

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

Candice Elliott, Ami Chen-Mills & Stoney Brook

November 4, 2019

- ☐ Background
- ☐ Public Engagement Subcommittee Recommendations
- ☐ Public Engagement Subcommittee Request
- ☐ Update on Items for Further Consideration

BACKGROUND

On September 17, 2019, the Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness was created the Public Engagement sub-committee to facilitate the development and implementation of the committee's community outreach efforts. The Public Engagement Subcommittee has provided two updates to the committee:

October 1, 2019 (attached)
Media Campaign
Stakeholder Engagement

October 15, 2019 (attached)
Wisdom Council
Community Listening Forum

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Public Engagement Sub-Committee has worked with staff to develop two (2) recommendations for immediate consideration: Social Media Campaign, Stakeholder Engagement Series.

Problem Statement

There has not been enough community engagement by the City of Santa Cruz on issues related to homelessness.

Proposed Solution & Operational Plan

1. *Social Media Campaign (Catching up with the CACH)*
Direct staff to immediately engage in a proactive media campaign on behalf of the CACH to include at least one weekly social media post that documents the good work that is being done in the City of Santa Cruz to address issues related to homelessness, especially the work of the CACH.
 - a. Inform the public on committee, city and council actions on this issue
 - b. Inform the public on available resources and resource limitations
 - c. As appropriate, inform the public on the work of other communities on this issue
2. *Public Outreach Series*
Implement a stakeholder engagement program as follows:

CACH Meeting Location

Responsible Party: Co-Chairs in coordination with Staff

- Schedule at least one CACH meeting in a public Westside location
- Schedule at least one CACH meeting in a public Eastside location
- Explore scheduling further meetings at alternative locations as needed

Pre-Meeting Public Engagement Sessions (Facilitation Method Attached)

Responsible Party: Public Engagement Subcommittee in coordination with Staff

- At least one meeting to be focused on Public Health and Hygiene
- At least one meeting to be focused on Sanctioned Campgrounds and Safe Sleeping
- Duration: 1 hour 15 minutes, to be scheduled prior to CACH Committee Meetings on the Westside and Eastside
- Facilitators: Candice Elliott with support from Ami Chen-Mills and Stoney Brook

Community Listening Forum (Facilitation Method Attached)

Responsible Party: Public Engagement Subcommittee in coordination with Staff

- After completing at least two (2) Public Engagement Sessions, a community Listening Forum will be held.
- Duration: 3 Hours
- Facilitator: Ami Chen Mills with support from Candice Elliott and Stoney Brook

Responsible Level of Government

Santa Cruz City

Funding

CACH Committee Funding Allocation

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE REQUEST

We request the CACH approve the above two (2) recommendations so that the Public Engagement subcommittee can move forward with scheduling and facilitation as soon as possible.

UPDATE ON ITEMS FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

The Public Engagement Subcommittee provides the following updates on for further consideration:

Expert Panels

After receiving feedback from the CACH between sessions, the Public Engagement Subcommittee is conducting further inquiry into scheduling expert panels and will return to the CACH with a recommendation at a future date.

Wisdom Council (Scope of Work Attached)

After receiving feedback from the CACH at the last meeting on October 15, 2019, the Public Engagement Subcommittee is conducting further research on the Wisdom Council and will return to the CACH with a recommendation at a future date.

Attachments:

Public Engagement Session Draft Agenda

Listening Forum Session Draft Agenda

Wisdom Council Scope of Work

Wisdom Councils in the Public Sector

Public Engagement Session

Draft Agenda

To be facilitated pro bono by Candice Elliott along with assistance from community volunteers. Candice's BIO: <http://www.fortressandflourish.com/cv>

Welcome (5 minutes)

As participants enter the room, they fill out a name tag with their name and neighborhood. Each name tag has a color (red, blue, yellow, green). Greeters evenly distribute colors among participants.

Introduce Agreements (written for everyone to see)

- Make sure everyone is able to contribute
 - more talkative people: show a little restraint
 - quieter people: your contributions are very welcome
- Only one person speaks at a time
- Respect each others' opinions, especially if you don't agree
- Participate!
- Confidentiality
- Be conscious of time - help stick to it, or negotiate for more
- Mobile phones off to minimise disruptions

Ice Breaker (10 minutes)

- 5 minutes to introduce yourself to three people you do not know
 - Must have a different color name tag from you
 - Tell them your name, how long you have lived here, and why you came tonight

Challenges/Fears (15 minutes)

Groups write on Large Post Its in the four corners of the room

Tonight we are focusing on the issue of XXX. You will see colors that match the colors of your name tag in the four corners of the room. In a minute we will direct you to go to those four corners to write down this community's challenges related to XXX. There are markers available for you to use. Ami and I will be going around the room to answer questions and help your groups along. You have 15 minutes, go to the corner of the room that matches your name tag! (15 minutes)

Synthesis

Thank everyone for their participation and explain that we will summarize and report back to the full CACH on this information. Now that we have gotten all of the challenges out of the way, we move on to our successes.

