

From community participation to organizational therapy? World Café and Appreciative Inquiry as research methods

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Abstract World Café (WC) and Appreciative Inquiry (AI) are two increasingly popular approaches to participatory research and policy-making that also frequently define themselves in relation to community development. They both seek to create environments in which participants' shared activity and inter-subjectivity enable positive responses to problems and challenges. WC and AI offer interesting and innovative approaches in research but present a number of problems within the field of community development. Several key issues are raised including the risk of imposing an interpretation of structural problems as 'misperceptions', a troubling and potentially stigmatizing interpretation of 'empowerment', and questionable assumptions about social change.

Introduction

This paper introduces and critiques World Café (WC) and Appreciative Inquiry (AI), two increasingly popular approaches to participatory research and policy-making. Both methods feature in the UK government-funded website www.peopleandparticipation.net and can be seen as representative of a new generation of participatory methods. WC (Brown, 2005) and AI (Cooperrider and Svivastva, 1987) are distinct but related, aiming to create settings in which participants' shared activity and inter-subjectivity enable positive responses to problems and challenges. Currently, however, the literature on WC and AI remains rather fragmented, concentrated either on dedicated websites or within subfields of organizational development and community development studies. The article discusses

why these approaches have become popular. While acknowledging that they are both interesting and innovative, I suggest some potential problems that WC and AI might create for the field of community development.

The article argues that WC and AI should be seen within the context of the 'participatory turn' in research and policy-making, and specifically, that they should be seen in relation to the rise of what I call the 'participation industry'. Because WC and AI define themselves in relation to community development and are found within community development settings, they are important for practitioners. The article raises several key issues for community development research and practice: first, that WC and AI risk imposing an interpretation of structural problems as 'misperceptions', secondly, that they carry with them a troubling and potentially stigmatizing interpretation of 'empowerment', and thirdly, that they depend upon questionable assumptions about social change, which have problematic implications. I believe that WC and AI are potentially useful techniques for community development practice; however, I am concerned that there is little critical appraisal of these methods and this article seeks to remedy that.

WC and AI today

WC and AI exist at the intersection of policy, research, and practice.¹ The two approaches are frequently linked; a recent textbook entitled *Appreciative Inquiry for Change Management* (Lewis *et al.*, 2008) includes discussion of WCs within its case study material. WC and AI are both methods of accessing what WC founder Juanita Brown (2005, p. v) calls 'the magic of collective wisdom', gathering information through structured group discussions to produce positive organizational change. In the case of WC this uses a 'café format', where participants discuss issues in groups sat around tables, moving on regularly to hold discussions with a new group of people. AI 'summits' involves more of a mix of formats, including one-to-one interviews as well as small and large group discussions (Whitney and Cooperrider, 2000), but the underlying premises and method of framing issues are similar. AI-like WC concentrates on asking questions that will produce positive, constructive responses.

While WC was developed in the 1990s by Brown and David Isaacs, AI was developed in the 1980s by David L. Cooperrider and Suresh Svivastva. Both approaches seek to move beyond 'a certain dynamic of problem-solving and blame assigning' (World Café, undated) toward

1 For more information on WC and AI, consult <http://www.theworldcafe.com/> and <http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/>

learning from what currently works well (Cooperrider and Whitney, 1999). Both WC and AI depict themselves as social constructivist. Cooperrider and Whitney (1999, p. 2) describe AI as 'a methodology that takes the idea of the *social construction* of reality to its positive extreme', while Brown (2005, p. 24) approvingly quotes social entrepreneur Lynne Twist as saying 'we don't really live in the world. We live in the conversation we have about the world. And over *that* we have absolute, omnipotent power'. Hence for both, how people view the world is crucial and this is what can be changed through structured discussions.

Reflections on WC provided in Brown's (2005) key text demonstrate the method has spread to diverse sectors; supporters range from CEOs of major companies to government ministers and senior public sector managers, to academics, journalists, and founders of think-tanks. UK organisation EM(IC)* communications uses WCs within corporate environments including recently Renault Trucks.² WC has been used in countries across the Global South by the UN's International Fund for Agricultural Development, and the WC book and website provide numerous examples of use across the globe and across sectors. Similarly the AI Commons (<http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/>) features many examples of AI in diverse situations; one key story is the transformation of Brazilian company nutrimental to survive in the marketplace, with success markers being raised productivity and lowered absenteeism. A more recent non-profit example is the charity World Vision International, which launched its Big Goals Process at an AI summit in Bangkok.

