

INNOVATIONS IN DEMOCRACY: AN EVALUATION
OF THE ROGUE VALLEY WISDOM COUNCIL

by

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Discussions about participatory democracy frequently focus on levels of participation and its direct effects on policy-making. A new model for community dialogue has been developed called The Wisdom Council. This model focuses on high-quality conversation in a small group of participants, with a goal of affecting overall community conversation. Despite, or because of, its newness, there have been no critical evaluations of this approach.

Recently, a Wisdom Council was held in the Rogue Valley of Southern Oregon. This thesis provides an evaluation of that event. Specifically, this work makes two important contributions to our understanding of the Wisdom Council model. First, a comprehensive set of evaluative criteria has been developed to evaluate Wisdom Councils. Second, that criteria is applied to the Rogue Valley Wisdom Council held in

late 2003. The results highlight some of the success and limitations of implementing a “dialogic” public participation model.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. LITERATURE REVIEW	6
Innovations in Democracy	6
Problems in Democracy	6
Common Solutions	7
Participatory Democracy	8
Minipopulus and Participation	9
Minipopulus and Participation	10
Deliberative Democracy	10
Large Scale Methodologies	11
Small Scale Methodologies	13
Common Elements	13
Conversation and Participation	15
Ideal Speech	16
Dialogue	17
Characteristics of Dialogue	20
Dynamic Facilitation	21
The Wisdom Council: A Dialogic Innovation	25
Model Comparisons.....	31
Wisdom Council Research	32
III. METHODOLOGY	34
Overview	34
Evaluative Criteria Methods	34
Core Wisdom Council	34
Group Process	38
Community Impact	39
Communicative Theory	40
Complete List of Evaluative Criteria	43
Case Study Methods	45
Summary	49
IV. RESULTS	50
Rogue Valley Wisdom Council: Inspiration, Organizing and Meeting	50
Inspiration	51

Organizing	52
The Rogue Valley Wisdom Council	53
The Town Hall Forum	57
Summary of Results	58
General Results	63
Other Results	69
Conclusion	70

Chapter	Page
V. DISCUSSION	72
Rogue Valley Wisdom Council	72
Recommendations	74
The Wisdom Council: Theories and Other Models of Public Participation	77

APPENDIX

A. ROGUE VALLEY WISDOM COUNCIL STATEMENT	83
B. PRE-MEETING QUESTIONNAIRE	84
C. POST-MEETING QUESTIONNAIRE	86
D. TOWN HALL FORUM QUESTIONNAIRE	91

BIBLIOGRAPHY	94
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LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Abbreviated Logic Model of the Wisdom Council	31
2. Chaos/Order Continuum of Public Participation Processes	80

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Different Kinds of Talking	21
2. Characteristics of Dynamic Facilitation	25
3. Comparison of Democratic Innovation	32
4. Weblor's Fairness Criteria	41
5. Complete List of Evaluative Criteria	44
6. Summary of Results	59

LIST OF GRAPHS

Graph	Page
1. Statement Interest	67
2. Inspiration	67
3. Future Wisdom Councils	68

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The problems facing democracy in this country are well known. Trust in government and voter participation rates are declining, as well as a host of other problems (Putnam 2001). Some have stated that this is a result of low-quality public participation (Arnstein 1969).

The theory of participatory democracy revolves around ideas to increase the quality of public participation. Participatory democracy is a body of theory which posits citizens have the right and responsibility to work with one and other and determine the “common good” or what’s best for all citizens (Mansbridge 1980; Barber 1984). Within the framework of determining what’s best for all, many “innovations in democracy” exist. One kind of innovation is *Deliberative Democracy*, which involves convening a diverse group of citizens to consider issues, weigh different options and make decisions based on an informed judgment (Gutmann and Thompson 1996; Macedo 1999). Deliberative innovations are often highly structured to ensure specific inputs (of high quality information) and outputs (of decisions or recommendations).

Others have advocated for less structured approaches to involving citizens in collective problem solving (Dryzek 1990). Habermas (1970) described an “Ideal Speech” situation, which he claimed could generate a consensus among participants in the conversation. Every participant would need to have an equal ability and opportunity to

make, interpret and challenge statements. This resultant consensus would be tested by each person's perspective through the process of conversation, therefore, the agreements or decisions would reflect each person's thinking. Thus the outcome of that conversation would have a kind of "Communicative Rationality," well suited for solving social problems (Habermas 1970; Dryzek 1990). While this idea is compelling, Habermas' writing leaves little explanation of Ideal Speech and we are left to interpret what it might look like in practice (Webler 1995). For instance, how would one create a public participation model based on these ideas?

Further, the literature on *Dialogue* puts forth that there is a range of possible quality in any given conversation, which may be independent of the equality among participants. Dialogue is from conversation that allows groups to access new understandings and connections between ideas (Isaacs, Zohar et al. 1995). Some have advocated the use of Dialogue to solve social problems (Isaacs 1999). These efforts, which are less structured than Deliberative approaches, might be termed, "Dialogic" innovations in democracy.

The Wisdom Council

The Wisdom Council is a new, dialogic public participation model that creates a high quality conversation among randomly selected participants (Rough 2002). Each participant has the same opportunity as the others to make or challenge statements; so in many ways it fulfills the Ideal Speech situation. Additionally, the process uses a special form of facilitation, called Dynamic Facilitation. Dynamic Facilitation is an offshoot or

variation of Dialogue that ensures a creative, heartfelt conversation among participants (Rough 1997). Because of its unique facilitation (and application of Dialogue to problem solving) and the fact that it meets the Ideal Speech situation as described by Habermas (1970), the Wisdom Council presents an innovation in democracy worthy of study.

However, this model has never been formally examined or evaluated. Additionally, there is very little literature on the subjects of Wisdom Councils and Dynamic Facilitation. Thus, this thesis takes advantage of an important opportunity: to examine these subjects in theory and evaluate the performance of the Wisdom Council in practice.

Purpose and contributions of this research

The purpose of this thesis is two-fold. First, since there exists no previous evaluations of Wisdom Councils, a comprehensive set of evaluative criteria is constructed. The second purpose is to apply these evaluative criteria to the implementation of the Wisdom Council model. A Wisdom Council was recently organized in a Southern Oregon community known as the Rogue Valley.

Several important contributions result from this analysis. First, a new set of evaluative criteria is created for Wisdom Councils. Second, the evaluation provides insight and understanding of Wisdom Councils as a public participation model. Finally, this new knowledge will inform the overall field of public participation by demonstrating how a less structured, dialogic public participation model can be implemented.

Document organization

The rest of this document is organized into four other chapters. Chapter two reviews the relevant literature and introduces the Wisdom Council model and Dynamic Facilitation. Literature on public participation and democratic innovations such as deliberative democracy is reviewed, providing context for the Wisdom Council model. Literature on Dialogue is also included in this chapter, which provides a context to examine Dynamic Facilitation.

Chapter three explains the methodology used for this analysis and is broken into two distinct parts. The first part of the chapter details the construction of the evaluative criteria. This criteria is mostly based on literature about Wisdom Councils and Dynamic Facilitation. The construction of these criteria also utilizes relevant literature on public participation evaluations. In particular, literature on Communicative Rationality is used as it is particularly well-suited for the analysis of Wisdom Councils. The second part of the chapter details the methods used to apply this evaluative criteria.

Chapter four presents the results of the analysis. This chapter provides an overall narrative of the event, reports on each evaluative criterion and gives an overall summary of the results.

The document concludes with chapter five, a discussion of the results. This discussion includes an interpretation of the results, as well as an overall examination of

the Wisdom Council model informed by the evaluation. The last part of the chapter applies this new knowledge to public participation in general and outlines areas for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review serves several purposes. It begins with a discussion of several innovations in democracy. These innovations are applications of the ideals of participatory democracy, which seek to remedy many of the problems associated with our current system of governance. Another purpose is to introduce the reader to the group process of *Dialogue* and discuss a similar facilitation process called *Dynamic Facilitation*. The review concludes with a description of a new innovation in democracy, called the Wisdom Council, which uses Dynamic Facilitation and an outline of the purpose of this research.

Innovations in Democracy: Deliberation, Dialogue and the Wisdom Council *Problems in Democracy*

Our democracy is plagued with numerous problems according to many standards. Powerful interest groups manipulate and control politics, leaving citizens at the margins (Greider 1993); public conflicts often prevent administrators from taking effective action (Susskind and Cruikshank 1987); and trust in public institutions, voting rates and participation in civic organizations is at an all-time low (Putnam 2001).

Democratic theorist Benjamin Barber (1984) characterizes our current governance system as a “thin democracy,” as a system with a strong emphasis on atomized individuality and private property (p110) and objective knowledge at the expense of

“discourse, common work and community building” (p112). Barber argues that these attributes are at the root of many of the problems in our system. Representative government and objective rationality replace a direct democracy with an engaged citizenry, working together for the common good. This breeds a lack of trust in institutions, apathy and a lack of a sense of belonging or connection with other citizens (Barber 1984).

Common Solutions

Common solutions to these problems are targeted at different parts of society and our system of governance. For example, education is an important part of modern society. Many believe an improvement to the education system would likely result in a more informed and capable citizenry. Such a citizenry might make voting decisions reflective of a deeper understanding and awareness. Also, this increased understanding may lead to voluntary actions aimed to remedy social problems. Hence, it is frequently offered as a solution to many societal problems.

Campaign finance is another popular reform effort targeting the government. The logic is the campaign finance system could be changed so that campaigns are free from massive support from special interests (which likely influence the positions and performance of the candidate). Candidates would either have to raise money from a larger constituency or run publicly funded campaigns. Thus, candidates would have a more equal footing to run campaigns. Candidates whose views reflect more of the general interest would be likely to gain popular support and win elections. In essence, elected

leaders would be more responsive to what's best for the majority of citizens, if the campaign finance system were reformed. This, of course assumes that the majority of citizens know what's best for all.

Participatory Democracy

Participatory democracy is a body of theory which recommends changes that target both the governance system and society (Mansbridge 1980; Barber 1984; Dryzek 1990). A primary goal of participatory democracy is the determination of a "common good" that is reflective of what is best for the whole of society and is based on collective reasoning (Mansbridge 1980; Barber 1984; Dryzek 1990). Within this realm, there are many different conceptualizations, including "Unitary Democracy" where political decisions are based on consensus (Mansbridge 1980), "Discursive Democracy", which is based on "Ideal Speech" of citizens (Dryzek 1990), or "Strong Democracy", where there is a focus on local direct participation (Barber 1984).

In a Strong Democracy, for example, decisions are made in a highly participatory, direct democracy where power is decentralized. The very nature of citizenship from this perspective is re-conceptualized from our modern democratic system, where citizen participation (particularly in terms of meaningful discussion and agenda setting) is rather limited. In a Strong Democracy, citizenship would entail people participating in decision making about all issues affecting them. Such a democracy is based on "strong democratic talk" where citizens must listen to each other and seek common ground to problems they face (Barber 1984). Through the process citizens

increase their connection and trust with one another, which in turn changes society and increases the desire for participation further driving the change process. The claim is this would reverse many of the problems of citizen apathy and lack of trust (Barber 1984). In this approach, and in the other participatory democracy ideals, it is assumed that citizens have the right, the capability and the responsibility to reason with one and other in order to understand and solve problems.

Despite these admirable goals, it is impossible to have every citizen make decisions about every issue that affects them. There are limitations in terms of the number of people who could possibly participate in decision making and the time required for large-scale direct decision making would be more than most citizens are probably willing to give (Dahl 1989; Berry, Portney et al. 1993). People have limited time, problems are complicated, there is an abundance of information relevant to these problems and their associated solutions, not to mention the fact that implementing citizen participation is often challenging and expensive (Kweit and Kweit 1981).

