

Organizational Capacity Building Through Empowerment Planning: Lessons from East St Louis, Memphis, and Sicily



Session Participants

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East St. Louis, Illinois



From All-American City to Beirut by the River

- In 1959, ESL was designated an All-American City by NML and Look Magazine
- Between 1960 and 1980, the city's lost 3/4s of its businesses – 12,000 well-paid industrial jobs
- By 1990, unemployment was 31%, poverty was 42% , and ESL had the highest violent crime rate in the US
- Prompting a HUD Official to refer to ESL as “America’s Soweto”



Just Another “Rust Belt City”

- Devastated by a combination of deindustrialization, suburbanization, and public and private disinvestment
- Whose residents suffered from what William J. Wilson called a new and more virulent form of American poverty
- Dominant urban policy approach towards severely distressed communities was Roger Starr’s “urban triage” or “planned shrinkage” – withdrawing resources from communities thought to represent “terminal cases” of urban decline (Necropolis)



“Wherever human beings are concerned, trend is not destiny.”

Rene Dubos

Birth of the East St Louis Action Research Project (ESLARP)

- Emerson Park women decided to transform the area surrounding their children's child care center – Result: Shugue Park
- Undertook the development of a comprehensive plan that won an AICP National Award but generated no local investment
- Residents and students launch volunteer cleanup of illegal dump sites without funding
- Moved on to organize volunteer scrape-up, paint-up of elders' homes
- Established a linked deposit program to support moderate rehab of "at risk" homes



Building Upon Initial Successes

- Formed a Habitat-like “infill housing” initiative
- Established the ESL Farmers Market
- Secured an extension of the Metrolink into East St. Louis
- Completed the Parsons Place Development Project
- Established Youth Build Charter School and Neighborhood College
- Re-opened the Katherine Dunham Centers for Arts and Humanities



Citizen Participation Techniques

- Formed a representative Steering Committee of local stakeholders
- Initiated an aggressive community media campaign
- Undertook several physical conditions surveys
- Conducted movers and shakers interviews
- Pursued door to door interviews with residents
- Organized monthly data analysis meetings
- Culminating in a well-attended Neighborhood Summit



Social Inventions for Citizen Participation/Empowerment

Adoption of “Ready, Fire, Aim” approach to community planning – undertaking meaningful action projects throughout the planning process to overcome residents’ skepticism regarding the possibilities of change



Paint-up, scrape-up work weekends



Construction of Illinois Avenue Playground



Development of the ESL Farmers Market

Establishment of the ESL Neighborhood College

- We are not even the flea on the tail of this dog – *Richard Settle, EPDC*
- We want similar training as your graduate students are receiving
- Decision to create the neighborhood college
- 200 ESL residents complete 8 non-credit courses on the fundamentals of bottom-up, bottom-sideways planning
- Classes cover community organizing, non-profit management, grantsmanship, resident-led crime prevention