The participatory turn

WC and AI must be seen within the context of the 'participatory turn' in research and policy-making. Over the past few decades, the language of research has changed: researchers no longer study 'subjects'; rather, we enrol 'participants'. The roots of this shift can be traced through the variety of recent challenges to social research³ and social policy. From the 1960s and 1970s onward, service users were increasingly challenging the provision of social welfare and the aims of social policy (e.g. Newnes *et al.*, 1999). Influenced by such movements, social researchers from a range of disciplines began to argue that dominant forms of knowledge marginalize oppressed groups and silence their experience-based forms of knowledge (e.g. Ehrenreich and English, 1978; Oakley and Oakley, 1979;

2 See <http://www.eminternalcomms.com/whatwedo.html>

3 Defined by the UK Economic and Social Research Council as 'the study of society and the manner in which people behave and impact on the world around us'; http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/what_is_soc_sci/index.aspx

Oliver, 1990). A shift toward more qualitative, inclusive methods occurred across a range of cognate fields. Sociologists began to argue over whether our methods can – and should – empower our research participants, and what such empowerment would mean (Aldred, 2008).

Simultaneously, governments in many Western countries were moving to the right, either through the election of conservative governments (e.g. the UK and USA in 1979 and 1981) or through the adoption of policies seeking to curtail the size and/or cost of the welfare state (e.g. Sweden and France in the 1980s under social democratic governments). This was a period of global retrenchment in which developing countries were experiencing harsh cuts in social services, due to the debt crisis and subsequent structural adjustment programs imposed by the International Monetary Fund. Necessarily this context has shaped the development of participatory research and policy-making.

While many user movements had roots in the New Left, like the New Right they were critical of Old Welfare bureaucracies. Critiques became entangled as dominant ideologies increasingly cast the welfare state and welfare professionals as a social problem, not a social solution. For governments seeking to cut welfare spending, the lay critique of professional knowledge promised to rein in expensive and oppositional professionals. Lay knowledge could become consumer power, and challenge entrenched ‘provider interests’. This re-imagining of the lay citizen as a consumer choosing between alternative products⁴ was attractive to administrations seeking to break up highly unionized public sector organizations, and contract services out to cheaper voluntary- or private-led agencies.

As service users were re-imagined as ‘consumers’, techniques of market research spread into public service provision. UK hospitals routinely carry out patient satisfaction surveys to supplement ‘hard’ clinical outcomes⁵. But there is a methodological tension between approaches informed by consumerism and those more influenced by user movements. The latter’s critique of official knowledge implies patient satisfaction surveys may be as problematic as any other expert-controlled methodology. Satisfaction scores tend to be high, yet this may primarily express the context in which information is demanded. Service users may fear that negative responses will lead to cuts in services; like Arnstein (1969) they may see this type of consultation as mere tokenism. WC and AI, whatever their faults, go far beyond a consumerist consultation. One way of understanding their popularity is that

4 Of course, notions of consumerism and citizenship are multiple and contested.

5 See <http://www.spirehealthcare.com/Treatment-Information/Hospital-performance-information/>, <http://www.christie.nhs.uk/everyone/surveys/patients.aspx> for two examples from the private and public sector.

they form part of a reaction against tokenistic forms of participation, understanding individuals as multi-dimensional and socially rooted beings.

The institutionalization of participation

Community development primarily creates academic knowledge through action research, which 'is emancipatory, it leads not just to new practical knowledge, but to new abilities to create knowledge' (Reason and Bradbury, 2008, p. 5). According to the UK government, community development practices play 'a special role in overcoming poverty and disadvantage, knitting society together at the grass roots and deepening democracy' (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006, p. 13). WC and AI are important for community development practitioners for two reasons: first, because they are being used for community development purposes, and secondly, because proponents explicitly relate their approach to methods used in community development research and practice. For example, Cooperrider and Whitney (1999, p. 3) cite Bushe's description of AI as 'the most important advance in action research in the past decade'.