Successes/Solutions (25 minutes)

Groups write on small Post Its, distributed once groups are formed

In a minute you will find three people who have name tags of different colors than your own, you are encouraged to work with three people who you do not know. In your group of four, you will spend some time listing this community's successes related to the issue of XXX. Think, what are the things that already exist? Ami and I will be walking around distributing post-it notes for groups to use. Please write one success on each post it note. You will have 15 minutes. Ready, find three people with different name tag colors than your own! (15 minutes)

Synthesis (10 minutes)

A large piece of butcher paper is on one wall. Participants put their top three choices on the butcher paper. Ami collects the remaining post-its.

Tell each group to prioritize their post-its, based on what they believe is making the most significant difference in the community. Put their first three choices up on the board, give the rest to Ami. We will be synthesizing all of this information to report back to the CACH, including the post it's that don't make it to our main successes board. You have 10 minutes, go!

Conclusion (5 minutes)

Thank everyone for their participation, and invite them to stay for the first part of the subcommittee meeting which will focus on current programs related to XXX issues.

Event Set Up

Supplies: 4 large post it easels, a bunch of small post it notes, a bunch of pens, butcher paper, tape

- *Set up a welcome table with name tags that are in four colors: blue, green, yellow and red.*
- *Put up the list of agreements.*
- *Have three pieces of paper that explain the directions for each part of the session: Introduction, Challenges and Successes*
- *Put up four large post it note easels in the four corners of the room. Each should have a large piece of paper that is either blue, green, yellow or red. Label each of these "Challenges."*
- *Put up a large piece of butcher paper on one wall labeled "Successes.")*

Community Listening Forum

Rough Draft Agenda

To be facilitated pro bono by Ami Chen Mills-Naim along with assistance from community volunteers. Ami's BIO: <http://www.amichen.com/bio>

This will be a three-hour evening session with outreach to the community to come and truly listen to one another very deeply on the homelessness issue. Snacks and refreshments would be good. We will not be trying to come to solutions here, but this is a warm up for future initiatives around community buy-in for solutions proposed by the CACH.

Outreach

It must be clear that this is a Listening Forum and not a place to "debate" or argue. Participants must see this in our advertising and promotions.

Part I

Presentation on Deep Listening and Listening for Alignment

- How we create "separate realities" and how this can get in the way of our deepest listening and understanding
- Listening for agreement and/or alignment
- The role of a quiet mind and Thought in listening
- How listening can help in all areas of politics and life

Part II

Dyad exercise on Listening (simple topic): clearing the mind, refraining from judgment, listening with curiosity and compassion

Part III

Community Dialogue and Listening in Turns ... Group will be reminded about how to listen and be curious. Any curious questions will be recorded and asked, any Points of Alignment will be recorded and submitted to CACH.

Groups to be invited: The general public, people experiencing homelessness, people concerned about homelessness in our community, members of the SCPD, City Council members and homeless advocates—all of whom must be willing to engage in this learning on listening and the listening exercises. *Would like feedback from the CACH on who to invite if this is approved.* Thanks to all!

WISE Democracy Santa Cruz County

Scope of Work

Draft 9/3/19

Summary

Project Name:	WISE Process for the CACH
Client(s):	City of Santa Cruz
Prepared For:	Megan Bunch, City Managers Office, City of Santa Cruz Susie O'Hara, Assistant to the City Manager, City of Santa Cruz
Prepared By:	Manu Koenig, Principle Angela Blessing, Principle
Deliverables:	(1) List of 500 randomly selected citizens (1) Mailed invitation to List (1) Facilitated Wisdom Council over a 2 day period (1) Facilitated public meeting for the general public to give input on Council findings (1) Report summarizing the process and results (3) Facilitation of CACH members
Proposed Delivery Dates:	Oct 1st, 2019 - List of citizens generated and invite drafted; 1st facilitation of CACH members Oct 15th, 2019 - Invites sent to randomly selected citizens Nov 1st, 2nd, 2019 - Wisdom Council Nov 7th, 2019 - Public meeting to give input on Council findings Nov 14th, 2019 - Report summarizing process and findings Nov 19th, 2019 - 2nd facilitation of CACH members Dec 17th, 2019 - 3rd facilitation of CACH members
Payment Schedule:	Invoice Oct 31, 2019 - for mailing Invoice Nov 31, 2019 - for Wisdom Council, Public meeting and Report <i>All invoices due Net 30</i>
Professional Contacts:	Manu Koenig, c: 831.234.3922, rskoenig@gmail.com Angela Blessing, c: 831.600.5013, angela@angelablessing.com