**First class on direct action
organizing – 15 expected, 35 attend.**

Key Outcomes of this Social Invention

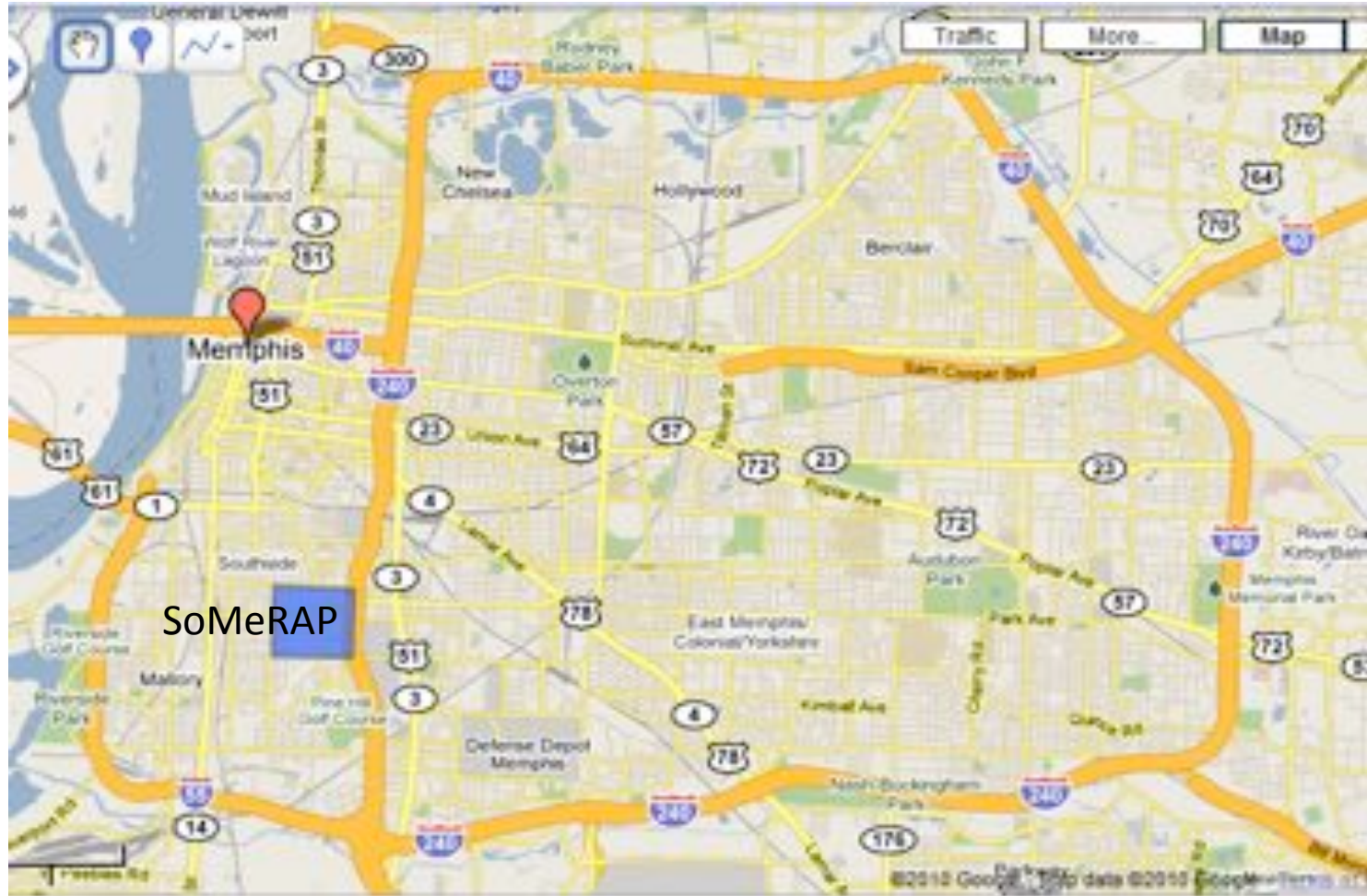
- \$40 million in improvements
- Ended population and income losses
- Encouraged organizing in other East St. Louis neighborhoods
- Popularized “empowerment approach” to resident-led revitalization planning
- Led to successful replication in other severely distressed urban communities
- Provided a transformative professional education for hundreds of planning and design students who have gone on to become key “opinion leaders” in the fields of affordable housing and community development



South Memphis, Tennessee



South Memphis: The South's First Garden City?



From Garden City to Necropolis



What Happened to S. Memphis

- Slowly integrated in the Post-War Period
- A very desirable neighborhood through the early 1970s
- Rapidly destabilized by loss of manufacturing, shift in mode of transportation, accelerated suburbanization (Post-King assassination), loss of retail, and pervasive residential and commercial red-lining

The Community's Future Further Complicated by Public Policies

- Failure to maintain the public infrastructure in older residential neighborhoods
- Focus on brick and mortar investment (Housing) with a lack of attention on economic development
- Economic development focused on mega-projects and “hoped for” trickle down
- Embrace of auto-oriented transportation (Ringling ourselves to death – I240 and I269)