Minipopulus and participation

Many democratic innovations can claim legitimacy based on the concept of the minipopulus. A minipopulus is a group that participates on behalf of the larger population (Dahl 1989). Such a group, composed of perhaps a thousand people, could be convened and meet using telecommunications to address each important issue. After approximately a year, it would announce its decisions and recommendations (Dahl 1989). The assumption is the decisions and judgments made by such a group would be

the same as those of the whole population if everyone had the same chance to study and talk together. The minipopulus thus provides a bridge between our current system of representative governance and a fully participatory democracy. In effect, it saves the entire population from having to deliberate on every issue, yet it still derives many of the benefits of participation.

Public Judgment

Yankelovich (1991) discusses the difference between public opinion (which is uninformed and thus likely to change with the introduction of new information) and public judgment (which is informed and stable). He offers a definition of public judgment as a special kind of public opinion: “(1) more thoughtfulness, more weighing of alternatives, more genuine engagement with the issue, more taking into account a wide variety of factors than ordinary public opinion as measured in opinion polls, and (2) more emphasis on the normative, valuing, ethical side of questions than on the factual, informational side” (5). Such public reasoning provides the foundation for collective decision making in a participatory democracy (Mansbridge 1980; Barber 1984), as a major tenant of the theory states that citizens have the right, capability and responsibility to reason with one and other in order to determine the “common good.”

Deliberative democracy

There are different ways public judgment as defined by Yankelovich, can be produced. Deliberative democracy is one such approach that has received a good deal of attention (Cohen 1989; Gutmann and Thompson 1996; Macedo 1999). Deliberative

democracy is a body of theory and practice based on the generation of informed public judgment. The practice of deliberation often involves convening a diverse group of citizens to consider issues, weigh different options and make decisions based on an informed judgment (Gutmann and Thompson 1996; Macedo 1999). The decisions issued by a deliberative body of citizens is sometimes called a “deliberative voice” (Crosby 2003). Many democratic innovations seek to create a deliberative voice of a population through the use of a sample of the population, similar to a minipopulus (Crosby 1995; Fishkin 1995; Fishkin, Luskin et al. 2000; Crosby 2003). Some methods use large samples of a given population for exercises in deliberative democracy (Fishkin, Luskin et al. 2000; Weeks 2000; Lukensmeyer and Brigham 2002). Other models use small, stratified random samples representative of the public in the deliberative model (Crosby 1995).

Large Scale Methodologies of Deliberative Democracy

The Twenty-First Century Town Meeting is an example of a large-scale democratic innovation involving hundreds to thousands of people in a computer-networked meeting (Lukensmeyer and Brigham 2002). Participants include self-selected, random members of the public, pre-identified and targeted stakeholders as well as political decision-makers. There are also outreach efforts made to recruit traditionally underrepresented groups. All of the participants are seated together at small tables equipped with computers networked to a giant screen at the front of the room. Each person has a keypad device they can use to input data (such as demographics) or vote on

initiatives during the process. The data from the keypads can be summarized and displayed instantly for the whole group to see. Issues are discussed in small groups and the outcomes are summarized on the big screen at the front of the room. Decisions are made by the whole group using majority rule voting. By connecting each table and having the ability to elicit individual responses, the model allows thousands of people to deliberate in both a small group and large group at the same time (Lukensmeyer and Brigham 2002).

Despite a good deal of explanation of the overall structure and elements of the process, almost no information is given about the small group discussions. It's unclear what the dynamics of those conversations are like or if it's even important to the overall model.

Weeks (2000) describes four examples of large-scale applications of deliberative democracy. Each event organized by the Deliberative Democracy Project drew hundreds to thousands of participants and was able to "create a political will which empowered elected leaders to take action" (p369). Detailed surveys with ranges of choices were distributed to all community residents, giving them the chance to deliberate on various options about the convening issues. The surveys were augmented by public workshops where groups of citizens were randomly assigned to work together in small groups. There they had the chance to deliberate together on issues. These discussions were described as "structured exercises" with "reasoned discussion and shared problem

solving” (Weeks 2000). Again, little explanation of the group process is offered and it’s unclear how the small group conversations fit into the overall model.

Small Scale Democratic Methodologies

Small scale democratic innovations exist as well. One well-known example is called the Citizen’s Jury (Crosby 1995; Crosby 2003). A Citizen Jury is a four to six day small group citizen deliberative event. Up to two-dozen citizens are randomly selected in weighted categories to represent the demographics and attitudes for a particular community (or state). The jury is given a task or “charge” to accomplish, which may be to evaluate an elected leader or make a policy recommendation. The group is given information in carefully selected briefing packets. Expert witnesses give testimony and are cross-examined by citizens. Eventually, the group comes to a decision by majority vote. The small group size and extended time allows citizens to get deep into the issue and have high quality deliberation, thus there is an emphasis on the small group process. Following the deliberation, the results are presented publicly using a variety of means (Crosby 1995; Crosby 2003).

Structure and Rules: Common Elements

Many of these approaches share certain characteristics. Within these mostly one-time events, participants are given an input of specific information (briefing packets, budget worksheets, expert testimonial, etc.) and given certain boundaries or rules for how decisions will be made. They are structured to make specific decisions which are outlined ahead of time. For example a Citizen Jury is given a “charge,” which determines what the

jury can consider. This is so the verdict of the jury has relevance to a particular social or political issue. The design of these approaches focuses on inputs (in the form of high quality information, representative participants, expertise etc), outputs (decisions), and the connection between the deliberative process and overall political decision-making.

The structure and rules of public participation events are particularly important if they are to have legitimacy as an input into larger and more formal decision-making processes (Webler 1995). Rules include ways to decide what information should be considered valid as well as how decisions should be made and how participants should interact. There can be a tension between creating these rules ahead of time (and thus constraining and biasing the conversation) and allowing participants to create these rules themselves, although Webler (1995) expresses skepticism participants would be able to actually do this:

“... the alternative- merely to ignore the issue of competent process and to rely wholly on the competence of the individuals to self-design adequate communication procedures is impractical, may result in more bias, and less likely to be competent” (p57).

(Webler 1995) also argues that by structuring the information component ahead of time allows participants to be efficient and avoid “re-inventing the wheel”. By deciding how information can be sorted or evaluated and by including information in briefing materials, a process can start much farther along the path to making informed decisions, than without such preparations. This is particularly true with environmental problems, Webler notes, where there exists a large body of knowledge about problems and potential

solutions (1995, p57). For example, with respect to the degradation of fish habitat, there are many factors which contribute to this problem and many proposed solutions to these problems. Each of these factors requires a good deal of specialized knowledge to understand.

This same logic can be applied to many other problems, especially any technical decisions requiring a high level of knowledge to properly make decisions. Thus, we can see structure has a clear place for many kinds of public participation as it provides a way to make decisions ahead of time about how to best structure the process to include relevant information.

Conversation and Participation

Structured deliberation is one kind of democratic innovation. But there are also less structured approaches to democratic participation with more of a focus on the group process and conversation than on the outcomes. Lowery, Adler, et. al. (1996) show that a focus on the macro level of participation (inputs, political context, outputs) can neglect important group-level dimensions of public participation such as facilitation, agenda creation and group process.

Most participatory democracy theorists place a high value on conversation among citizens (Mansbridge 1980; Barber 1984). This makes sense given that conversation is fundamental to collective decision-making and cooperation (Habermas 1970; Dryzek 1990). Given the importance of conversation and its intrinsic relationship with participation, a closer look at the subtleties of conversation itself is warranted.

Ideal Speech

Jurgen Habermas (1970, 1984) explored the idea that conversation and cooperation are closely linked. He described conditions for “Ideal Speech” where all participants in a conversation have a high degree of equality and the conversation is open, free and fair. This “Ideal Speech” would then produce a consensus that was tested by the diverse perspectives of participants through the conversation. This consensus would be comprised of a special kind of rationality called communicative rationality (Dryzek 1990; Webler 1995), which is particularly well suited to solve social problems. This is because it brings together two critical goals of problem solving and the exercise of democratic ideals (through participation) (Dryzek 1990). Habermas’ description of the Ideal Speech situation clearly articulates that participants should be allowed to set the agenda and create any rules for the discourse, thus we see an argument for less structured approaches to democratic innovation, where fewer aspects of the process are designed ahead of time and more autonomy is given to the participants to make such decisions.

Renn and Webler (1995) translated Habermas’ Ideal Speech conditions as:

1. All potential participants of a discourse have the same chance to employ communicative speech acts.
2. All discourse participants must have the same chance to interpret, claim or assert, recommend, explain and put forth justifications; and problematize, justify or refute any validity claim.
3. The only speakers permitted in the discourse are those who have the same chance to employ representative speech acts.
4. The only speakers permitted in the discourse are those who have the same chance to employ regulative speech acts.

Condition one essentially means no one is forbidden to participate. Condition two is that all participants have an equal chance to make statements, challenge each other and frame issues, problems and solutions. Conditions three and four reinforce that equality among participants ensuring all participants can be sincere or make normative statements.

These Ideal Speech conditions provide some loose framework to judge the fairness and equality needed for powerful democratic conversation, as Ideal Speech requires a neutralization of power among participants (Webler 1995). But beyond this we are left with little more explanation of the subtle aspects of an Ideal Speech conversation or what the production of communicative rationality may look like in practice.

Dialogue and Dynamic Facilitation

The subtle aspects of conversation are explored in literature on *Dialogue*. This literature presents a more sophisticated view of high-quality conversation and group process. David Bohm (1996) in his pioneering work *On Dialogue* makes the following observation about discussion:

“...discussion,’ which has the same root as ‘percussion’ and ‘concussion.’ It really means to break things up. It emphasizes the idea of analysis, where there may be many points of view, and where everybody is presenting a different one – analyzing and breaking up...people are batting ideas back and forth and the object of the game is to win or to get points for yourself” (7).

Discussion is thus framed as a win-lose situation where one idea is found superior to another. Alternatively, Bohm describes dialogue as a “flow of meaning among and through us and between us. This will make possible a flow of meaning in the whole

group, out of which may emerge some new understanding. It's something new, which may or may not have been in the starting point at all" (6). Dialogue, is framed as a win-win interaction where new ideas and new meaning are created and all participants grow in the process.

Isaacs (Isaacs 1999) describes four fields of conversation in which a group practicing dialogue may find itself at various times. Although they are not stages in sequence per se, groups normally spend time in fields one and two before moving into the dialogic fields three and four.

Field I is a common field for groups where politeness and civility are the rule. The integrity of the group is kept intact as few people make assertions, while the rest follow in agreement or remain silent. This is called the "move-follow" field of conversation.

In *Field II*, the "move-oppose" phase, people begin to open up and make assertions or statements which are either agreed with or opposed. People begin to identify with their own ideas and identify others with theirs. There is a more competitive feel as the group dynamic becomes more like a game or debate. The focus of individuals' attention moves from the group (and its associated civility and politeness) to assertion of their own ideas or analysis of others'. In this more individualistic phase, groups may feel a sense of fragmentation, as the cohesion of the group is lost to different ways of thinking. People either "move" by making an assertion or "oppose" by being contrary to

others' opinions. The rest of the group either falls in line with a particular view or remains quiet, outside of the process.

While many groups stay at field two, with proper leadership (either from skilled participants or a facilitator) the group may move past this field into a more reflective field of conversation (Isaacs 1999). In *Field III*, dialogue begins to emerge. People move from narratives or statements in the third person to first person narratives. Not only are people sharing what they think, they begin to reflect and share *why* think that way. At this point individuals often become aware of the structure of their own thinking. A focus on agreement or opposition becomes less important as a sense of curiosity or discovery takes over. This field is called "reflective dialogue." People have moved beyond "positionality" and are beginning to let go and inquire into their own thinking. The group is not necessarily cohesive at this point, as people are still mostly focused on their ideas, albeit in a less "attached" way.