Overview

WISE Democracy Santa Cruz County will assist the Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness (CACH) in their working process as well as in engaging the public to determine the acceptability of proposed solutions. The WISE Process, or Wisdom Council Process as it is alternatively known, is effective because it creates a community of the whole. Bias from group affiliation is avoided by randomly selecting citizens to participate. Citizens are able to engage in a many-to-many process, working together with a facilitator to create greater solutions. Compare this to the many-to-one approach that the majority of government agencies follow today which creates a backlog for processing input and typically results in long lists of suggestions which are not followed.

WISE Democracy Santa Cruz County will directly assist the CACH by providing dynamic facilitation for the group at up to three of their meetings free of charge. The Proposed Delivery Dates listed in the above plan are flexible.

WISE Democracy Santa Cruz County will also facilitate a Wisdom Council by generating a list of randomly selected citizens and sending invites to those selected; facilitating the Wisdom Council with two dynamic facilitators; hosting a follow up public event for the Wisdom Council to present its findings to the general public; and presenting a report to the CACH and other stakeholders to present the process and findings.

Budget

Description	Quantity	Cost
Randomly selected citizen list generation for Wisdom Council	1	\$200
Mailing invitation to list of citizens	500 mailings	\$600
Expense compensation to participants (travel, child care, food)	<i>Up to \$100 per participant as needed</i>	\$1,800
Facilitation at Wisdom Council, 2 facilitators, 2 days at 6 hours per day	24hrs	\$4,800
Facilitation of Public Event, 2 facilitators, 2 hours	4hrs	\$800
Filming and editing of Wisdom Council and Public Event (optional)	1 film	\$1,000

Report preparation and presentation	8hrs	\$640
Facilitation of CACH, 3 meetings 2.5 hrs each	15hrs	\$3,000 \$0
Project Total		\$9,840

Rate Card

Description	Rate
Facilitator Hourly Rate	\$200.00
Principal Hourly Rate	\$80.00
Scope Change Fee - Assessed to each change in the project agreement after signing date	\$500.00
Interest on Overdue Payments - Interest calculated monthly from the date payment was due until the date payment, including accumulated interest, is made in full	5%

Terms and Conditions

Proprietary Rights:

The Client shall retain all right, title and interest in the intellectual property comprising all concepts, themes, and designs, created or developed by Consultant (whether individually or in collaboration with others) for the specific purpose of rendering the services required by this Agreement (the "Intellectual Property"). All other files, records, documents, drawings, specifications, and similar items related to the Client's business, whether prepared by Consultant or otherwise coming into Consultant possession, shall remain the exclusive property of the Client. The Client takes no property interest whatsoever in the equipment and non-Client-specific software used by Consultant to provide the services contemplated in this Agreement.

The Client shall retain ownership of all data that result from the survey contemplated by this Agreement (the "Survey Data"). The Client hereby grants Consultant a non-exclusive, irrevocable license to (1) use the Intellectual Property and Survey Data for its own research, advertising, marketing, or other purposes and (2) publicize summaries or digests of the Survey Data, provided that Consultant shall not publicize any such summary or digest within 60 days after the day on which all of Consultant' obligations to submit deliverables to Client under this

Agreement are satisfied (that 60-day period, the "Non-Disclosure Period"). The Client may waive the Non-Disclosure Period by written communication to Consultant.

Neither the Client nor Consultant may publicize any Survey Data that includes information that, in isolation or together with other publicly available information, enables a third party to personally identify respondents. Neither the Client nor Consultant may use respondent phone numbers, email addresses, mailing addresses or any other contact information to communicate with any respondent for any purpose other than those purposes a respondent expressly consents to.

Term and Termination:

The Client may terminate this Agreement at any time without cause by giving 2 days written notice to Consultant. Upon termination, Consultant shall (i) cease all work being performed pursuant to the Agreement, (ii) deliver to Client all work product completed up to the date of termination, and (iii) not enter into any further subcontracts or purchase orders with regard to the Agreement. As Consultant's sole remedy for termination, Consultant shall receive payment for all work performed prior to termination, and for work product created prior to termination and delivered to the Client upon receipt of the termination notice. The Client shall not be liable for any termination fees or penalties nor for lost profits or special or consequential damages allegedly suffered by Consultant as a result of the Client's termination of this Agreement.

