coupled with the direction, and the values, jointly they become a holistic model that can identify and filter the real intent of any politician, any journalist, or any educational content.

In order to disseminate the model, I wrote a project called “Internet Valley” in 2000. It described a path to render Turkey wealthier by raising IT-fluent youth. Its opening sentence reads: “Internet Valley is a path to change the World for the better, starting in Turkey.” Working on this project, four years later, led me to an exciting scientific tournament platform called FIRST LEGO League (FLL) for young students. FLL is an example of an experience that can positively transform humanity. I will briefly summarize how we got involved in FLL and give examples of its impacts.

***The Experience***

Our daughter was born in 2002. As mothers do, my spouse wanted to spend quality time with her. So, along with a colleague, they decided to establish an after-school activity center for children. From the first day, the content at the center included science, technology, scientific experiments, stop-motion filmmaking, and robotics:

you could have called it “Internet Valley” in the making. The center was never a financial success. Some years later we closed it. However, thanks to this venture, we came across FLL.

During a two to three month FLL season, each group of 10 students, ages 9-16, work together at school under the supervision of an adult team coach. They design and code a modular, autonomous robot that can perform certain mechanical tasks within two and a half minutes. They brainstorm and select an issue relevant to their community regarding the theme of the season. Then,

*“[In the Turkish education system] we all learn to kneel in front of a perceived authority from the first day of school if not earlier.”*

they research, interview experts, come-up with original solutions, and prepare a five-minute theatrical presentation. FLL values are similar to the values of the model: “teamwork” is being promoted instead of “building loyal communities.” Each team participates in regional tournaments and, depending on their success, they can continue to national and then to international tournaments. I recognized that the FLL experience could help build Internet Valley and allow the children to live the holistic model.

We became the partner of FLL in Turkey. Later, with other volunteers, we started a Turkish non-profit entity called *Bilim Kahramanları Derneği* (BKD – Science Heroes Association). The goals of BKD are: to render science the focal point of Turkish society, to attract children and adolescents to fundamental sciences at an early age; and to motivate young scientists. Cumulatively, in 11 seasons, FLL in Turkey has reached 9,000 young students from 35 cities. Turkish teams have fared well in the international legs of FLL and received 21 awards so far. Participants have received full scholarships from some of the best universities in the US. There are patent applications every year. Each year, the number of underserved teams is increasing thanks to supporters.

Based on studies and interviews with parents and teachers, internationally and in Turkey, FLL participants exhibit:

- Increased levels of fine-motor skills
- Very high degrees of self-confidence
- Increased levels of trust in others
- Improved listening and self-expression skills

- Improved presentation and time management skills
- Higher levels of school attendance
- Higher success levels in all subjects
- Increased interest in pursuing higher education and careers in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) subjects
- Increased teamwork skills
- Increased interest in volunteering and in community matters

Each tournament is a high-energy, festival like environment that fills parents, teachers, and visitors with hope. The FLL experience transforms kids from children into empowered young adults, but this has not been the only impact.

**Building trust among various layers of the society:** There was a tragic mining accident in Soma, a town in the Manisa province, in May 2014. Thanks to a donation, BKD was able to reach out and touch about 150 children who were directly or indirectly affected by this accident. Participating in FLL helped them build capacity to deal with the trauma. The process took about nine months. Local government officials, the private sector, and BKD all played important roles along the way, and today each is aware that value was delivered thanks to a team effort.

**Increased feelings of solidarity:** At each event, about 100 volunteers serve about 200-300 participants. This increases the feelings of solidarity and may inspire the participants to become volunteers for social causes later in life.

**A snowball effect:** At the age of 14, a three-year participant decided to become a team coach for a public school team. The public school students she helped one day may similarly volunteer and touch others.

**Promoting regional peace:** A project named APOS (A Piece of Science) will help promote regional peace. By design, it is an annual invitational FLL tournament in English, which is scheduled to be held in mid-2016. The initial group of invited countries will be the neighbors of Turkey. The list of invited countries will expand every year to include the Balkans, the Caucasus, and the Middle East. In time, APOS can open hearts and minds more effectively than state policies. It can be used first to instill trust among participants, their parents, and then to influence public opinion positively. Politicians and policies will eventually follow.

I have briefly described the model and described the path I have walked since. The model and the path complement and feed each other. Similar approaches can empower the masses. Empowered people can change the region for the better bottom-up.

The adoption of this or similar models may help this generation raise global citizens who care for each other. Our children may thus be able to deal better with the humanitarian crises that they may soon be facing. Nowadays, many people search for consistent holistic models that answer many questions at once. The higher the violence and the anxiety levels, the more frantic the search.

*“BKD was able to reach out and touch about 150 children who were directly or indirectly affected by the [Soma mining] accident.”*

The use of the model will:

- Clarify the direction of the individual, and our race
- Reduce ideological pressures on education systems
- Clarify the direction of learning & educational content
- Increase the quality of all interactions and improve levels of trust
- Allow a sustainable and transparent governance methodology to flourish where accountability, meritocracy, and separation of powers are common place
- Reduce sectarianism, prejudices, violence, suffering, and corruption
- Neutralize many tools of enslavement
- Simplify and improve constitutions
- Help balance the forces within any society: the government, media, individual communities, and NGOs
- Add meaning to the word “democracy”

And eventually, will start a virtuous cycle of positive change healing humanity from its own mistakes.

If concerned communities adopt this model in large enough numbers, eventually politicians will also be attracted to it. If one policy maker uses this model, the future will be better for his/her country. If scores, even hundreds of policy makers use this model worldwide, then, very likely, humanity will eventually be at peace with itself, with nature, and with the many problems of its current existence.