Rarely, groups move beyond this field into *Field IV*, or the field of "generative dialogue." Here a collective sense of awareness emerges and people begin to experience thought as more of a flow between them. People may finish each other's sentences or say things that spark new thoughts for other people. Ideas are quickly integrated and a synchronicity of thinking is created. The group is once again cohesive, with listening becoming a more important aspect than assertion. In generative dialogue the focus of the group is on the active discovery of connection between the thinking of group members.

Based on this short review of Dialogue literature, a more subtle and nuanced discussion of conversational dynamics was developed. Within the framework of Ideal Speech then, it is clear a group may stay entirely in Fields I and II. Such a conversation is likely to have very different outcomes from a group whose conversation moves into the more dialogic fields, III and IV.

Characteristics of Dialogue

There are certain characteristics of Dialogue which may make it difficult to apply for solving social problems. Dialogue is largely dependant on the participants' ability to balance a sense of advocacy with a sense of inquiry (Gerard 1999). Bohm (1994) points out:

“In principle, the dialogue should work out without any leader and without any agenda. It may be useful to have a facilitator to get the group going, who keeps a watch on it for a while and sort of explains what's going on from time to time....but his function is to work himself out of a job.” (p15)

Also, Bohm (1994) also mentions that while Dialogue is not social-group therapy or an encounter group aimed at emotional therapy, emotions certainly can enter into the process. We see here how the focus of Dialogue is not focused directly on emotional content, but does allow it into the process. Finally, while Dialogue has been advocated for use in solving social problems, Isaacs (1999), shows the difficulty of creating the appropriate conditions for using dialogue for social change purposes.

Dynamic Facilitation

Variants or offshoots of Bohm Dialogue exist, including Dynamic Facilitation, which seeks to integrate the core elements of dialogue with a special attention to emotional dimensions and which can be applied to problem solving situations (Rough 1997). Whereas Dialogue relies largely on the participants, Dynamic Facilitation relies more on the facilitator.

Rough (2002) differentiates between transactional and transformational modes of talking in a manner very similar to the previous distinction between debate and dialogue. Transactional is a mode of talking, which inspires “critical thinking, judging, analyzing, sorting, combining, storing and relaying information. With it we can influence others toward predetermined goals” (76). Transformational talking is more akin to dialogue with a spontaneous generation of shared understanding. Transformational talking involves creativity and heartfelt, authentic connection between people (Rough 2002). Table I contrasts Transactional (TA) and Transformational (TF) types of talking.

Table I, Different Kinds of Talking

Transactional (TA)	Transformational (TF)
Focus: <i>what</i> is said...the content	Focus: <i>How</i> it is said... the process
Transmitting information- where concepts and information are exchanged, modified or evaluated	Creating new information- where concepts information and people all evolve together
People remain the same, although they improve their skills or have new understandings	People are “moved” by the experience, and become different in a meaningful way

People remain detached from the “things” they talk about and the people they talk with.

The process can be predetermined, step by step, as with an agenda

The results (knowledge, skills decisions, etc.) are measurable

Associated words: Discussion, input, training, team, compromise, agreement and decision making.

People become fully involved-builds trust and a sense of “we”

The process is necessarily dynamic (eg you go with the flow)

Measurable results are far greater than TA results, but measuring can diminish them

Associated words: Dialogue, involvement, education, community, consensus and Choic-creating

Dynamic Facilitation uses a facilitator who helps the group generate a “transformational” conversation. The facilitator accomplishes this largely through careful listening and reflecting of group members’ comments. These are charted on wall pads, reinforcing the reflection of people’s comments. The facilitator welcomes any contribution made by group members and keeps people from talking over each other by “protecting” the person who is speaking. Protection in this case means keeping criticisms or attacks to what someone is saying at bay temporarily, so they can finish what they are saying (the facilitator follows up with the other person soon after). Every participant is involved and the statements or agreements made as a result of the process are unanimous (Rough 1997; Rough 2002).

By using reflective listening and charting people’s statements the facilitator helps each person feel heard. This frees them up from the need to advocate for their ideas as someone has heard and understands them. This is called “purging.”

The facilitator will often ask “empowering questions” which seek to help people articulate a desired state or condition. Empowering questions are frequently used when people describe a negative situation or condition. A participant might remark: “The campaign finance system in this country doesn’t work. We need a new system.” The facilitator follows with an empowering question such as “Well, if you were in charge, and could make anything happen that you wanted to, what kind of campaign finance system would you create?” or “Well, what would the ideal campaign finance system look like?”

The facilitator may also ask follow-up questions to help draw out people’s thinking and continue to help them purge. These various questions help people to conceive of positive conditions or situations and challenge them to think of what they really want (Rough 1997; Rough 2002).

After participants feel heard and have been challenged to think of what they want, they are often able then to get beyond their normal thought patterns and begin to listen to the other participants. (Rough 1997; Rough 2002).

To help sort out participants’ statements during the meeting, the facilitator records things on four charts: problems, solutions, concerns and data. “Problems” are the way a particular issue or problem is framed. “Solutions” are the ideas people have to solve a particular problem. A “concern” is simply an expression of uneasiness someone has about a solution or something else someone has said during the meeting. By articulating it as a concern and not a rejection of what the other person said, this helps with the “protection” of the original speaker to whom the criticism was originally directed. “Data”

are simply the information and perspectives which people share which provide some context to the rest of the conversation (Rough 1997; Rough 2002).

A session begins with the facilitator asking what issues are important to people and what they want to work on. This creates an initial “working list” which differs from an agenda in that the list is not followed in any linear fashion. From this list, the group picks a topic to start with and may revisit the others as the conversation unfolds. Throughout the process, the facilitator watches the dynamics in the group and “follows the energy.” Thus the participants frame the conversation and control the flow of the meeting (Rough 1997; Rough 2002).

The group leads the meeting in an unfolding and non-linear fashion. For example, the facilitator might notice people’s energy waning and say to the group: “it seems like everyone has lost interest in this. Should we be talking about something else or do we need a break?” The idea behind Dynamic Facilitation is that the group has the capacity to self-organize, given the right conditions. The energy or excitement of the participants (both positive and negative) drives the process. The facilitator will often recount the history and “check-in” with the group, asking people if this is what they want to talk about next. Thus, the conversation can unfold in whatever way is appropriate to the group and they can arrive at consensus through their own dialogic process (Rough 2002). Table II summarizes some of the key characteristics of Dynamic Facilitation.

Dynamic Facilitation has noticeable similarities to Dialogue and appears to fit the Ideal Speech conditions (depending on who participates). All participants are encouraged to participate and no participants have any advantage or special privileges. The group makes the initial list of issues, controls the process and operates using consensus (Rough 1997; Rough 2002). Thus at first pass, Dynamic Facilitation seems to create a dialogue that fulfills much of the criteria of Ideal Speech.

Table II, Characteristics of Dynamic Facilitation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator asks participants what they want to talk about at the start of the meeting • Facilitator occasionally reflects to the group on its progress and asks them on what they want to talk about next • Facilitator records Problems, Solutions, Concerns, & Data • The group leads the <i>content</i> of the meeting, the facilitator leads the <i>process</i> • Facilitator uses reflective listening and “protects” each speaker • Facilitator uses empowering and follow-up questions • Resultant statements are unanimous

The Wisdom Council: A Dialogic Innovation

The Wisdom Council is a recently created process which seeks to create a dialogic “voice of the people” (Rough 2002). After years of training people in Dynamic Facilitation, Rough noticed workshop participants chose to work on difficult and important issues when they practiced facilitating in small groups. In Dynamically Facilitated conversations, groups often generated creative, common sense solutions to

these “impossible” problems. Rough then thought of the idea to create a political body composed of citizens, which could do the same for a community in a symbolic conversation, called the Wisdom Council (Rough 2002).

A Wisdom Council is a periodic, several day dialogue of two-dozen randomly selected citizens. There are no convening issues or agendas created ahead of time. Participants are encouraged to articulate their own issues and concerns for the conversation. There are no formal ground-rules for participation. After two days of Dynamically Facilitated conversation, the participants write a consensus statement. That statement is then presented at a public ceremony to the community from which they are selected. The presentation would be similar to the President’s “State of the Union Address,” except it would be a group of citizens making a statement based on their dialogue together (Rough 1997; Rough 2002). The ultimate goal of this Wisdom Council is to create a conversation of “we the people” which would eventually result in a consensus of the whole community (or state, nation etc.).

Involving the Whole Community

Ideally, participatory practices should involve all those who will be or are affected by issues or purposed plans (Langton 1979). However, in a Wisdom Council, the issue is not known ahead of time, thus there is no criteria to determine which publics would be affected. Without such criteria it is difficult to select a representative sample. Further, attending public participation as a representative of a demographic, group or interest may put an additional stress on a participant (Mansbridge 2003). (Rough 1997) also points out role-playing (as a representative for example) has a detrimental effect on the Dynamic

Facilitation process, and Webber (1995) notes that no group should be systematically excluded from a dialogue according to the Ideal Speech situation. For these reasons, the Wisdom Council employs a simple random sample of the community, so “everyone has the chance to participate” (Rough 2002). Depending on the sampling frame then, there should be no systematic exclusion of participants described in the model. This simple random sample differentiates the Wisdom Council from other models, such as a Citizen’s Jury which seeks to gather a representative sample.

An Ongoing Community Conversation

In theory, the Wisdom Council engages the whole community in an ongoing conversation by being a continuous *process* as opposed to a discrete event. This too differentiates it from most other democratic innovations, which have discrete endpoints signified by specific outcomes. After the results of a Wisdom Council are presented (in the form of a consensus statement), people are encouraged to gather in small groups to discuss the results before subsequent Wisdom Councils are convened. Because the statements are consensus based, minority opposition or critiques of Wisdom Council statements would be considered to be a challenge to this consensus and would thus garner media attention. Because of the media attention of these challenges, most people would find out about those opinions and have a chance to consider those viewpoints before the next Wisdom Council is selected. (Rough 2002).

Design Principles of the Wisdom Council

The following is a list of twelve principles described by Rough (2000, 2004). The original principle is in italics followed by a short description or interpretation. These

principles will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter and are intended here as part of the introduction of the model.

1. The Wisdom Council must be chartered by We the People

Essentially, the Wisdom Council must be created by the people in a community, not by executive order or by some other entity. Rough suggests a community might pass a measure to officially charter a Wisdom Council to happen each year.

2. It is a microcosm, composed of randomly selected people

It is considered a small sample of ordinary people convened to talk together.

3. It is empowered to select and frame the issues it addresses

There is no convening agenda or issue, participants determine the content themselves.

4. The members are chosen in a ceremony: a lottery

The selection of participants is announced publicly. This particular principle gives little precise explanation of how the principle may be applied.

5. It is non-coercive

People are not forced to participate. They are strongly encouraged, but no one is required to participate in a Wisdom Council. Also, the results of the Wisdom Council are not binding in any way.

6. It operates in a fishbowl

As the Wisdom Council is happening, people can watch the process. Afterwards, they are able to see the presentation of the results. The biographies of the participants would be a likely part of the pre-Wisdom Council media coverage.

7. It is facilitated dynamically

The Wisdom Council meeting is a creative, heartfelt conversation. To create this conversation Dynamic Facilitation is used to facilitate the conversation.

8. It generates unanimous statements

The group reaches consensus and everyone agrees on the statements.

9. The results are presented in a ceremony

Again, little else is provided to explain how what this actually means.

10. Small group dialogues are convened

Many small groups are convened in various places to discuss results. This is a method to disseminate results into the community. People may gather in their homes, etc.

11. The process is ongoing

The process happens annually. A new Wisdom Council happens every year, which continues to stimulate conversation in the community.

12. The process operates in parallel with normal governance structures

The process is not meant to replace any government functions, rather it operates simultaneously.