In particular, WC and AI practitioners contrast their approaches with participatory action research (PAR), which provides community development practitioners with a bottom-up, activist perspective on community. PAR begins with a problem and attempts to solve it, engaging local people in various stages of the research (for example, as lay researchers). While the professional researchers may cede significant control over the project, they gain the opportunity to study knowledge in action. This accords with the approach taken by Kurt Lewin, who stated that to understand what exists, we should try to change it. After becoming embedded in Latin American research theory and practice (see e.g. Freire, 1996), PAR has become popular in Western community development contexts, and remains widely used there.

Lammerink (1998, p. 344) explains that PAR seeks to respond 'to concrete needs of a group, a social sector or a community. It aims at finding solutions to concrete problems and conflicts'. Thus a PAR approach in East London might work with a particular group or community (e.g. a tenants' association, or housing association residents) to address a specific issue (e.g. the lack of recreational facilities on the estate). The researchers would identify themselves with the tenants or their association and work with them to understand the causes of the problem and develop potential solutions. However, one practical difficulty is that the lay groups involved are unlikely to be able to fund research.

By contrast, the official sanctioning of 'participation' has created a growing interest in participatory research reaching high up into the political system (e.g. in the UK, Blunkett, 2003). A new industry has been born,

including a new layer of ‘participation professionals’ mediating between ‘lay people’ and policy-makers or service providers (from consultancy firms to ‘Participation Managers’ in specific organizations). Companies, charities, government and local authorities, public sector organizations, and funding councils increasingly *do* fund participatory research and policy-making, which has become much more mainstream. However, some funders may be unwilling to support what they may perceive as a political or adversarial approach counter to their interests as service providers.

In this context the ‘participation industry’ could be seen as developing its own organizational ideology, the basis for which is articulated by Brown (2005). She argues that the fields of organizational development and community development are moving closer together as ‘[c]ollaborative approaches in community organization which include those “at the top” are replacing adversarial models’ (Brown, undated). Businesses and social movement organizations are, Brown argues, converging in terms of organizational structure and therefore ‘what works’ for each is becoming more similar. This, Brown argues, is why community development is becoming less antagonistic and more consensual, and new participatory research methodologies are more appropriate to this new context. Additionally, the approach chimes with a shift toward a more ‘businesslike’ or ‘social entrepreneurial’ approach among third sector or civil society organizations.

Offering a more consensual, positive approach to problematic situations, WC and AI can speak to the needs of the participation industry and its political supporters. Rather than focusing upon the needs of a particular group or community, WC and AI offer to involve a range of players to find solutions that are ‘win-win all the way’ (Brown, 2005, p. 31). Boyd and Bright (2007, p. 1020) state that ‘AI begins with the premise that communities are centers of relatedness, and that the extension of strengths within communities invokes a reserve of capacity to reshape the images of community such that previously viewed challenges can be confronted in radically different ways’. This fluid concept of relatedness replaces the more antagonistic power relationships found in classic PAR methodology. Accordingly, WC and AI attempt to provide positive, productive working relationships between apparently opposed groups.

Like other research methods, WC and AI will construct distinctive *versions* of ‘lay views’ rather than ‘lay views’ per se. At least implicitly, WC and AI practitioners tend to accept this. For Akdere (2005, p. 25) ‘AI distinguishes itself from critical modes of research by its deliberately affirmative assumptions about people, organizations, and relationships’. In some cases this may overstate inter-group coherence and concordance: although Akdere says she ‘acknowledges possible internal group conflicts’, (p. 30) she also states that ‘[i]n some cultures, such as the Somalian culture,

women have different needs and responsibilities at home, in the community, and in the workplace' (p. 29). While understanding cultural diversity is important, there is the danger of minimizing disagreements over women's needs and responsibilities within both immigrant and majority cultures. Arguably in many cultures women's (and men's) needs and responsibilities are constructed in ways that are neither feasible nor coherent (e.g. the 'Superwoman' who effortlessly manages home, family, and work). Community development practitioners need to be aware that using WC and AI might lead to the over-stating of consensuality, with potentially problematic implications.

(Mis)perceiving power?

WC and AI ground themselves in contemporary psychology; both the psychology of organizations and the more individualistic positive psychology. This psychological background provides the basis for claims that they create distinctively valuable processes and reactions, by contrast with other approaches such as PAR. WC and AI proponents make trans-social validity claims, arguing that WC and AI enable a participatory approach valid across different societies, and within different organizational/cultural settings. For example, Tan and Brown (2005, p. 87) state that 'the [World Café] process travels so well and easily [that] it has spread to departments and organizations across Singapore where people are tailoring the process to address their own important questions'.