Client Information

PO # (if applicable): _____

Project Contact Person: _____

Title: _____

Email: _____

Direct Phone: _____

Cell Phone: _____

Fax: _____

Billing Contact Person (if different from above) : _____

Billing Address: _____

Zip Code: _____

Signatures

By their execution below, the parties hereto have agreed to all of the terms and conditions of this Agreement effective as of the last date of signature below, and each signatory represents that it has the full authority to enter into this Agreement and to bind his/her respective party to all of the terms and conditions herein.

Signature/Date: _____

Name/Title: _____

Signature/Date: _____

Name/Title: _____

Wisdom Councils in the public sector

Manfred Hellrigl, Michael Lederer

This chapter describes the practical experiences of Vorarlberg State Government's Office for Future-Related Issues (Büro für Zukunftsfragen) in facilitating citizen participation on socio-political issues, with Dynamic Facilitation and Wisdom Councils. It describes the potential as well as the limitations of this new approach to citizen participation. The most important lesson we have learned so far is that for participation to succeed, we need more than powerful methods. What we most need, is willingness on the part of decision-makers to engage in open-ended processes.

What is a Wisdom Council?

Wisdom Councils are a practical application of Dynamic Facilitation (DF), a group facilitation process developed by Jim Rough. DF is a fascinating approach to group facilitation that can be used in many different settings (business, management, institutions, NGOs, associations, private groups, etc.) to help a group of people arrive at innovative and holistic solutions to complex problems, within a relatively short time and in an enjoyable manner. As a result of the special way in which facilitation is handled in DF, long-winded and tedious discussions are avoided, participants are able to bring forth their criticisms and objections and still feel valued, and both individual and collective learning can take place.

Normally in a facilitated process, a specific topic has been chosen beforehand. Yet in DF, the initial topic is only the starting point for the conversation. It is quite possible (and in fact happens regularly) that in the course of the conversation, a group will discover that the real problem is on another level. The facilitator of the DF process responds by following the energy of the group. Inspired by their shared realization, a new energy is generated to get to

the bottom of things and to develop appropriate solutions. In the course of a DF session, a shared view is created out of many individual opinions and viewpoints; in the truest sense of the word, the topic is illuminated from many different perspectives. This is the crucial precondition that allows innovative solutions to develop, and for everyone involved to become clear on the root of the problem.

It's easy to imagine that in many places where DF could potentially be applied, there may be little interest in finding root solutions; instead, the main interest could be limited to arriving at superficial answers. However, Jim Rough did not want to lose the potential benefit that DF can bring, of empowering a group to go far beyond the initial symptoms to explore the actual background and underlying causes of a situation, thus arriving at more fundamental answers to difficult questions and challenges. And so he created a format where not only is it possible for participants to devote themselves to the "really big" questions, but where they are actually invited to do so. He calls this format the *Wisdom Council*.

In a Wisdom Council, a group of about twelve to sixteen citizens will meet for a day and a half to explore a socially relevant issue. In addition to the use of DF as a facilitation process, the remarkable thing is that participants are selected at random based on the population register. It is not possible to volunteer for the Council; each potential participant is drawn by lot (and can then decide if he or she wants to accept the invitation or not.)

The task of the Wisdom Council is to submit a shared statement within the given time frame. "Shared" means that all of the participants (and not just 'the majority') must stand unanimously behind the written statement. The results of the Wisdom Council are then presented and discussed at a public event. After that, the Wisdom Council is dissolved. For any new issues, a random selection is performed again and a new Wisdom Council is convened.

As fascinating as the idea of the Wisdom Council is, it initially had very little diffusion. This may be due to the fact that its inventor, Jim Rough, hoped that citizens themselves would recognize the value of the method and thus find the ways and means to convene their own Wisdom Councils, instead of having them propagated by the State. However, it is unlikely for this to happen. The breakthrough came in 2004, when the Vorarlberg regional government became aware of this method and began using it as a tool for developing

political programs and strategies with the involvement of citizens.

Citizen participation in Vorarlberg

In 1999, the Vorarlberg State Government created the Office for Future-Related Issues (Büro für Zukunftsfragen) to find answers for increasingly complex socio-political challenges, while searching for new approaches for reducing the growing gap between government and society. To these ends, the Office for Future-Related Issues began experimenting with various methods in the area of sustainable development at both local and regional levels.