Assumptions of the Wisdom Council Model

There are several major assumptions underlying the Wisdom Council model. One, that most people in a given community (organization, city, state etc) have a good deal of knowledge about the wisdom council. They understand how it works and what to expect. Two, most people in the community anticipate the Wisdom Council statement and actually attempt to read the statement or watch its presentation. Three, the model assumes that people actually read or hear the statement and/or story of the wisdom council. Four, critiques or minority opposition to the Wisdom Council statement are somehow broadcast or distributed to other members of the community. Presumably this would happen through the media, letters to the editor, op eds, etc. Essentially, the model assumes massive and complete transmission of information throughout society about the Wisdom Council process, the statement and any concerns or objections to that statement.

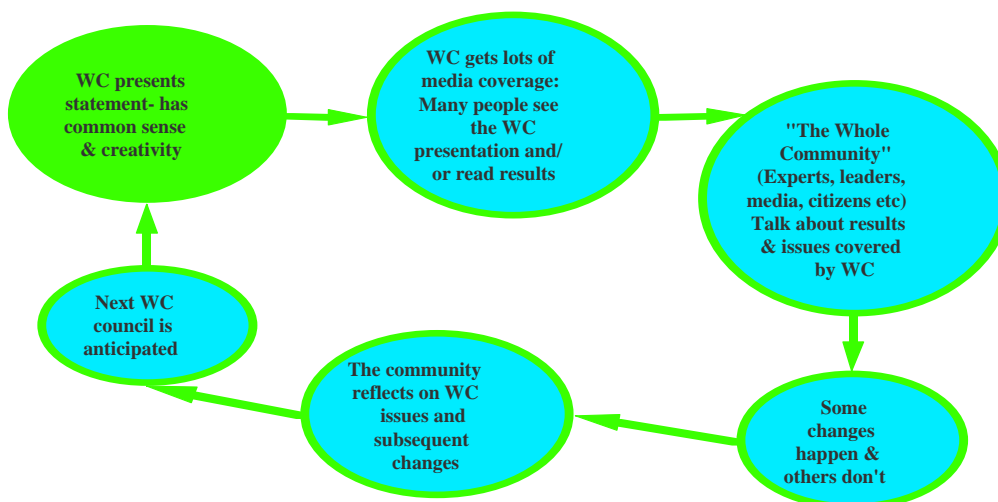
Figure I demonstrates several of these points. It shows how a Wisdom Council may operate in a community every year. The Wisdom Council meets and presents it's statements. Everyone in the community witness the presentation and/or read the statements. Everyone (including experts, elected leaders etc) talk about the results and issues raised by the Wisdom Council. Some changes may happen in the community

related to the issues raised by the Wisdom Council and some don't. Over time, people in the community reflect on these changes and anticipate the next Wisdom Council.

These assumptions are important because they highlight several obstacles to full implementation of the model. In order for the model to function as described here, nearly everyone has know the Wisdom Council is happening, understand and pay attention to the Wisdom Council itself, and somewhat actively reflect or engage with the consensus statement that results from the Wisdom Council. Thus, not only are the Wisdom Council participants important, but the model also demands an active interest from the larger community.

Compared to other innovations in democracy, however, the Wisdom Council stands out in several ways. One, it is unstructured in that there are no formal rules, convening issues or informational inputs. Two, it uses a very small sample of the population, which is selected at random. Three, it uses Dynamic Facilitation, which is very similar to Bohm Dialogue and has been found to be especially appropriate for “highly polarized situations, including public policy, public participation, and moral and ethical divides” (Zubizarreta 2002, p 34). So the Wisdom Council creates a context in which Ideal Speech may take place and helps a group of citizens engage in a productive dialogue with one another.

Figure I: Abbreviated Logic Model of the Wisdom Council



Model Comparisons

Table III below shows the comparison of the Wisdom Council to several other democratic innovations. The table displays the number and selection method of participants, the group process, information component and expected outcomes are all compared for several models. The table also displays whether each innovation is designed as a process or one-time event. Both large group and small models are included. Essentially, the unique characteristics of several of the models are highlighted. For instance, the Citizen Jury is a small group innovation which uses a stratified random sample, while the 21st Century Town Hall meeting uses both targeted outreach and self-selection in a large group format.

Table III, Comparison of Democratic Innovations

Name	Approx. Number of Participants	Selection Method	Group Process	Event/Ongoing Process	Information Input	Expected Outcomes
Large Group Innovations						
21 st Century Town Hall Meeting	100's to 1000's	Self-selected, elected leaders, targeted outreach	One day small group discussion linked to large group	Event	Briefing materials	Majority-vote decisions
Week's 4 Deliberative Trials	100's to 1000's	Self-selected	One day small group discussion & individual work	Event	Briefing materials & worksheets	Majority-vote decisions
Small Group Innovations						
Citizen Jury	24	Stratified random sample	Multi-day small group deliberation	Event	Briefing materials & expert testimony	Majority-vote decisions
Wisdom Council	12-24	Simple random sample	Multi-day small group dialogue	Ongoing Process	None	Consensus statements & further conversation

Wisdom Council Research

To date, little literature has been published describing the Wisdom Council model and there has been no formal, critical analysis of the model or any of its applications.. Exceptions include Crosby (2003) who describes the Wisdom Council and compares it to a Citizen Jury and Atlee and Zubizaretta (2003) who briefly mention the Wisdom Council as a “powerful democratic innovation.”

As previously mentioned the Wisdom Council appears to be one of the few democratic models to fit the Ideal Speech Situation. Thus, as a model it is unique and

may have significant contributions to a participatory democracy. It is clear then, a study of the Wisdom Council as an application of dialogue to address social problems is an important opportunity to examine a new democratic practice.

There are several possible lines of inquiry which could be pursued in Wisdom Council research. For instance, one may judge the appropriateness of the Wisdom Council as a form of public participation. Or within the model itself, one might take a close, critical look at Dynamic Facilitation in order to determine whether it is the only or most effective form of facilitation or group process to be used in the model.

This study makes several assumptions based on the inquiries above. One, it assumes that the Wisdom Council goal of strongly influencing community conversation and helping to shape a general consensus is indeed an appropriate social goal. Hence, it is an appropriate form of public participation, should it be effective. Second, it is assumed that Dynamic facilitation is the appropriate group process to be used within the model.

The intention of this study is to develop a set of specific criteria to evaluate Wisdom Councils and then apply the criteria to an actual Wisdom Council process. Through the development and testing of evaluative criteria specific to Wisdom Councils, a more in-depth analysis of the model itself will be possible. Such an evaluation will generate new understandings of how a less-structured, dialogic approach to public participation performs in practice. Thus, new knowledge is added to the field of democratic theory and practice and it continues to evolve.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Overview

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part details the construction of Wisdom Council evaluative criteria which uses literature from Wisdom Councils, Dynamic Facilitation, and Communicative theory. As previously mentioned, there are no prior evaluations of Wisdom Councils, so this first part is an effort to develop some measures by which Wisdom Councils can be objectively judged. The second part of this chapter details the case study methods used to gather and analyze data from the Rogue Valley Wisdom Council that occurred in the winter of 2003. These methods included semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, direct observation and analysis of secondary data. Several groups of subjects were studied including the participants of the Wisdom Council, the attendees of the town hall forum and the organizers.

I. Evaluative Criteria Methods

The evaluative criteria are separated into four sections:

- The Core Wisdom Council criteria based on the twelve design principles (see Chapter two)
- Dynamic Facilitation criteria
- Community impact criteria
- Communicative Theory criteria

A. Core Wisdom Council Criteria

The twelve principles describing the Wisdom Council model are listed below. While these principles give some idea of how a Wisdom Council should operate, they are too

vague to use for evaluation purposes. So, more explicit measures were needed to be developed that reflected measurable criteria of the broader general principles. Both the general principle and my evaluative conditions are listed below.

1. The Wisdom Council must be chartered by We the People

This was interpreted to mean the Wisdom Council has been voted on or ratified by a community of people, instead of being created by a specific interest or by executive order. However, Rough (Rough 2002) admits this presents a paradox as a community would likely not even know about a Wisdom Council before several meetings had occurred. An early or initial Wisdom Council, then, is likely to be organizer led, involving regular citizens, who are perhaps involved in other community groups. Hence, the following criterion was developed:

- Criteria: Did community members not affiliated with a particular interest (other than Wisdom Councils) organize the Wisdom Council?

2. It is a microcosm, composed of randomly selected people

- Criteria: Were people randomly selected, using a sampling pool representative of the community?
- Criteria: Was the response rate relatively high?

3. It is empowered to select and frame the issues it addresses

- Criteria: Were participants asked what issues or topics they wanted to talk about during the meeting?
- Criteria: Did the facilitator record these on a list framing the issues or topics the same way as participants?
- Criteria: Were those issues or topics talked about during the meeting?

4. The members are chosen in a ceremony: a lottery

- Criteria: Was the selection done in a public place?
- Criteria: Was it announced or publicized ahead of time?
- Criteria: Was it broadcast on television or other media?
- Criteria: Were the results published and/or available to the general public?

5. It is non-coercive

This principle is interpreted in two ways. One, the Wisdom Council cannot exert any formal power over anyone outside of the process (for instance, it cannot make laws). The other way this principle can be interpreted relates to the participants. No one can be forced to participate in a Wisdom Council meeting. This seems unlikely as there is no mechanism to coerce people into participating. Therefore, only the former interpretation of this principle was included in this analysis:

- Criteria: Did the Wisdom Council attempt to assume or exert any formal authority over any person or entity?

6. It operates in a fishbowl

People in the community should be aware of the Wisdom Council as it is happening. Ideally, the Wisdom Council would be broadcast live so people could watch it as it happens.

- Criteria: Was the Wisdom Council widely promoted in the community beforehand so that people knew it was happening?
- Criteria: Was the Wisdom Council broadcast so it could be viewed while it was happening?

7. It is facilitated dynamically

Was the Wisdom Council facilitated using Dynamic Facilitation?

[This criteria is really more of a category than a specific criteria which will be further developed later in this chapter (see group process below).]

8. It generates unanimous statements

- Criteria: Did the Wisdom Council write a statement at the end of the process?
- Criteria: Did the group unanimously agree to the statement?

9. The results are presented in a ceremony

This principle was interpreted to mean that the results are presented in a way which bears some resemblance to the President's state of the union. The participants would read their statement and explain a little bit about how they came to write it.

- Criteria: Were the results presented in a public place at an event that was publicized widely beforehand?
- Criteria: Was that event accessible to many residents of the local area?
- Criteria: Was that event covered in the local media before, during and after?

10. Small group dialogues are convened

Small group dialogues are interpreted to mean groups of 5 to 10 people talking together about the results of the Wisdom Council. This is supposed to happen throughout the community in which the Wisdom Council takes place.

- Criteria: Were small group conversations organized at the Town Hall Forum to discuss the results?
- Criteria: Were small group conversations organized elsewhere in the community to discuss the results?

11. The process is ongoing

[This principle is covered by the measures developed to evaluate the impact of the Wisdom Council. See the Community Impact section below for criteria related to this principle.]

12. The process operates in parallel with normal governance structures

This principle would be upheld unless a Wisdom Council somehow tried to replace a normal governance structure. Essentially, the criteria which would serve this principle is the same as principle five above:

- Criteria: Did the Wisdom Council attempt to assume or exert any formal authority over any person or entity?

B. Group Process Criteria

As previously mentioned, Dynamic Facilitation is a critical part of the Wisdom Council. However, within the principles, little is said about Dynamic Facilitation. The literature review in Chapter two provided several key characteristics of Dynamic facilitation (see table II, page 24)Therefore, the following is a list of evaluative criteria of Dynamic Facilitation that can be used to determine whether the Wisdom Council had adequate facilitation.

- Were empowering and follow-up questions frequently used to draw people out? (for instance two to three times an hour)?
- Did the facilitator ask the group to form a list at the beginning of the process?
- Were each of those topics talked about during the dialogue?
- For each topic which were not talked about, did the facilitator go back to these topics and ask the group if they wanted to talk about them?
- Were the four charts used (Problems, Solutions, Concerns & Data)?
- Did the facilitator reflect to the group on its progress?