Many practitioners believe that WC and AI are inherently social constructionist (van der Haar and Hosking, 2004). This is because they focus upon intervening in the processes by which, proponents argue, collective perceptions shape our social world. Struggling organizations (and communities) may be locked into negative views of themselves, unable to break out and imagine a more positive future. Yet, the use of the term 'misperception' by writers such as Elliott (1999) suggests that the social constructionism involved is of a 'weak' rather than a 'strong' type, in other words that some perceptions are more accurate than others. Elliott argues that negative views are due largely to collective misperceptions, and that if apparently opposed groups listen to each other such misperceptions may be overcome and replaced by more accurate views. The implication is that society is basically harmonious, if we would overcome entrenched negativity to allow diverse voices and experiences space to speak.

Such approaches have interesting similarities to the positive psychology paradigm (Boyd and Bright 2007). Positive psychology pinpoints individuals' irrational beliefs as a key root cause of mental distress (Layard *et al.*, 2006). It has created the 'Happiness Industry', whose best known product

is Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT). CBT seeks to increase individual happiness through training individuals to move away from negative thought patterns. Could WC and AI be seen as an application of CBT on an organizational or even societal level? Certainly, practitioners such as Brown stress that WC is not therapy for individual participants and should not be seen as such. But might it be conceptualized as a form of collective therapy aimed at changing collective thought patterns?

Indeed, Boyd and Bright (2007, p. 1033) do speak of AI as a collective therapy, saying that 'AI helps prevent excessive negative thought patterns and energy that could thwart the group's ability to reach desired outcomes and social changes'. Criticisms of positive psychology may thus be applicable to WC and/or AI. Positive psychology is claimed to focus on the negative effects of irrational beliefs to the exclusion of structural factors contributing to beliefs (Ferguson, 2008). This may at best obscure structural inequalities and at worst collude in them. However, some of those associated with positive psychology do address structural causes of unhappiness, such as James (2007). Wilkinson (2005), whose work has similar psychosocial themes, believes that while the psychosocial effects of envy may be unpleasant and destructive, the solution is a reduction in inequality rather than envy.

This would imply that Elliott's 'misperceptions' may be accurate or at least logical – if damaging – perceptions of structurally rooted problems. Attempting to remove such problems through collective or individual therapy could thus be seen as practically, theoretically, and ethically problematic. If community development practitioners progressively adopt positive approaches such as WC and AI, the implications are troubling: do they risk telling participants that their organization or community is 'really' harmonious, and that their experiences of exclusion or oppression represent misperceptions? And if so, would this represent aligning community perceptions to those of the participation industry?

The problem of empowerment

One key justification for participation is that it will 'empower' communities, and community development practitioners have grappled with this official endorsement and its potentially problematic implications for practice (Craig and Mayo, 1995). Empowerment is a contested topic which may be valued and interpreted differently by different groups (Israel *et al.*, 1998). Empowerment in terms of service provision could mean residents providing services themselves, such as setting up a social enterprise that will clean estates. Alternatively, it could mean residents having a greater voice in how services are provided. It could mean 'participatory budgeting', residents collectively deciding how money is spent locally.

In terms of research, community empowerment could mean setting the research agenda, deciding how it should be operationalized, carrying out the research, interpreting and analyzing the results, and/or evaluating the research project. In a context where policy-focused research increasingly involves some rhetorical claim to empowerment and/or participation, it is unclear exactly where the line should be drawn.

Perhaps unsurprisingly given their psychological underpinnings, WC and AI practitioners cite empowerment as one of the key benefits of the approaches. Boyd and Bright (2007, p. 1033) argue that AI can empower individuals and even systems, encouraging self-reliance, and self-confidence. They argue that it 'requires a participative environment for all stakeholders; therefore, it helps to empower those who do not typically have voice in organizations. In addition, groups, organizations, and community systems can attain various degrees of empowerment. When individuals and groups participate in deficit-focused interventions [for example, problem-solving approaches such as PAR], they may unconsciously develop states of learned helplessness that reduce their ability to envision a greater future'.