Relatively soon, it became clear that the 'usual' approaches (such as public appeals and educational campaigns to raise awareness) had only limited effects. They were insufficient to create enough social acceptance for the kinds of measures and behavioral changes that would be required to ensure a sustainable quality of life in the region. Only the shift towards self-organizing processes, where citizens themselves take on more responsibility - not only for the implementation of solutions, but also for the formulation of key challenges – was able to bring about the desired results. (Examples of this are the local and regional development processes in Langenegg, Götzis and Großen Walsertal.)

Encouraged by these initial successes, the Office for Future-Related Issues continued to emphasize citizen participation, paying particular attention to ensuring the open-ended nature of these processes (i.e., that the results of the process are not predetermined.) In 2004, as part of the new program "Children at the Center", a Planning Cells / Citizen Report process including "Future Workshops" were used to develop a strategy for more child-friendly policies in our State.

Here, too, the results we obtained confirmed the appropriateness of our chosen path. However, we were not happy with the cost/benefit ratio, since Vorarlberg has a large number of small and medium-sized communities that cannot afford costly public participation processes.

In our ongoing search for powerful yet cost-effective processes, we eventually came across Jim Rough's *Wisdom Councils*. After initial experiments with DF were held in 2006 under the title *BürgerInnen-Rat* (Citizens' Council), the first Wisdom Council was held in

Wolfurt. Since then, more than 35 Citizens' Councils have been held within the State of Vorarlberg, and this example has inspired many other Citizens' Councils outside of Vorarlberg. In 2013, the Vorarlberg State Parliament added a new passage to the state constitution, making a clear commitment to participatory democracy. In doing so, Vorarlberg became the first state in all of Europe to take such a step.

Wisdom Councils in Practice – Citizens as Policy-Makers

The above-mentioned constitutional amendment has been a significant milestone along the path to developing a more participatory democracy. Along with a directive from the state government which governs the convening and management of Citizen Councils, this reflects how Citizens' Councils have become an integral part of policy making in Vorarlberg.

To understand this, we need to look at some larger questions. How can we create sustainable policies? What do we need in order to do so, and what actually constitutes good policies? Is a sustainable policy one that strives to provide a high quality of life, or is the purpose of policy decisions to achieve a high degree of acceptance among the population at large?

Since the establishment of the Office for Future-Related Issues 15 years ago, one thing has become clear: the decisive factor is quality of life, as subjectively perceived by citizens. This sounds good, but when we take a second look, what does it mean? Each and every person usually has a different understanding about what quality of life means to them: for some, this is based on hard factors such as job opportunities, mobility, and quality of housing; for others, soft factors are critical: social cohesion, peaceful co-existence, mutual support, simply feeling at home. How can we succeed, then, in bringing diverse needs under one roof, translating them into policy measures, and thus creating good policies?

In addition to the different needs among the population at large, there are other factors that make life difficult for policy-makers: the dependence of social policies on the economy, changing demographic trends, the curtailment of decision-making powers, the increasingly widespread disenchantment with politics, and the media environment, to name just a few. How, then, can the political sphere make good policy decisions? Usually, this is done on the

basis of political parties' programs, government declarations, negotiations within working groups and committees, and recommendations from many experts.

However, as we've seen in recent years, even while many political decisions are carefully prepared and adopted, they still do not find the necessary acceptance among the population. Confidence in decisions wanes, lack of transparency is high and accountability is difficult at times even for insiders. Citizens often arrive at similar conclusions and diagnoses with regard to the challenges of political life today.

Within this larger context, Citizens' Councils have offered a fresh approach for bridging the divide between government and citizens. A Citizens' Council comes together for one and a half days on the basis of random selection. Whether it's a small rural community or a larger urban environment, a group of people who have never met before in this particular constellation, come together to explore an important issue or concern. The question of how to bring together people from all walks of life, to formulate a perspective on what is important to them as a whole, has led to the establishment of the Citizens' Councils as an instrument of policy consultation in Vorarlberg, whether at the local, regional or state level.

Where else do we find a neutral ground where "normal people" can exchange perspectives on sociopolitical issues and develop possible solutions? At the beginning of each Citizen Council, participants are asked how they felt when they initially received a personal invitation to attend from the Mayor or the Governor. Most initial responses range from skeptical to suspicious, while also curious and interested. Yet by the end, we have repeatedly found that most participants are highly appreciative of having been invited to take part.

What can a Wisdom Council do? What can't it do?