- Did participants feel like they were well heard throughout the process?
- Did participants try listen to each other? (ie. use active listening or try to help each other articulate a point or concern?)
- Did participants consider some of the ideas generated by the group to be creative?
- Did participants feel supported to talk about things they really cared about?

C. Community Impact: Future Wisdom Councils

A “normal” Wisdom Council is defined as a process which has been established in a community and is ongoing. Evaluating such a Wisdom Council should include an assessment of the impact of the process on the parent community. However, since the Rogue Valley Wisdom Council was the first Wisdom Council in the community, it should not be judged by precisely the same criteria as a “normal” Wisdom Council.

The Rogue Valley Wisdom Council was considered instead as an “initial” Wisdom Council. The goals of such a Wisdom Council are not direct community impacts, but are focused more on firmly establishing the process in the community. Hence, the community impact of the Rogue Valley Wisdom Council was not measured directly (with a statistically significant sample, for instance); rather the focus was shifted slightly to determine whether or not this particular Wisdom Council created the context for future Wisdom Councils in the community. This includes generating more awareness, support and capacity for organizing future Wisdom Councils. To test for this, the following criteria were developed:

- Criteria: Was there a significant spreading of awareness about the process?
- Criteria: Were new organizers and supporters of the process recruited as a result of this Wisdom Council?
- Criteria: Have future Wisdom Council’s been planned?

D. Communicative Theory Criteria

Using Habermas' theory of Ideal Speech, Webler (1995) developed a useful set of evaluative criteria for public participation models, which are informative for an evaluation of Wisdom Councils (see Table IV below). Some of the criteria, however, are not directly applicable to Wisdom Councils because they focus on formal processes or structures to ensure certain aspects of fairness.¹ The Wisdom Council *could* provide these aspects of fairness as Dynamic Facilitation is very open and encourages people to articulate their concerns and solutions however, there is nothing in the Wisdom Council model that explicitly describes or provides processes or structures which ensure these aspects of fairness are integrated into the meeting. Thus, the Wisdom Council would technically fail to fulfill criteria some of Webler's criteria by design.

Table IV, then, lists all of Webler's evaluative criteria (preceded by letters) and segregates them into criteria that can and cannot be used to evaluate Wisdom Councils. The column at the far right gives additional information where necessary.²

¹ The aspects of fairness include: the means for participants to create, modify and make final decisions about the agenda, the means for participants to suggest a moderator and facilitation method, and the opportunity for everyone to make and challenge others' statements during the meeting.

² Webler Webler, T. (1995). "Right" Discourse in Citizen Participation: An Evaluative Yardstick. Fairness and competence in citizen participation : evaluating models for environmental discourse. O. Renn, T. Webler and P. M. Wiedemann. Dordrecht ; Boston, Kluwer Academic: xix, 381. also developed criteria to judge the competence of a public participation model. However, these criteria assume the model has a specific decision or set of decisions to make and a need to input additional information into the process. Since the Wisdom Council does not fit within these parameters, the criteria for competence which describe the competence of the model were not selected for this evaluation.

Table IV, Webler's Communicative Theory for Fairness

CRITERIA	SELECTED	NOT SELECTED	COMMENTS
MAKING OF THE AGENDA AND THE PROCESS RULES			
The model should provide everyone with an equal chance to put their concerns on the agenda and to approve or propose rules for discourse			
A. Does the model provide an equal opportunity for everyone to suggest items for the agenda?	X		
B. Does the model provide an opportunity for everyone to suggest items for the rules?		X	Process has no formal ground rules for discussion
The model should provide everyone with an equal chance to debate and critique proposals for the agenda and the rules.			
C. Does the model provide everyone an equal opportunity to debate proposals for the agenda?			Although everyone has an equal opportunity to suggest items, no items are eliminated from the list at the beginning of process.
D. Does the model provide everyone an equal opportunity to debate proposals for the rules?		X	Process has no formal ground rules for discussion
E. Does the model provide enough time to accommodate all agenda items that the group wants to discuss?	X		
F. Does the model provide an opportunity for everyone to suggest changes to the agenda or the rules?	X		To the agenda, at least
The model should make certain that everyone has an equal chance to influence the final decision about the agenda and the discourse rules.			
G. Does the model provide a consensually-approved means to resolve conflicts about the agenda?		X	There is no formal agenda
H. Does the model provide a consensually-approved means to resolve the rules for discourse?		X	
MODERATOR AND RULE ENFORCEMENT			
The model should provide everyone with an equal chance to suggest a moderator and a method for facilitation.			

CRITERIA	SELECTED	NOT SELECTED	COMMENTS
I. Does the model provide an opportunity for everyone to suggest a moderator?		X	
J. Does the model provide an opportunity for everyone to comment on the facilitation style?	X		
The model should provide everyone with an equal chance to challenge and support suggestions by others for a moderator and a method for facilitation.			
K. Is there a setting for discourse among all who wish to debate proposals for moderator?		X	
L. Is there a setting for discourse among all who wish to debate proposals for how moderation should be carried out?		X	
The model should provide everyone with an equal chance to influence the final selection of moderator and moderation method.			
M. Does the model provide a consensually-approved means to resolve conflicts about the choice of moderator, either through selection or verification?		X	
N. Does the model provide a consensually-approved means to resolve conflicts about the style of facilitation?		X	
DISCUSSION			
The model should provide everyone who is potentially affected by the decision proposal (positively or negatively) an equal chance to be present or represented at the discourse.			
O. Does the model attempt to identify the individuals or groups that are potentially affected by the problem?		X	Not feasible (see chapter two)
P. Does the model provide all people in the greater affected population an equal chance to participate?	X		
Q. Does the model provide all people who feel they are affected an equal chance to participate?		X	
The model should make certain that everyone has an equal chance to put forth and criticize validity claims about language, facts, norms and expressions.			
R. Does the model provide all an equal chance to make communicative validity claims?	X		
S. Does the model provide all an equal chance to make cognitive validity claims?	X		
T. Does the model provide all an equal chance to make normative validity claims?	X		
U. Does the model provide all an equal chance to make expressive validity claims?	X		
The model should make certain that the method chosen to resolve validity claim redemption dispute be consensually chosen before the discourse began.			
V. Does the model make certain that disputes over communicative validity claims will be resolved using a		X	

CRITERIA	SELECTED	NOT SELECTED	COMMENTS
procedure that was consensually approved before the discourse began?			
W. Does the model make certain that disputes over cognitive validity claims will be resolved using a using a procedure that was consensually approved before the discourse began?		X	
X. Does the model make certain that disputes over normative validity claims will be resolved using a using a procedure that was consensually approved before the discourse began?		X	
Y. Does the model make certain that disputes over expressive validity claims will be resolved using a using a procedure that was consensually approved before the discourse began?		X	

Complete List of Evaluative Criteria

Using both Webler’s evaluative criteria, and the set of criteria developed under each of the core Wisdom Council tenets above, below is an integrated set of measures that can be used to evaluate Wisdom Councils. In several places, some criteria were combined for simplification (e.g. all of the questions about media coverage were combined into one multi-faceted criterion) and in other places, duplicative criteria were eliminated (e.g. questions about agenda formation). Therefore, Table V below is list of twenty-eight separate measures, assembled into four main groupings, which can be used to evaluate Wisdom Councils.

Table V, Evaluative Criteria

Core Wisdom Council	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Did ordinary community members not affiliated with a particular interest (other than Wisdom Councils) organize the Wisdom Council? 2. Were people randomly selected, using a sampling pool representative of the community? 3. Was the response rate relatively high? 4. Were the following parts of the model publicized before, during and after their occurrences: Selection of participants? Wisdom Council Meeting? Town Hall Forum? 5. Did the Wisdom Council write a statement at the end of the process? 6. Did the group unanimously agree to the statement? 7. Were small group conversations organized at the Town Hall Forum to discuss the results? 8. Were small group conversations organized elsewhere in the community to discuss the results? 9. Did the Wisdom Council attempt to assume or exert any formal authority over any person or entity?
Dynamic Facilitation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Were empowering and follow-up questions frequently used to draw people out? (for instance two to three times an hour)? 11. Did the facilitator reflect to the group on its progress and ask them on what they want to talk about next? 12. Were the four charts used (Problems, Solutions, Concerns & Data)? 13. Did participants feel like they were well heard throughout the process? 14. Did participants try listen to each other? (ie use active listening or try to help each other articulate a point or concern?) 15. Did participants consider some of the groups ideas to be creative? 16. Did participants feel supported to talk about things they really cared about?
Community Impact	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 17. Was there a significant spreading of awareness about the process? 18. Were new organizers and supporters of the process recruited as a result of this Wisdom Council?

	19. Have future Wisdom Councils been planned?
Communicative Theory	<p>20. Does the model provide an equal opportunity for everyone to suggest items for the agenda?</p> <p>21. Does the model provide enough time to accommodate all agenda items that the group wants to discuss?</p> <p>22. Does the model provide an opportunity for everyone to suggest changes to the agenda or the rules?</p> <p>23. Does the model provide an opportunity for everyone to comment on the facilitation style?</p> <p>24. Does the model provide all people in the greater affected population an equal chance to participate?</p> <p>25. Does the model provide all an equal chance to make communicative validity claims?</p> <p>26. Does the model provide all an equal chance to make cognitive validity claims?</p> <p>27. Does the model provide all an equal chance to make normative validity claims?</p> <p>28. Does the model provide all an equal chance to make expressive validity claims?</p>

Several methods were used to gather data from the Rogue Valley Wisdom Council in order to apply the evaluative criteria outlined above. First, the Wisdom Council meeting and Town Hall Forum were observed directly. Interviews and questionnaires were then used to analyze the organizing of and follow-up on the Wisdom Council, the experience of the meeting and the impact of Town Hall Forum event. Three groups of subjects were interviewed: participants in the Wisdom Council, attendees of the Town Hall Forum presentation and the organizers of the Wisdom Council. The participants and forum attendees were also given questionnaires asking them about their experience.

Secondary data sources were also analyzed. These included organizing materials such as meeting notes, promotional materials and plans related to the organizing of the Wisdom Council. A media audit was also conducted to determine the extent and nature of media coverage before, during and after the event. Video footage of the actual event was viewed and analyzed as well.

Participants

This study focused largely on the participants of the Wisdom Council. This group was randomly selected by the organizers of the Wisdom Council from the pool of registered voters in Jackson County. All 7 participants were studied.

In order to assess the kind of impact the Wisdom Council process had on participants several methods were used. The participants were given questionnaires to fill out before and after the dialogue. The questions largely focused on the process of the meeting. Participants were asked what they thought of the process, if they felt creative ideas were expressed, if they were listened to, etc. Additionally, they were interviewed by telephone to explore some of their answers and more completely document their experience in the Wisdom Council.

Attendees of the Town Hall Forum

Another group of subjects was the community members who chose to attend the presentation of the Wisdom Council. This group was selected because it is the only group of community members beside the participants who were directly affected by the Wisdom Council process. All 45 attendees were studied.

A questionnaire was used to ask the attendees what they thought about the presentation in general and about the results. Questions ascertained how supportive they were of the Wisdom Council process and if they have interest in learning more or being involved in future organizing efforts. For attendees who expressed interest in learning more or volunteering, follow-up telephone interviews were used to learn more about their interest, excitement and commitment to the Wisdom Council process. These attendees were also asked about what kinds of other civic activities they engage in.

Wisdom Council Organizers

The third group of subjects was the organizers of the Wisdom Council process. Telephone interviews were used to document how the Wisdom Council was organized, how decisions were made etc. Also questions ascertained how excited and committed organizers are to plan future Wisdom Councils.

Direct Observation

The Wisdom Council meeting and Town Hall Forum were observed directly. During the Wisdom Council meeting, particular attention was paid to the conversational dynamics and how the participants interacted with each other. This direct observation helped to generate many of the questions used later for the semi-structured interviews. The facilitation was also analyzed to determine how the Dynamic Facilitation was being used. The Town Hall Forum was also observed to determine if the criteria related to the presentation was fulfilled.