Clearly, this is a directive approach, which argues that problem-solving or deficit-focused interventions have negative effects, potentially leading to psychological dependency. Therefore groups, organizations, and communities are encouraged to discuss issues in positive terms ('When has the tenants' organization been really successful?' rather than 'What problems has the tenants' association encountered?') This shift in terms of issue construction is intended to generate a search for the key characteristics of successful experiences and events, with a view to replicating these in future activities. Yet the dock may be so heavily rigged against the tenants' association that its rare successes happen only when exceptional and unrepeatable levels of resources are deployed by or for the organization. An analogy might be made with government ministers fond of suggesting that because 10 percent of schools in deprived areas achieve excellent results, that 100 percent of schools in deprived areas can do so. However, just because constraints do not *inevitably* block success does not mean that they are less real, and so practitioners should be wary of approaches that 'empower' participants through telling them that their successes are in principle always repeatable.

The attempt to encourage empowerment and discourage dependency can be seen in Rose's terms (1999) as 'responsibilisation' – the attempt to create responsible, self-governing citizens, who will in ways acceptable to governing agencies and who will be judged responsible if their efforts fail. The attempt to empower implies that some people (generally, those living in poverty and/or members of minority groups: Cheong *et al.*, 2007) need

help in making their voice heard. This can slip into a deficit model, where people are seen as deprived or excluded *because* individually or collectively, they lack 'capacity' (Craig, 2007). But does 'building capacity' mean equipping groups to better advocate for neighborhood interests, or does it mean equipping them with skills to provide local services? The two may be compatible, but they may not be, particularly as volunteers frequently are short of resources and have to ration their activities accordingly.

The focus on 'empowerment' raises the question of how we value 'empowerment' vis-à-vis tangible goals achieved, and who decides this? Does it matter if organizational leaders take data from WC or AI processes and act on it as they wish (implementing some ideas, not necessarily the most popular ones)? Or is the positive effect of the process divorced from the implementation of the ideas expressed within the process? In situations where institutional legitimacy and trust are low, this may be a common worry of those involved. Boyd and Bright (2007, pp. 1031-2) report on how an AI Summit 'seemed to facilitate a condition where members realized that they, collectively, were in control of the organization's destiny'. But were they 'really' in control? Or was this feeling a temporary phenomenon, providing a bounded space for flouting convention? Should community development practitioners encourage processes that raise people's sense of control, if life returns to normal on Monday morning? Or do WC and AI have more long-lasting positive effects?

Where organizations use WC and AI methods, their chief executives are unlikely to be bound by any ideas suggested during these meetings. Perhaps practitioners should build in greater levels of democratic decision-making, particularly where public spending is involved. There are a range of participatory methods available, and some like citizens' juries do involve a greater reliance on formal democratic techniques. WC and AI allow for broader participation (being part of a citizens' jury is onerous and time-consuming, which may put off many potential participants) but may be less likely to create longer-term communities of practice. There is a need for community development practitioners to critically evaluate the plethora of new research approaches available and to think about combining them in ways that might overcome particular weaknesses, like those discussed here.

New society, new methodology?

According to Elliot, the rise of approaches such as WC and AI reflect profound shifts in social structure. Referring to Goleman's best-selling book *Emotional Intelligence*, he argues that (1999, p. 61) 'the rise of information-based industries, the collapse of hierarchies, the processes of delayering and

the rise of networking as a normal mode of production have all served to put emphasis on the task-centredness of quality relationships'. Similarly, the website of World Café consultants EM(IC*) argues that 'the transactional relationship between employee and company becomes redundant. Now, it's about people and it's about communities'. Brown (2001, p. 3) talks of assisting 'senior executives as they struggle to embrace the challenges of unprecedented uncertainty and the coming of the Knowledge Era'. More specifically (undated) she describes 'shared vision, empowerment, and continuous improvement as key elements in organizational strategy development'.

This, then, is the key socio-structural claim underlying methods such as WC and AI; society has shifted and organizations must change too. There are similarities to contemporary management theories such as Lean Manufacturing, where organizations appear flatter and more decentralized. Indeed, Brown states that the WC should not be used in overly hierarchical organizations where communication is one-directional, while Elliott sees AI as providing something akin to Habermas's ideal speech situation, where ideology and status are sidelined to allow free conversational space. Brown (2005) argues that WCs work because the conversations encouraged within them are 'natural' and represent a common human experience; an open and learning dialog between equals. She compares this with the dehumanization of 'subjects' in traditional research, where a dialog of equals is to be feared and avoided. But *is* equal conversation 'natural'? One might argue that a more common human experience (in work, education, or at home) is subordination and constraint. Thus a critical question about WC and AI might be whether, in particular instances, they challenge existing social relations, and to what end.