It sounds easy, but sometimes simple things are not so simple. Mayors, community leaders, members of the parliament or critical citizens rarely see in advance the potential value of these conversations, which often resemble a planning assesment: What is important to the population at large? What themes are emerging? Where do we want to

© copyrighted material. Hellrigl, M. & Lederer, M. (2014), "Wisdom Councils im öffentlichen Bereich", in R. Zubizarreta and M. zur Bonsen (eds.) *Dynamic Facilitation: Die erfolgreiche Moderations methode für schwierige und verfahrene Situationen*. Weinheim and Basel: Beltz Verlag. Chapter translated into English by Rosa Zubizarreta.

focus? How do we interpret this information?

Sometimes the Citizens' Council can serve as a kind of pre-evaluation for a planned project. This was the situation in the case of a large urban development project that was being planned in Bregenz. A large area in Bregenz was finally going to be developed, with the participation of several different project partners. This came after decades in which, due to political differences, no agreement had been possible. Before the project went public, the city wanted to protect itself by hosting a Citizens' Council to accommodate the concerns of the residents in the planning process.

The planner in charge presented the final draft of the master plan to the Citizens' Council, just before the town council was scheduled to vote to approve the plans. A brief exchange began, and very quickly this came out: "You have worked hard on this; we citizens do not have the planning expertise to assess this plan in detail, yet the most important thing has been forgotten," said the citizens. If you have ever been to Bregenz, you know the situation the city has to contend with; the scenic shores of Lake Constance, which are so attractive to tourists, are separated from the city center by a railway line and a busy road. It turned out that the area to be developed was located right at a strategically important point for addressing this major challenge.

This was clearly the perspective that the Citizens' Council was bringing forth, and in the end they arrived at this clear formulation: "With this project, Bregenz has a historic opportunity to resolve the separation between the lake and city." Based on this insight, the Citizens' Council developed a great many ideas about how this could be achieved, from a Spanish Staircase to a gondola ferry that could be used to relieve traffic congestion. What was ultimately most crucial were not the solutions themselves, but the opportunity that the citizens had to exert a positive influence on the development of their city, and to experience themselves as effective participants. Shortly after the Citizens' Council, the Town Council made a unanimous decision. They agreed upon a new master plan which now included a broad overpass and thus addressed the core concern that the Citizens' Council had raised.

The next set of innovative results demonstrate an application of the Citizens Council at the State level. In response to the question "How can we create good neighborhoods?" a Citizens' Council formulated a clear plea for a better society. As part of this, the Citizens' Council developed a model of "neighborhood democracy." Their model included having

participation and design options within one's neighborhood, and also being aware of these options. Concrete ideas were developed to ensure the successful application of this model. Eventually, this culminated in the concept of "settlement work in Vorarlberg."

In response, the State Government of Vorarlberg commissioned the Institute for Social Services to implement this model. Some sample elements of the model include:

- A Conciliation Board: A key suggestion made by the Citizens' Council was the introduction of a conciliation board, whose members are equipped with skills and can intervene in case of conflict. This Board is now a part of the larger frame of settlement work in Vorarlberg.
- Neighborhood democracy was the buzzword that came out of that Citizens' Council, and it implies greater engagement at the neighborhood level. It includes participatory elements, such as greater direct democracy within the neighborhood, as well as input into different design options for neighborhood development. In particular, having a say with regard to economic incentives was part of the concept.
- - What do we consider to be a good neighborhood? This question was taken up in depth by the Citizens' Council. Their responses ranged from the attitudes encountered in interactions with one another, to socio-political conditions (labor market policies, financial policies, educational policies, as well as distributive justice), to a shared awareness among many stakeholders about the common concerns and issues in the neighborhood. This differentiated analysis generated by the Citizens' Council is now included in the concept of "good neighborhood".
- This last point included the opportunities to encounter one another in the course of daily life that must be present, in order to have the experience of "living in a good neighborhood."

Meanwhile, a position has been created to support this settlement work and to take up many of the suggestions of the Citizens' Council. An adaptation of the Citizens' Council for a neighborhood context, in the sense of a neighborhood or village council, is already being planned.

A Citizens' Council can also be seen as an instrument of regional development. For example, a Citizens' Council that took place in a region consisting of 13 municipalities faced an unusual task. In a new twist from "classical" Citizens' Councils, an additional incentive was offered: participants were asked to imagine themselves in the role of the mayors of the 13 regional communities, and were given the task of developing concrete proposals for cooperative projects. To this end, a fixed implementation budget of € 3.500 was provided. As a theme, the (apparently) banal and simple question was posed: "The region Vorderland - Feldkirch: What shall we do now?" In addition to a vision of stronger cohesiveness in the region, and to numerous substantive suggestions (for instance, on topics such as community-wide land management, regional recreational facilities, regional food, and regional information and public relations efforts), participants came up with two concrete projects to implement: First, an annual gathering of the towns (a "Regio-Café") where the general public and the politicians can jointly determine a regional Theme of the Year. Secondly, the establishment of an Outdoor Workout fitness trail in the region to promote physical activity and sport. This example from practice shows the potentials that lie dormant within the population, and that "only" need a container in which they can emerge.