Secondary Data Analysis

Several sources of data were analyzed to evaluate the Rogue Valley Wisdom Council. One particularly important source was the video footage of the Wisdom Council meeting. The footage was reviewed carefully to determine how participants were introduced to the process, how the agenda was created and what was talked about. Additionally, the facilitation was studied to determine whether the criteria related to Dynamic Facilitation was fulfilled.

Another source of secondary data was the notes, emails and documents used by the organizers. These were reviewed to determine how the model was implemented. Documents used to publicize the events and invite participants and community members were also analyzed.

Finally, a media audit was conducted. All newspaper, radio and television footage was reviewed. This provided a rough estimate of how well the various events associated with the model were publicized.

Summary

The methodology had several important aspects. One, it used the first evaluative criteria constructed for Dynamic Facilitation and Wisdom Councils. Two, the methodology utilized several different sources of information and data gathering techniques. As a result, the methodology itself was generally strong. However, it contained several limitations, which subsequent researchers will hopefully improve upon. One that is particularly important to note: the subtle aspects of dialogue and group processes like Dynamic Facilitation can be difficult to evaluate or even systematically document. The criteria presented here attempted to measure some of these aspects, yet there are many parts of the participants' experience which undoubtedly escaped measure. The semi-structured interviews were an attempt to capture more of the participants' personal experience.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter describes the results of the Rogue Valley Wisdom Council (RVWC). Divided into three parts, it begins with a narrative description of how the RVWC was initially inspired, how it was organized, the Wisdom Council meeting and Town Hall Forum presentation of the results. This narrative is followed with a table summarizing the results for each criterion. The chapter concludes with a summary of the results.

I. Rogue Valley Wisdom Council: Inspiration, Organizing and Meeting

Inspiration for the Rogue Valley Wisdom Council

In December 2003, writer and social philosopher Tom Atlee gave a radio interview on the Jefferson Exchange, a radio talk show in Southern Oregon. In this interview, he described Dynamic Facilitation with its unique ability to inspire creative, heartfelt conversation. Atlee also described several methods for citizen dialogue and deliberation, including the Wisdom Council.

A resident of Ashland named Lance Bissaccia heard Atlee's talk and was very inspired by the ideas. Lance had been a self-described activist for years and had been searching for some way to engage everyday people in the issues which affect their lives.

Bissaccia contacted Atlee to discuss his ideas about public participation. Atlee put Bissaccia in contact with Jim Rough, the creator of the Wisdom Council and Dynamic Facilitation. Sufficiently intrigued with Rough's ideas, Bissaccia then persuaded Jeff Golden, the host of Jefferson Exchange, to interview Rough.

During Rough's interview where he too described the Wisdom Council in more detail, two other Ashland residents became interested in the ideas. Following his interview Karen Gosetti and David Wick called Rough to talk with him further. Rough then let them know about each other and Bissaccia and gave them each other's contact information. Thus, three citizens from the same community who didn't know each other, but all had an interest in high-quality community dialogue met each other.

Organizing the RVWC

After talking on the phone about various possibilities for citizen participation, the three decided to meet and talk about organizing something together. Initially, they weren't sure exactly what they would like to do. They considered various models including Citizen Juries and some large-scale deliberative models. After considering their options, however, they soon settled on organizing a Wisdom Council because of two main factors: 1) they felt it was within their capacity and financial resources to organize one (other models required more money and expertise); and two, they liked Jim and his approach. In Bissaccia's words, "Jim's approach combines both head and heart, like Dynamic Facilitation. Jim had a certain 'sweetness' to him that we connected with" (L. Bissaccia, Personal Communication June, 2004).

Early in summer 2003, Bissaccia, Gosetti and Wick created an organization called Rogue Valley Wisdom Councils to organize a Wisdom Council for the area. Wick soon suggested they participate in the 4th of July parade with a booth and banner to promote their organization. Their original plans were to plan and organize a Wisdom Council later that winter or spring. Sometime late summer however, they learned that documentary filmmaker, Joseph McCormick, was making a film about the state of democracy in America. He was interested in filming a Wisdom Council, but wanted to be finished filming by late Fall. Seeing this as an excellent opportunity for exposure of the process, the three decided to accelerate their organizing and set a mid November date for the first Wisdom Council.

Soon thereafter, the Center for Wise Democracy (CWD, a nonprofit focused on Wisdom Councils and Dynamic Facilitation) began to help with some of the organizing tasks. Mainly the organization acted as a consultant, helping the Ashland organizers make decisions about how to implement the model. CWD also helped fundraise and publicize the event.

Selecting the participants

Participants for the Wisdom Council were selected from a database of all the registered voters in the Rogue Valley. Bissaccia, set up a program for selection based on a random number generator from an internet site. Using the program, Lance generated a randomly selected list of 80 registered voters from the database, which was used for recruitment of participants.

Potential participants were sent a letter explaining that they had been in the initial selection pool and may be contacted and asked to participate in the Wisdom Council. The organizers then began to call these eight people to recruit them for participation in the Wisdom Council. Many of the people on the list did not have phone numbers listed and thus were never contacted, except by letter. One person on the list had actually deceased. As the date drew near, even after multiple calls to several people, 12 agreed to participate. However in the days leading up to the event, several of those people cancelled. On the morning of the event, eight of the original 80 attended. One participant said the night before she would probably not attend as she felt ill. However, she did attend the beginning of the meeting only to leave, saying she didn't feel well enough to stay.

The Rogue Valley Wisdom Council

Wisdom Council meeting: Day One

The participants arrived on Saturday morning November 15th at a conference room at the Red Lion Inn in Medford, Oregon. They were greeted by Karen, Lance, and David as well as others from the *Center For Wise Democracy* and their volunteers. Karen, Lance and David opened the morning with a brief introduction of themselves and their organizing process. They then introduced Jim Rough, who would facilitate the meeting.

Jim briefly introduced himself and spoke a little about Dynamic Facilitation and the Wisdom Council. He answered several questions from the participants, including one

about who was paying for the Wisdom Council meeting. Jim explained that the organizers and CWD were paying for it out of pocket. Several participants asked about the cameras and microphones and Joseph was called into the room to explain his documentary film project. Once all the questions were answered, questionnaires were administered to the participants. The questionnaires asked participants what they felt were important problems in the community, how difficult the problems were to solve and how hopeful they were that those problems would get solved. When they finished filling out the questionnaires, the dialogue began.

Rough asked the participants what they'd like to talk about, which generated a list of topics. He then asked which one people wanted to start with, mentioning that they would likely be able to revisit the other topics later. The group picked education funding.

The conversation wandered through several areas on that first day, although the need for stable school funding came up repeatedly on the first day. At one point, a participant explained an idea he had for school funding. The idea was to create a state sponsored program to clean up the mine tailings found in many defunct mines in Southern Oregon. The tailings found in these mines could be processed into metals, which have market value. The revenue from the sales of these metals could generate revenue for school funding. This idea later became known as the "water plan." Such a state program would generate new jobs for the area, while cleaning up the environment. Many people in the group expressed interest in this idea and later reported that they felt it to be very creative, while expressing some doubts about its feasibility.

The day closed with Rough asking the group to summarize what they had talked about. He then checked to see if the group agreed it was correct and moved on to ask the group if they had some ideas of what they might write in a statement if it were to happen today. The group outlined a few points about stable education funding and better public participation.

Wisdom Council Meeting: Day Two

The second day of the Wisdom Council began with Jim asking people to “check in” with each other, telling if they had any interesting thoughts or insights in their time apart. He shared that one of the staff in the hotel was really interested and excited by what they were doing. Jim then read through the previous days’ problem statements and concerns and the dialogue began. People began discussing ideas to reform the voting process and the electoral process.

The day proceeded similar to the previous day with the group exploring some new ideas and revisiting ones from the previous day. The topics mostly centered on public participation and how people could and should participate in the political process more effectively. The group also focused on ways to hold state legislators more accountable in their decision-making.

At one point in the dialogue, a participant posed a question: “what about the guy who holds up the process?” He was speaking about the way in which one person or interest group can derail an entire public process and effectively block consensus. Later on, he mentioned that he was “playing that guy...and holding up the process.” For nearly

an hour, this participant was the dominant speaker and this topic of derailing public processes was the focus of the conversation. Later the group moved away from this topic and summarized a few of the key points they wanted to include in their statement.

Rough later reported in an interview that he felt this got the group off track and negatively impacted the statement writing by taking the conversation away from areas of consensus (J. Rough, Personal Communication, January 2004). However, when participants were later asked to recall this event, most did not feel it affected the overall outcome of the meeting. In fact two, felt they thought it might have actually focused the group and strengthened the process.

Consensus Statement Writing

With two hours left before the Town Hall Forum, Jim left the group to allow them to write their consensus statement without his influence. The first hour didn't go as smoothly as the dialogue had gone previously. Without a facilitator, many participants interrupted each other and expressed frustration about their lack of progress. One participant said, "We're just going in circles now." Another participant shared similar feelings when he said "We're getting way off track now." Jim was finally asked to come back and help facilitate. Jim explained that it was their statement and helped them outline a few of the key points they made in their summary earlier. The group then decided to give each person about a half-hour to reflect and write down what they wanted in the statement. Each person then read what they had written and the group discussed the key elements they wanted to see in the statement. One participant's writing seemed to capture

much of what the group wanted and that became their working document. The language was changed and a few things were added and the Wisdom Council statement was then finished.

In the end, the statement writing process had felt slightly disorganized for a few participants. Four people reported not having enough time and two mentioned it was disorganized. Most participants said that many of the creative ideas generated during the dialogue were not included in the statement. The statement was one page and discussed education funding, public participation and legislative accountability. However, there were few specific suggestions offered within each of these areas (a copy of the statement is included in Appendix A).

Town Hall Forum

After a short break, the organizers and participants walked up to a larger conference room set up for the presentation of the results. The organizers typed the Wisdom Council statement, printed it and made several dozen copies for people to read. Approximately 45 people from the community (not including organizers and their families) attended the forum. Deanna Martin from the CWD opened the town hall forum explaining the Wisdom Council process and then introduced Karen, David and Lance, who each spoke briefly about a particular aspect of the Wisdom Council organizing and process.

One of the participants then read their consensus statement. Each participant then had an opportunity to tell people their name, where they lived and a brief discussion

about their experience as a member of the Wisdom Council. Following that, the statement was read again. Attendees of the town hall forum were then asked to get into small groups of 6-8 people and talk about the results. Each member of the Wisdom Council joined one of the small groups. After approximately 30 minutes, each group reported back to the larger group with comments and questions. Following another half hour of large-group discussion, Martin thanked everyone for coming and closed the event, signaling the end of the Wisdom Council meeting and presentation.

II. Summary of Results

Table VI below summarizes the results in table form of the Rogue Valley Wisdom Council using the evaluative criteria presented in Chapter 2. Each criterion is listed and the degree to which it was fulfilled. This is followed with a brief description of the methods and subject or source used to judge each criterion. Additional notes are provided where necessary.