South Memphis Circa 1990: A Perfect Example of Wilson's Truly Disadvantaged

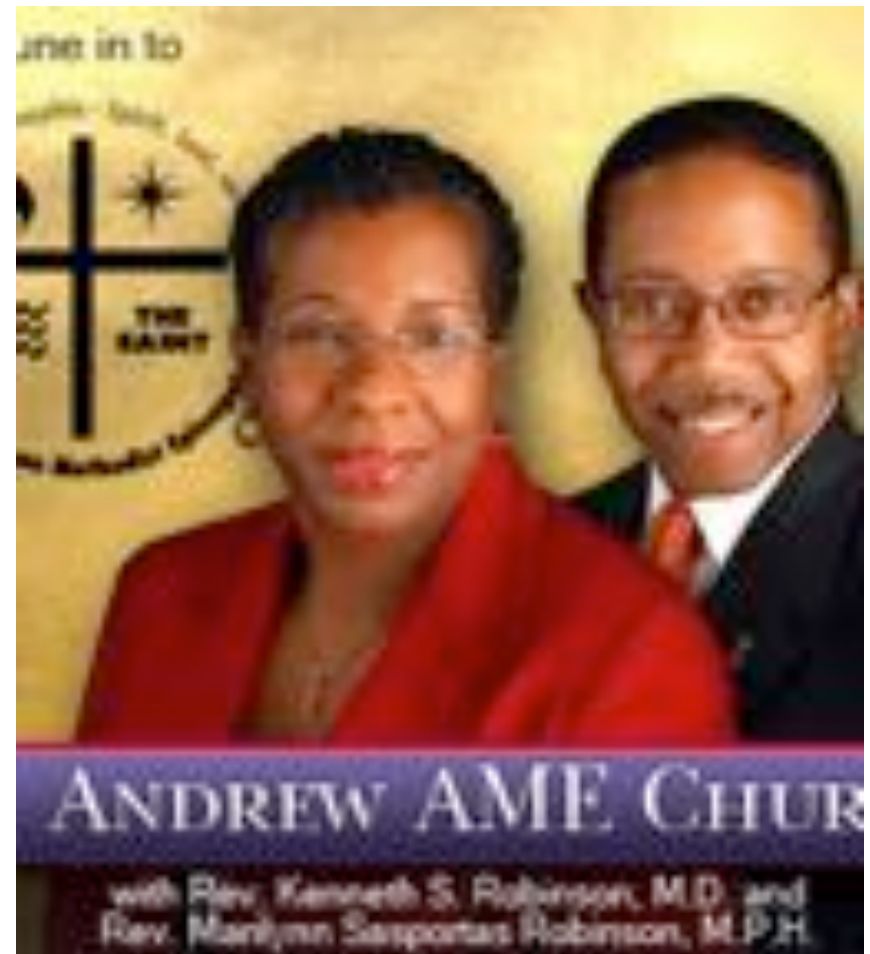
- Unemployment approaching 30%
- Poverty exceeding 60%
- Vacant (problem) properties at 30%
- Abandoned industrial, commercial, and residential buildings at 25%
- Highest school suspension and expulsion rate in the city (43% of high school students finish)
- Frighteningly high violent crime rate

What Observers Failed to Notice: Life Beneath the Surface!

- Extraordinary upswing in citizen organizing: open spaces, crime, youth, housing. etc.
- Increasingly engaged African American faith communities (Perkins' CCDA)
- Growing connections between local community and nearby universities
- Rich cultural life: STAX – Otis, Isaac, Sam and Dave, Rufus, Karla, Mavis, Booker T.; and Hi-Records – Willie Mitchell and Reverend Al Green

Enter the Reverend Robinsons

- AME Bishop James Bryant assigns the Robinsons to St. Andrew in an attempt to save a former flagship church that was on life support
- These two remarkable co-pastors rebuild the church by serving the physical, social, and spiritual needs of the community



Saint Andrews' Prescription

- Resurrected Ernestine Rivers Child Center
- Created a Family Life Center: health, wellness, education and jobs
- Established Circles of Success Learning Academy
- Organized The WORKS Inc. CDC – Counseling, Rehab, Construction, ED



Photo by Heather Had
have a sing-along at Mosholu Monte
Center's newest annex.



Success, YES! Moving the Dial, No!