In addition to the kinds of outcomes described above with regard to content and themes, the Citizens' Councils have a strong impact with regard to community education, as well as a personal impact on participants.

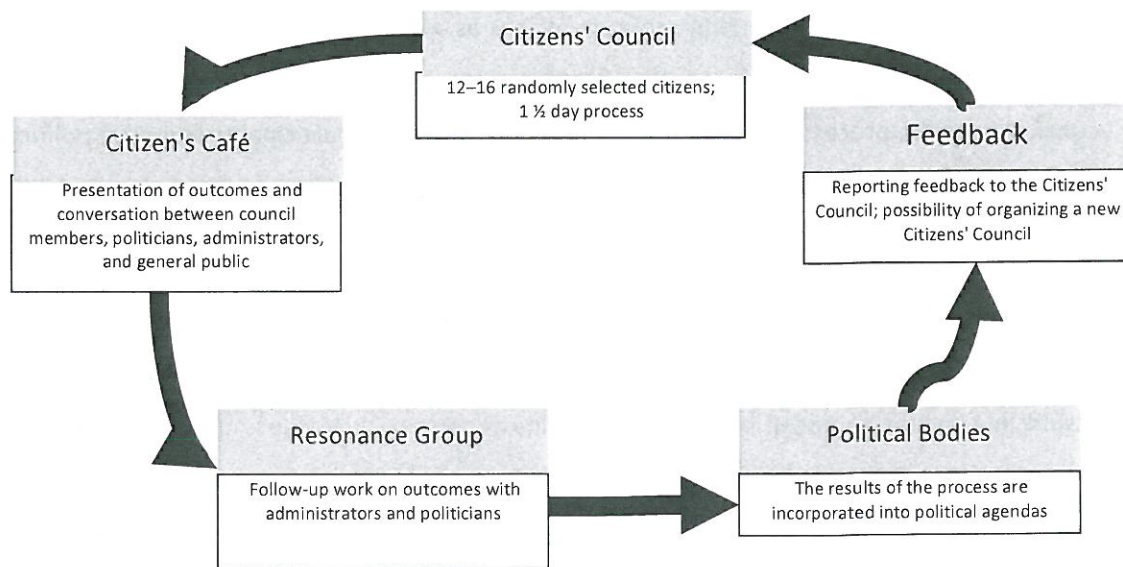
What are the characteristics of a Citizens' Council?

The Citizens' Council is at minimum a three-step process, consisting of the Citizens' Council itself, the Civic Café (which involves a public presentation and public conversations) and the Resonance Group, whose purpose is to feed back the findings of the Citizens'

Council to the political system. Additional elements, such as an informational evening during the preparatory stage, or working group meetings as part of the follow-up to the Citizens' Council, are also useful and can be considered as part of the planning process. The conclusion of the process is a response to the Citizens' Council participants from the political representatives and governmental administrators in the region, on how the Council's findings have been addressed thus far and what elements will be pursued further.

The participants of Citizens' Council are encouraged to explore issues and concerns of their choice during their one and a half days together. As the random selection process results in a diverse composition, the group is almost certain to choose issues that affect many people in the community. As the Citizens' Council explores these themes, they generate theories, perspectives, ideas for solutions, and recommendations. The DF method contributes significantly to advancing the conversation, while at the same time making it possible to deliberately explore the underlying challenges.

At least as important as having an effective Citizens' Council, is the integration of their outcomes with the larger political process. Those participating in the Council should not feel in the end that they have been working for a day and a half "for nothing"- instead, their role and influence within a larger ongoing process needs to be apparent. This creates a context where they can feel valued and recognized for their commitment. As a result of this positive experience, they are more willing to continue becoming involved and to share their experience with others.