Table VI, Summary of Results

Criteria	Fulfilled ?	Method & Subject/Source	Notes
Wisdom Council			
1. Did ordinary community members not affiliated with a particular interest (other than Wisdom Councils) organize the Wisdom Council?	Yes	Interviews with organizers, Review of organizer notes	
2. Criteria: Were people randomly selected, using a sampling pool representative of the community?	No	Interviews with organizers, Review of organizer notes	List of registered voters are not representative of the community
3. Was the participation rate relatively high?	No	Interviews with organizers, Review of organizer notes	Only 14% of those contacted participated
4. Were the following parts of the model publicized before, during and after their occurrences:			
Selection of participants?	No	Media Audit, Interviews with organizers	
Before			
During	No	Media Audit, Interviews with organizers	
After	No	Media Audit, Interviews with organizers	
Wisdom Council Meeting?	Yes	Media Audit, Interviews with organizers	
Before			
During	No	Media Audit, Interviews with organizers	
After	Partially	Media Audit, Interviews with organizers	Very little media coverage, overall

Criteria	Fulfilled ?	Method & Subject/Source	Notes
Town Hall Forum? Before	Yes	Media Audit, Interviews with organizers	
During	No	Media Audit, Interviews with organizers	
After	Partially	Media Audit, Interviews with organizers	
5. Did the Wisdom Council write a statement at the end of the process?	Yes	Direct Observation, Review of Video	
6. Did the group unanimously agree to the statement?	Yes	Direct Observation, Review of Video	
7. Were small group conversations organized at the Town Hall Forum to discuss the results?	Yes	Direct Observation, Review of Video	
8. Were small group conversations organized elsewhere in the community to discuss the results?	Partially	Interviews with organizers	Only one instance occurred
9. Did the Wisdom Council attempt to assume or exert any formal authority over any person or entity?	No	Direct Observation, Review of Video	
Dynamic Facilitation			
10. Were empowering and follow-up questions frequently used to draw people out? (for instance two to three times an hour)?	Yes	Direct Observation, Review of Video	
11. Did the facilitator reflect to the group on its progress and ask them about what they want to talk about next?	Yes	Direct Observation, Review of video	
12. Were the four charts used (Problems, Solutions, Concerns & Data)?	Yes	Direct Observation, Review of video	
13. Did participants feel like they were well heard throughout the process?	Yes	Direct Observation, Review of Video, Interviews with participants	

Criteria	Fulfilled ?	Method & Subject/Source	Notes
14. Did participants try to listen to each other? (ie use active listening or try to help each other articulate a point or concern?)	Yes	Interviews with participants, Questionnaires	Nearly two dozen times one participant would help another articulate a point to the speaker's satisfaction, when the facilitator was unable to accurately reflect what was originally said.
15. Did participants consider some of the groups ideas to be creative?	Yes	Interviews with participants, Questionnaires	
16. Did participants feel supported to talk about things they really cared about?	Partially	Interviews with participants, Questionnaires	Some participants felt they did, others felt they had to "hold back"
Community Impact			
17. Was there a significant spreading of awareness about the process?	Partially	Interviews with organizers, Questionnaires & Interviews with Town Hall Attendees	
18. Were new organizers and supporters of the process recruited as a result of this Wisdom Council?	No	Interviews with organizers, Questionnaires & Interviews with Town Hall Attendees	
19. Have future Wisdom Councils been planned?	No	Interviews with organizers, Questionnaires & Interviews with Town Hall Attendees	
Communicative Theory			
20. Does the model provide and equal opportunity for everyone to suggest items for the agenda?	Yes	Direct Observation, Review of video	
21. Does the model provide enough time to accommodate all agenda items that the group wants to discuss?	?	Direct Observation, Review of video	

Criteria	Fulfilled ?	Method & Subject/Source	Notes
22. Does the model provide an opportunity for everyone to suggest changes to the agenda or the rules?	Yes	Direct Observation, Review of video	
23. Does the model provide an opportunity for everyone to comment on the facilitation style?	Yes	Direct Observation, Review of video	
24. Does the model provide all people in the greater affected population an equal chance to participate?	No	Direct Observation, Review of video	
25. Does the model provide all an equal chance to make communicative validity claims?	Yes	Direct Observation, Review of video	
26. Does the model provide all an equal chance to make cognitive validity claims?	Yes	Direct Observation, Review of video	
27. Does the model provide all an equal chance to make normative validity claims?	Yes	Direct Observation, Review of video	
28. Does the model provide all an equal chance to make expressive validity claims?	Yes	Direct Observation, Review of video	

III. General Results

This section presents more detail of the four areas of evaluative criteria: the Wisdom Council Criteria, Dynamic Facilitation, Communicative Theory and Community Impact. In addition, several additional outcomes of the process, which were not part of the original criteria are presented.

A. Wisdom Council Criteria

- *Participant selection*

While the actual selection was random, the actual participants were really more self-selected as many people chose not to participate, despite being “selected.” In the end, only 14 percent of those asked actually decided to participate. Also, the sampling frame was registered voters, thus excluding a large portion of the community who are not registered to vote. This criterion therefore was not fulfilled.

- *Media coverage*

The media coverage of the event was very limited. There were two short articles, one written before and one written after with limited descriptions of the event. There was a television interview with the organizers before the Wisdom Council explaining much of what it was about and a very brief story on the night of the Town Hall Forum. The Jefferson Exchange did not do any follow-up to the Wisdom Council. Technically, some of this criterion was fulfilled, but compared to what the model requires, this was far from the ideal. Very little information from the Wisdom Council got out into the community

through the media. Additionally, the statements of the Wisdom Council were never reproduced in the media.

- *Town Hall Forum and small-group dialogues*

The results were presented publicly and small groups were formed to discuss the results. This part of the model was fulfilled in part. But given the limited media coverage, the presentation was limited with respect to how many people in the community actually saw the presentation.

B. Dynamic Facilitation

- *Participants held back*

While Dynamic Facilitation is supposed to allow participants to talk about the issues that mattered most to them, this particular meeting didn't support people to do so. Several participants noted that they felt limited by time and the need to achieve consensus and thus didn't talk about everything that they really cared about.

Further on this point, there were several participants who mentioned during the dialogue that they didn't know enough as a group to make certain statements. For example, the group was not sure about the constitutionality of campaign finance reform. In another instance, several people expressed concern that the group didn't know about how the budget process worked for school funding. As a result, the group held back from advocating for certain solutions. Three participants reported they felt the process did not allow them to talk about the things that really mattered to them.

- *Participants felt heard and showed signs of listening to each other*

Generally, participants reported that they felt the facilitator listened to them very well and that they felt heard overall during the meeting. Several times participants would ask clarifying questions of each other such as, “is this what you mean,” or “let me understand what you are saying.” Participants also explained that they felt other participants listened to them.

- *Participants felt they generated some creative solutions*

Most participants felt that the meeting generated some creative ideas. Several mentioned the “Water Plan,” which was the mine-waste recovery plan mentioned earlier. However, most participants did not feel these earlier statements were recorded in the final group consensus statement.

C. Communicative Theory Criteria

Generally, the RVWC fulfilled the Communicative Theory criteria for fairness. Internally, all people were given the opportunity to make any statements they felt were important for either logical or normative reasons. The facilitator would frequently stop someone from talking over someone else and call on quieter members of the group to invite them into the discussion. The open format allowed participants to list out the topics they felt were important. These were largely covered during the meeting.

Externally, however, the event failed to include all affected parties from being able to participate. As previously mentioned, the pool of registered voters may not be representative of the community.

D. Community Impact

- *The Town hall forum generated excitement*

The Town Hall Forum yielded many positive responses. Most questionnaires showed that the attendees found the results to be interesting and exciting. Additionally, in the follow up interviews people expressed enthusiasm for the model and the presentation they saw that evening.

The questionnaires attendees filled out gave a strong indication people's excitement and support for the model. When asked about how interesting they found the results, most of the respondents answered 8 or above on a scale of one to ten (with a 10 indicating "very interesting" and a 1 indicating "not interesting"). Similarly, many attendees reported feeling inspired after talking with fellow community members. Two thirds of the respondents rated their level of inspiration to be an eight or higher on a scale of one to ten (with a ten being very inspired and one being not inspired). 25 of 30 respondents indicated they think the Rogue Valley should have more Wisdom Councils in the future. Three said they were unsure and two didn't answer. Many attendees also had intentions of carrying the results out into the community. 29 attendees reported that they had intentions of talking to others in the community about the results.

- *Follow up activity*

Follow-up to the Wisdom Council appeared to be strong at first. Several people who attended the Town Hall Forum also expressed interested in volunteering to help with the next Wisdom Council. Two meetings were organized to bring the original organizers

together with these people. However, the meetings were not well planned or organized. Additionally, one of the main organizers, Lance Bissacia felt he couldn't continue to organize at the same level. Another organizer, David Wick began to work with filmmaker Joseph McCormick on a national project, which is discussed below. Karen Gossetti has since moved out of the state. Rogue Valley Wisdom Councils, the lead organization, had no staff and no money. These forces combined to fragment any interest in the community as there was no lead organization or core group to sustain interest and motivation.

- *Reserved confidence about future Wisdom Councils*

When asked if there would be another Wisdom Council in the Rogue Valley area, one organizer remarked, "I don't know. I'm hesitant to say one way or another." Other organizers from Rogue Valley Wisdom Councils and Center for Wise Democracy said they felt fairly confident there will be more Wisdom Councils. However, there is little evidence to support this claim. It seems that unless another organization or community leader takes a lead in organizing future Wisdom Council's they are unlikely to happen in the Rogue Valley.

IV Other Results

- *A "powerful process"*

Despite these shortcomings, a lot of energy and excitement seemed to be generated at both the Wisdom Council meeting and the town hall forum. Participants reported that it was a very significant experience for them. One participant remarked:

“I’m a different person now and I think everyone else is too. This was a very powerful process.” Another remarked: “It was the start of something very big for me.”

Several town hall forum attendees remarked that they were “blown away” and very surprised about the outcome of the process. One attendee later reported, “Each person [in the Wisdom Council] was validated. The whole idea of people being validated is missing in our society today. A flame has been ignited, but there needs to be follow-through.” Another attendee remarked, “I was very impressed with what can come out of it...the idea of consensus of everyday people’s views and one that was obviously wise. It’s something I could really get behind.”

■ *A National Wisdom Council*

Another outgrowth of the Rogue Valley Wisdom Council was inspiration for a national-level Wisdom Council. Joseph McCormick, the filmmaker who filmed the process felt very inspired after witnessing the Wisdom Council. He then decided that he would help organize a National Wisdom Council linked to a large national convention on Democracy, which he has personally donated a good deal of start up funds. In an email, McCormick reported the “The We the People National Convention” is a *DIRECT RESULT* of the learning and inspiration and relationships built at the RVWC“ (emphasis in the original).

Conclusion

Using the overriding goals put forth by the originators of the Wisdom Council model, the RVWC could not be considered a success. The idealized Wisdom Council model calls for a random selection of participants to generate “a microcosm of the community,” extensive media coverage, widespread community awareness and a variety of public support. This community dialogue had none of those elements and thus can’t be considered a success from that point of view.

The idealized model also assumes that future Wisdom Councils would have been planned and past Wisdom Councils would have already happened. Obviously, since the RVWC was the first to occur, no prior events happened. As for future Wisdom Councils in the Rogue Valley, there was some talk by the original organizers and participants to organize future events, but there is little evidence that such a goal will be achieved.

From the point of view that considers the RVWC as an initial Wisdom Council, that is, an early iteration of what would likely become a regular series of Wisdom Councils, it should be seen as a partial success. Many of the criteria that would constitute an early or initial Wisdom Council were fulfilled: it had successful Dynamic Facilitation, utilized the strengths of Communicative Theory, and did meet a core number of overarching Wisdom Council values. However, without a good deal of follow-up organizing and a sense of continuity of the process, future Wisdom Councils in the Rogue Valley area seem somewhat unlikely. Thus, while much of the criteria used in this analysis were fulfilled, important criteria were not. Thus the RVWC cannot be considered a successful initial Wisdom Council until future Wisdom Councils are organized and the

process is firmly established in the Rogue Valley. Time will reveal whether or not this was indeed an initial Wisdom Council or just a powerful one time event to a small group of people in Southern Oregon.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the results of the Rogue Valley Wisdom Council in greater detail. The first part of the chapter reviews several of the specific results and explores the related causes and effects. Then, the larger implications of the Wisdom Council and how it relates to other models of public participation is discussed. Following that discussion, recommendations for improved organizing of future Wisdom Councils are made based on the results of the evaluation and the discussion.

