

Analyzing discursive relationships during the Ample Opportunity Workshops

The transcription was an imperfect process at best. There were a number of significant technical problems. This was further complicated by the mass of transcription that was undertaken. Different people transcribed different texts, although each roundtable was transcribed by a single individual. The decision to transcribe also raised a number of questions.

- 1) Should we transcribe in a word for word verbatim style? After extensive discussion we decided that word for word translation was an important intent, although we needed to make allowances for clarity and concise presentation.
- 2) Should we edit out the conflict that occurs when people enter into passionate discussion? Initially we did not edit out the conflict. We eventually changed this decision, editing out the unnecessary argumentative language that seemed excessive or berating. We did our best to retain the often passionate and relevant content that may have led to the conflict.
- 3) Should we clarify misperceptions and questions that couldn't be answered in the roundtables? In a few cases we decided to add specific references.
- 4) What should we do about technological glitches creating gaps in the recordings? When we faced technological problems we considered the import of the discussion based on notes taken at the table. In some cases we went back into the text by calling community members and advisors to clarify important items missing from the record.

For the purpose of this final document, the STUDIO team worked closely with the graphic designer to develop a presentation that would enable some inquiry into the relative quality of the conversations which occurred in the *Ample Opportunity* roundtable discussions. We decided to break our discussants into three specific groups: project team, community and government. Our designer devised a graphic layout that would allow the casual reader to clearly see the relationships between groups during the discussion (who was talking to whom.) As we developed this formatting technique it began to occur to us that we could also graph the participation of the groups by counting the number of lines of text for each group involved in the event. It is important to note that these analytical techniques are not based on a controlled scientific experiment, but are an analysis after the fact. The relative truth and import of this analysis is mitigated by four issues:

- 1) Each group had a different set of leaders and discussants;
- 2) The enumerative process of counting text lines ignores the difference between a person who speaks succinctly and a person who wanders in their presentation;
- 3) The relationship between the total attendance and roundtable attendance was not confirmed on site;
- 4) Roundtable three, of the fourth dialogue, was an anomaly in the process. Concurrent dialogue created significant complications in the transcription process. Ultimately the transcript could only focus on one of the three sub-groups. With these qualifications clearly in mind, we feel the analysis provides a means to consider the cause and effect of our program as we attempted to enable public dialogue.

Looking at Table 1 below, we see that project team participation increased as advisors and research assistants returned for subsequent events. The community line moves up and down illustrating the decreased attendance at the second event and a dip in attendance at the final event. (The transcription problems for table three of the Sustainable Open Space event may contribute to this perception.) The government participation increased in a steady curve with growth through the final event.

Table 1: Participation by event