Source: authors' own illustration

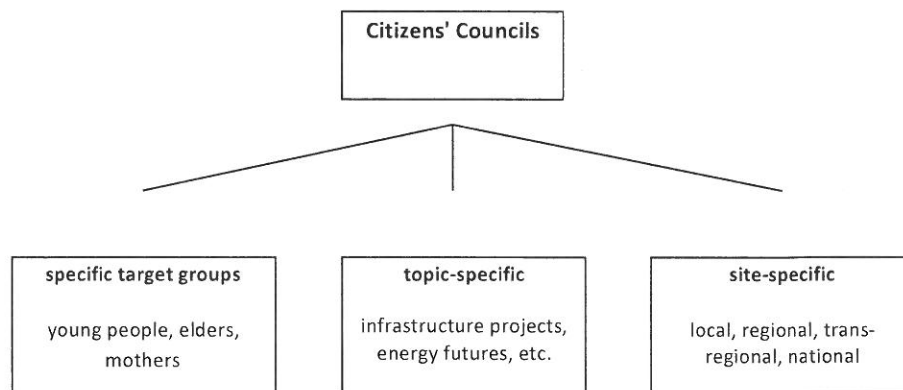
The Citizens' Council does not make political decisions, yet it still has a great impact within the community. Having their considerations and recommendations presented to the public, creates greater awareness within the community of the shared challenges and the responses that are needed. The Citizens' Council is a means to deal intensively with complex social problems. It creates a forum of communicative exchange and is also a step toward greater political education. Participating citizens are significantly expanding their field of vision and recognizing the complexity of social issues. They understand the necessity to set priorities and recognize the importance of working through particular issues. They are also developing social competencies through exposure to other viewpoints and opinions.

The aim is to encourage people, through their participation in the Citizens' Council, to become responsible for engaging with the challenges in their environment and begin searching for possible solutions. Often referred to as "empowerment", this is an essential element of social self-organization. Thus, the Citizens' Council is a living example of participatory democracy and points to a new path for cooperation between politicians, public administrators, and citizens. It has significant impact on citizen's identification with

their own communities, as well as developing a greater understanding of the challenges faced by politicians and public administrators.

Fields of application

Citizens' Councils can be carried out for a specific target group, for a particular subject, or for a particular geographical area.



Since 2006, in Vorarlberg and beyond (other states in Austria, the state of Baden-Württemberg in Germany, various parts of Switzerland and Liechtenstein) there have already been 60 Citizens' Councils that have been carried out in various towns, cities and regions, as well as at the state and federal level. Within the German-speaking world, the Citizens' Council has been implemented with greatest intensity in Vorarlberg. Topics that have been explored with Citizens' Councils include development issues within municipalities and cities, such as economic development projects (for example, projects to revitalize a downtown area or to safeguard local communities), projects for promoting a region or municipality, and urban development projects (for example, transportation or specific construction projects.) Other kinds of topics that have repeatedly come up include community coexistence within integrated areas, social capital and quality of life, and networks of commitment. A detailed overview of the Citizen's Councils that have taken place in Vorarlberg thus far can be found at : www.vorarlberg.at/beteiligung.

Conclusion and Summary

A Citizens' Council is an exciting opportunity to engage in high-quality thinking about significant social developments; through the component of the Citizen Cafes, it extends that involvement to a broader public. Through the Citizens' Council and Citizen Cafes, individuals are offered the opportunity to personally engage and participate in a constructive and straightforward manner in political life, without having to involve themselves in political partisanship.

When visiting the Citizens' Cafes, the constructive atmosphere is highly evident. Instead of disputes, conversations take place in a mostly calm and rational manner. Mutual appreciation predominates, the conversations are held at eye level, and there is room for different viewpoints.

To date, Citizens' Councils have taken place at different levels: local, regional, national, at the federal level, and internationally. The process has matured over the years, yet its development is still far from complete. Various potentials for further development in different directions are still largely untapped.

At the Office for Future-Related Issues, two issues are currently at the top of our list: How can an even wider public be involved in the process? And, how can we better counsel and support politicians regarding the application of public participation methods?

The latter question in particular points to an interesting development: While in the early years of public participation processes, our questions were primarily about finding the optimal methods to use and about optimizing our processes, it is becoming increasingly clear that today the bottleneck is less with the processes themselves, and instead with having the right attitude on the part of the sponsors. The best method is not worth much when it is applied with the wrong attitude, for example, if it degenerates into a means for gaining popularity.

Citizens' Councils seem to be a promising method that can help bridge the gap between government and the governed. The method works, but the essential requirement is for it to be applied with the right attitude. And this requires leaders who dare to formulate good

questions, and to invite citizens to think together and explore possible solutions.

To really take advantage of the opportunities and potential of participation, we need to develop a new vision and understanding of the role of political life. Our future depends less on heroes and doers, and more on good facilitators and hosts. In order to make good use of the rich treasures of diversity, as well as the wisdom of crowds, we especially need suitable spaces where great conversations are possible. Just complaining about politics and parties does not help us to move forward.

How may we best support our political leaders during this change process?