- Significant economic and community development successes
- Congregations grows from 150 to 1700
- National recognition
- Still, overall community conditions continued to deteriorate
- The pastors felt the need to increase the scale of the church's efforts



The
POVERTY
A Call to Conscience *TOUR*

The Birth of SoMeRAP

- Rev. Robinson calls the University of Memphis President
- Presents an ambitious goal for comprehensive community transformation
- Describe your team!
- Call back when you have 10 churches, call back when you have 20 churches
- Result: Formation of a broad-based Sponsoring Committee for Community Change called SoMeRAP



Determining the Need - Mixed Methods

Patrick Geddes (Father of Modern Town Planning)

“Survey Before Plan”

- Oral history
- Archival research
- Demographic analysis
- Community mapping
- Neighborhood documentation
- Physical conditions surveys
- Movers and shakers interviews
- Focus groups
- Resident interviews
- Listening posts
- Community visioning
- Neighborhood summit

All used to gather data and build the base

Survey gives S. Memphis neighbors a voice in future revitalization efforts
By Linda Moore, Memphis Commercial Appeal
Sunday, March 22, 2009



Overall Development Goal

Transforming South Memphis into the region's premier neighborhood of choice by dramatically improving the overall quality of life through a resident-led and managed comprehensive community development strategy

Specific Development Objectives

- Improve access to **primary health care** services (No local providers, 60% uninsured)
- Insure access to high quality, affordable, and culturally appropriate **foods** (No full service market for 3 miles)
- Expand quality **housing** options, especially for low-income renters (Recent emphasis has been on home ownership)

Development Objectives II

- **Expand living wage employment and entrepreneurial opportunities** for local residents (\$156 m in HOPE VI, < 20 jobs)
- Support resident efforts to reduce the incidence of **violent street crime** (Address lack of treatment, jobs, and re-entry programs)
- Enhance the **beauty**, safety, and functionality of the public realm to encourage investment
- Promote **alternative transportation** options for local residents

The Peoples' Plan for Building a More Vibrant, Sustainable and Just South Memphis

- Involved nearly 1,000 residents
- Endorsed by more than two dozen local institutions
- Won State APA Award for Excellence
- Rejected by Housing and Community Development Commissioner – The City plans for its neighborhoods!



Organizing the Campaign

- Organizational endorsements
- Resident petitions
- Letters to the editor
- Press conference
- Individual Council Meetings
- Major City Hall Turnouts
- Result: 13 to 0 passage of the plan
- Adopted as city-wide best practice



Food Desert

An area with limited access to quality retail food stores offering a well-rounded selection of foods, including fresh fruit, vegetables, meat, and dairy products.

Addressing Food Insecurity in South Memphis



- Community Gardens
- Community Supported Agriculture
- Farmers Market
- Local Grocery Stores
- Transportation Program
- Food Policy Advocacy

Farmers Market Steering Committee

The People and Organizations that made the SoMe Market happen

Sponsoring Organization(s)

Representatives of an established
Farmers Market

Residents

Representatives from local non-
profits and churches

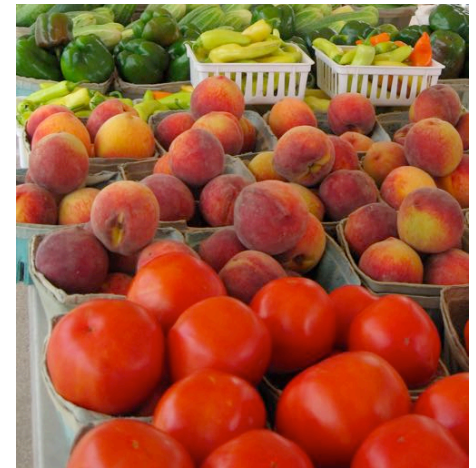
Representative of Food Policy
Council

Representative of Healthy
Memphis Common Table



Getting Started - Farmers Market Basics I

- Establish the need for improved food access (Plan and Retail Study)
- Form Farmers Market Steering Committee
- Determine Local/State Laws
- Pursue Market Design and Siting



Getting Started - Farmers Market Basics II

- Find a Location
- Develop Market Policies and Rules
- Undertake Vendor/Farmer Recruitment
- Prepare the Site/Secure Approvals
- Mobilize Volunteers to Staff