The claim that the socio-structural conjunction favors WC and AI is in tension with the argument that these methods travel freely and can be used in many different cultures. Moreover, the claim that organizational hierarchies have collapsed might well be challenged. Many social theorists (e.g. Clarke, 2006) describe instead a reconstitution of power relationships based around markets or around softer forms of governance. Lean Manufacturing's use of work teams could be seen as manipulating peer pressure to meet organizational goals, increasing control over employees through an apparently participatory process. Potentially, processes such as WC and AI could be critiqued as representing similar forms of control, where individuals are placed in an environment where it is hard for them to air possibly justified grievances.

This raises the question of whether learning, democratic organizations are necessarily more successful. This is far from an obvious point, as seems to be assumed by some authors in this tradition (and of course, it

depends on the criteria by which one measures ‘success’). Cooperrider, Whitney, and Stavros (2003, p. 3) state: ‘Appreciative Inquiry . . . involves systematic discovery of what gives a system “life” when it is most effective and capable in economic, ecological, and human terms. AI involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system’s capacity to heighten positive potential.’ This is to assume that the economic, the ecological, and the human act in concert, or at least are not cast in contradiction to one another. However, other writers (e.g. James, 2007) argue that contemporary societies are structured to set the economic, the ecological, and the human against one another. Managers of corporations are legally bound to maximize shareholder value, even where this damages other aspects of the ‘triple bottom line’, while public sector bodies are encouraged to act in similar fashion. Within cultures dominated by shareholder value, can WC and AI change existing organizational goals? Or do they become shaped by these existing goals?

Finally, even if there is a tendency toward decentralization and network-based societies, existing organizations still tend to be structured along bureaucratic and/or market models. Given that these are relatively undemocratic, how much do status and power differentials between participants matter, within the WC or AI methodology? Clearly the micro-environment within which an event takes place shapes it; however, there are likely to be structural, cultural, and other factors outside the event’s micro-environment which are also part of its context. If the method is neutral toward these meso-environmental contexts, this raises questions over its validity, just as anti-positivist critiques of surveys would highlight the extent to which apparently valid results may be heavily dependent upon the research instrument itself.

Practitioners need to be aware of the questionable social-scientific premises underlying WC and AI, and to interrogate them with respect to the ideas generated through WC and AI. One pertinent example comes from the World Café handbook (Brown, 2005, p. 32), where a global pharmaceutical company uses the process to increase sales. A participant from the Stroke Recovery Association is reported as saying ‘You have a great product that prevents strokes. Why can’t a part of your larger mission be to stand for no more strokes in all of Canada?’ Following this contribution ‘[t]he room just lit up. It was like a volcano. All of a sudden, there was a feeling of “Oh, yes, that’s it!” Now we’re seeing patients, physicians, and hospitals as directly linked to our contribution to society’. While this story is told as a positive example, I found it troubling. Such a motto could be an immensely powerful marketing tool for the company’s drug, to the possible exclusion of other methods of stroke prevention (e.g. diet, exercise). Within a Café organized by Big Pharma, how can less powerful

groups have the ability to shape the agenda – or will their ideas become co-opted into a corporate agenda?

Conclusion

This paper has analyzed the rise of WC and AI, setting them within the context of participatory methods and of action research. It has raised three key issues for the use of these methods within community development practice, related to the concealment of structural inequalities, problematic notions of empowerment, and implications of the social-scientific justification for WC and AI including the co-option of critique. The methods may be useful tools for community development practitioners, and supplement other approaches such as PAR, but there needs to be more critical investigation of their premises and their potential effects. In particular, there is concern that this method may silence dissenting voices and create the perception of empowerment and control where it may not exist. I would suggest that community development practitioners using WC and AI consider carefully how the methods might best be used to minimize such potential problems: for example, it might be best to use these methods only where there are limited power inequalities among those participating, or to supplement them with more formal democratic mechanisms.

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