I. Rogue Valley Wisdom Council

The outreach and publicity were found to be lacking for the RVWC organizing. As presented earlier, the Wisdom Council model hinges on widespread awareness and anticipation of the process. Without these, there is no dynamic to drive change in the community. Very few people actually saw or read the results, so it is assumed the community impact outside of the Town Hall Forum and Wisdom Council meeting was very minor.

The media coverage was also very limited, especially for what is necessary for the model to have a larger community impact. Also, there was very little information about the participants or details about the process, so the quality was lacking as well. It is

unlikely that the level of awareness of, or support for the Wisdom Council process, increased very much as a result of RVWC.

Similarly, the follow-up activities were insufficient to firmly establish the process in the community. Meetings were not well organized and there was little energy to sustain the organizing of future Wisdom Councils. As mentioned, there were several people who attended follow-up meetings and expressed interest in organizing future Wisdom Councils during the interviews. Apparently then, this lack of follow-up was not due to a shortage of volunteers and support, as much as it was due to a lack of organizational capacity to work with those volunteers and sustain future organizing efforts.

The Town Hall Forum attendees reported a good deal of interest in the Wisdom Council statements. However, given that this group was self-selected, it seems likely they were predisposed to appreciate any outcome of the process. Hence, we cannot draw any conclusions for how other community members might have reacted to the statement based on the response from this group. The statements themselves were short and contained very little depth and didn't seem to possess a great deal of creativity. Perhaps then, the positive responses from the town hall forum attendees were aimed more at the process of the Wisdom Council itself as opposed to the results of it.

One factor which may have played into this dynamic and served the overall process was the Friday night talk that Tom Atlee and Jim Rough gave the night before the Wisdom Council. As previously mentioned, some background ideas about what the Wisdom Council represents and how it works were explained by the speakers. Several

people who attended the Town Hall Forum attended this event and may have gotten very interested in the process as a direct result of attending this talk.

As was mentioned, the participants expressed that they were very uncertain about what to expect at the Wisdom Council meeting. The organizers were careful not to influence what the participants might talk about. Given the fact that the Wisdom Council meeting isn't very structured, the organizers couldn't give a great deal of information to the participants about what to expect. The organizers didn't really know what to expect themselves, for that matter. What was meant as care for the integrity of the process by the organizers may have created some uneasiness or even suspicion on the part of the participants. Such mistrust would explain why the participants had so many questions about who was paying for the Wisdom Council and why the event was being filmed. An atmosphere of mistrust can create a difficult climate for dialogue. Participants in the dialogue would be more likely to be reserved and "hold back" their true feelings, which is what participants did indeed report.

II. Recommendations

- *Create expectations, which emphasize fairness and openness of the process over the need to achieve consensus.*

Participants in Wisdom Councils should be well informed that they are truly free to discuss whatever they want and what they really care about, without having to worry too much about achieving consensus. Creating expectations that they will all be listened to, and are free to really "open up" will release them from having to hold back as much in

the future. Emphasizing these aspects will give participants a clearer idea of what to expect in the process, while not directly influencing the content of meeting. Focusing too much on achieving consensus may stifle less popular opinions because they can be seen as “holding up” the rest of the group process. Since the primary point of Dynamic Facilitation is to encourage, respect, and support each individual’s voice, lessening the focus on consensus may be needed.

- *Build community support before and after the process.*

While the organizers did meet with other community groups in an effort to educate them about the process, not enough of this “bridge building” was done. By educating community groups about the process and the goals of the Wisdom Council, anticipation for the meeting and the results would be increased. Additionally, new volunteers and additional fundraising capacity may be created through partnerships with a variety of community groups.

- *Consider media sponsorship for “initial” Wisdom Councils.*

While this may violate the first principle about “We the People” chartering the Wisdom Council, it provides immense benefits. One, the issue of media coverage and publicity would likely be less of an issue. Two, a newspaper and/or TV station may be willing to invest money in organizing the event, which opens up the possibility of creating organizational capacity. For instance, a part-time organizer might be hired, quality flyers could be printed, or a high-quality meeting room may be procured. Developing a high quality, highly visible initial Wisdom Council (even if media

sponsored) could provide a level of community interest and participation that could sustain future Wisdom Councils without direct media sponsorship, if in fact media sponsorship is determined to in some way be detrimental to the process and goals of Wisdom Councils.

- *Improve recruitment strategies.*

Paying participants a stipend, offering child care, transportation and/or food could all potentially help increase participation in the Wisdom Council meetings by either providing incentives or removing barriers to participation. The ultimate goal is to improve the participation rate, which would then be closer to the model's ideal of truly random selection. This would also create more legitimacy for the Wisdom Council process.

- *Create a strong organization before starting.*

Without having first demonstrated some success, this does present a difficult chicken-and-egg dilemma. Nonetheless, the organizing effort in Rogue Valley could not be sustained because of a lack organizational capacity, not a lack of interest. The intensity of the work and need for strong follow-up organizing should not be underestimated for future Wisdom Councils.

- *Organize several Wisdom Councils instead of focusing on only one.*

This too, is a difficult recommendation to follow. However, to firmly establish the process in the community several Wisdom Council meetings must take place. To avoid a

“one-shot” situation, organizers should commit to organizing at least three or four Wisdom Councils over a period of two or three years. All of the organizing does not need to happen at one time and therefore should not be overwhelming. The organizing should be started slowly, building community support for the idea and allowing ample time for education and outreach throughout the effort. Several dates could be planned ahead of time. This way, community members and groups begin to get used to Wisdom Councils happening and would begin to anticipate each successive one. Each Wisdom Council in turn, would be more likely to attract attention and may garner new support. This support may create opportunities for additional fundraising and organizational capacity building.

- *Establish a solid theoretical framework and evaluation methodology.*

Without a solid theoretical framework, it is difficult for other public participation practitioners to compare and contrast the Wisdom Council model with others. Several possible frameworks have been suggested here and are worthy of further exploration. Additionally, by establishing a method of evaluation for both Dynamic Facilitation and the Wisdom Council, the results can be more easily demonstrated. By showing results in a way that other academics and practitioners find relevant, then the model will attract more attention and further study. This opens up the opportunity for funding through experimentation and more rigorous evaluations.

III. The Wisdom Council: Theories and Other Models of Public Participation

That participants “held back” was surprising because the Wisdom Council model allows for, and even encourages, emotional expression. Mansbridge (2000) points out

how more models of public participation should include emotional components. Here we see one way the Wisdom Council model differentiates itself from other methods of public participation. Webler (1995) also makes the claim that public participation models should include multiple kinds of thinking, including emotional and experiential.

Another way the Wisdom Council is different than other public participation models is its lack of formal structure. The meeting component has very little structure by design. Other than the facilitation process, the initial listing of the topics at the beginning of the meeting and the production of a consensus statement, there is little other “structure” involved with the Dynamic Facilitation.

However, some structure may have been created by participants’ perception that the need to achieve consensus was very important. Mendelberg (2001) found that a unanimous decision rule, when applied “under the right circumstances,” can result in people being more willing to listen to minority views, resolving conflict properly and leaving deliberators feeling that everyone received a fair hearing” (41-42). This anticipation of achieving consensus may have created an environment in which participants were more likely to listen to each other and feel heard at the end of the process. The perceptions and expectations that participants had before the meeting may have created some structure for the dialogue (in the form of a perceived decision rule) rather more by accident than by design.

Complexity theorists would argue that this is more accurately called “emergent” structure as opposed to “designed” structure (Capra 2002). Dynamic facilitation seeks to create a self-organizing dynamic, which then allows for the creation of some semblance

of order, which appears from what would likely be described as chaos. So while it has been argued here that the Wisdom Council is an unstructured approach to dialogue, it is perhaps more accurate to describe it as a process more oriented towards emergent structure, as opposed to designed structure.

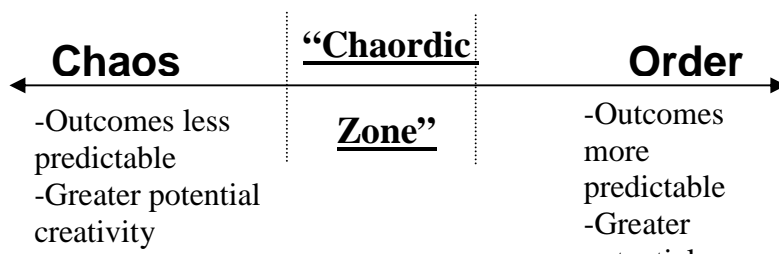
A more designed meeting process would entail making decisions ahead of time about the sorts of things that would happen and at what times during the meeting. The meeting would thus be designed ahead of time. An agenda, which is a particular sequence with time allotments, is a very simple example of a designed meeting structure.

And while structured approaches do indeed produce specific outcomes (which is of course critical for many, if not most, public participation models), they do not allow for the same self-organizing behavior characterized by Dynamic Facilitation and the Wisdom Council. The vast majority of public participation processes fall into the former category.

The Wisdom Council operates with some structure and order, but a good deal of the meeting moves in and out of chaos. This blend of chaotic and orderly elements is a major characteristic of living systems and human systems according to complexity theorists (Capra 2002). This area of overlap or mix of chaos and order was named by Dee Hock, founder of Visa, as “Chaordic,” a combination of the words chaos and order (Hock 1999). Figure 2 shows how the Wisdom Council would compare with other processes from an “order/chaos” framework.

Figure 1, Chaos/Order Continuum of Public Participation Processes

Adapted from Chaordic alliance website: www.Chaordic.org



The idea of exploring how dialogue is related to complexity theory is not new. At least a few authors have explored the connections between self-organized complexity and the open, unpredictable nature of dialogue (Senge 1994; Olson and Eoyang 2001). This area is probably ripe for more exploration.

Another study area that needs further development is that of measurement and documentation of dialogue processes. This study suffered from a lack of quality indicators to describe the dialogue process. Some criteria were created based on literature about Dynamic Facilitation and Communicative Theory. However, Rough (2002) notes how there are outcomes of Dynamic Facilitation that cannot be measured or would even be lessened by the act of measurement. While it's unclear exactly how measurement may have affected the dialogue, it is clear that there were outcomes which were not captured in the criteria. Future research will hopefully find ways to study dialogue more concretely.

One promising development in this area is an active discussion group and collaborative research project sponsored by the National Coalition of Dialogue and

Deliberation. The project, which was started after the time of the Rogue Wisdom Council, is aimed at collecting and comparing evaluation tools for dialogue and deliberation models.³

If there is indeed something to be learned by experimenting with self-organization in human systems as many suggest (Senge 1994; Wheatley 1999; Capra 2002), then the Wisdom Council represents a model worth further examination. It is a model which allows participants a great deal of freedom to self organization in a dialogue as public participation process.

Additionally, as was discussed in Chapter two, Habermas (1970) suggests in the ideal speech situation, that participants should be allowed to create the rules and structure of their discussion. If the ideal speech situation conditions are met then, he claims a kind of communicative rationality will be produced (Habermas 1970). Essentially, the rationality will emerge from the interactions of members in the group and could be used to solve important social problems while involving people in a meaningful process.

Webler (1995) attempted to create clearer indicators from this theoretical standpoint of Communicative Rationality. However, in doing so, he assumed that many of the processes to insure fairness and competency within that framework had to be *designed* ahead of time. We are left to wonder if Habermas' work might be further informed by nascent developments in complexity theory and dialogue theory.

The Wisdom Council model is not grounded solidly in any theoretical framework. This makes exploring these connections much more difficult. A full exploration of any

³ See <http://www.thataway.org/index.html>

one of these connections was beyond the scope of this particular work, but is much needed. Important questions, however, have been raised in the analysis of the Rogue Valley Wisdom Council and may point in the direction of future research in the areas of Communicative Theory, Dialogue, Complexity theory and public participation. Explorations of such connections are likely to lead to new understanding of public participation and the development of new democratic models.

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