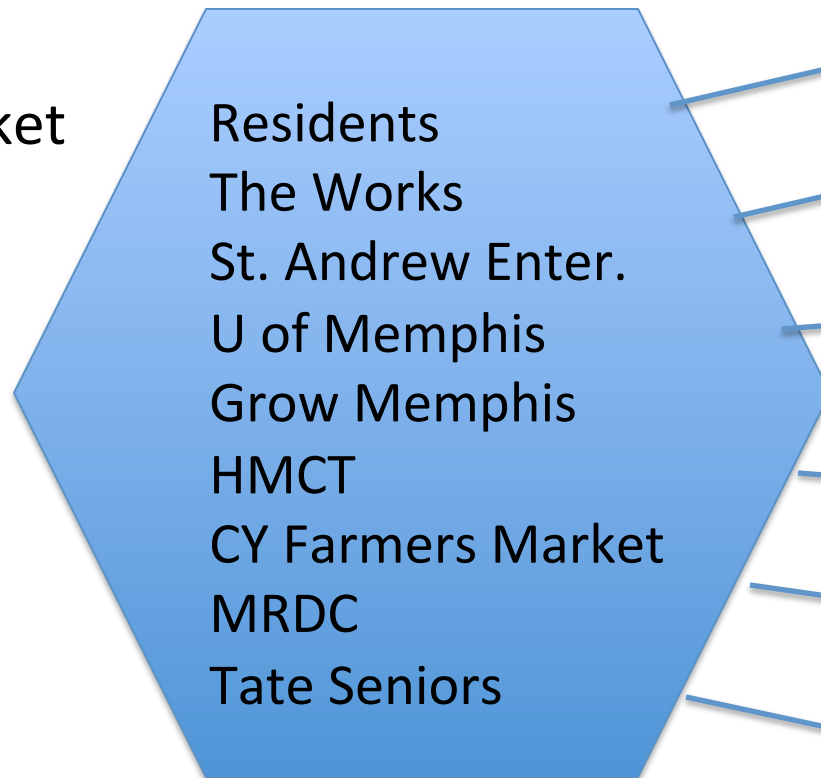


South Memphis Farmers Market Key Collaborators and Partners

Initial Consultations

Ag Extension
CY Farmers Market
Downtown FM
Grow Memphis
MLGW
MRDC
St. Andrew AME
The Works CDC
U of Memphis

FM Advisory Brd.



Co-Conspirators

M&SC Health Dept
FM Vendors
Food Policy Council
OPD/LUCB
Market Goers
Knowledge Quest

Market Site Considerations

Location, Location, Location

Site Design

- What is required (Stands, parking, info, signs, lavs)?
- What will go where?
- How will farmers and shoppers access the market site?

Zoning and Special Permits

- Office of Planning/Develop.
- Land Use Control Board
- City Council



Market Management – Setting Policies and Rules



When will the Market open?

What will be sold at the market (Producers only, organic?)

What will it cost to rent space at the Market?

Who will be on site during Market hours?

Is security a consideration?

Farmer Recruitment

- Press Campaign
- Attractive Vender Materials
- Tri-State Mailings by U of M
via Cooperative Extension
- Technical Assistance Providers
(Grow Memphis)
- Farmers Market Visits (Repeated)
- Farmer Friendly Policies
- Visible Commitment to the
Enterprise
- Press Coverage for Businesses



Community Impact of the Farmers Market

- Improvement of a highly visible location
- Increased community pride
- Creation of a safe public space
- Increased access to fresh fruits and vegetables
- Enhanced awareness of the nutritional importance of fresh foods
- Demand for additional food-related resources (A grocery - now!)
- Greater recognition of SoMe RAP



Strengthening the Market

Sustained Support for a Farmers Market

Links to Local Community Gardens

Volunteer Involvement

Funding to Support a Market Building

Food Policy Advocacy

Additional Food Access Strategies



Building Upon the Market!

Other Developments

South Parkway East Improvement Project (Approved for Spring '11)



Urban Art Commission - South Memphis Community-Builders Walk! (\$85,000)



From Illegal Stripping to Legal Scavenging - Tire Reclamation

Attracting a Local Primary Care Facility

Grocery Store Development Initiative



More Recent Developments!

New Developments

Funding for new building for Ernestine Rivers – 50 to 120 child.

Freeing of space to allow Circles of Success Charter School to add 6th, 7th, and 8th grades

Adoption of South Memphis Park by Grizzlies and AutoZone

Grocery store development initiative, incubator space

New rails to trails project connecting neighborhood to MRT



Health and Wellness Initiatives

Immediate Projects - Year 1 and 2	Intermediate Projects - Year 3 and 4	Long Term Projects - Year 5, 6, and 7
<p>Summer Sports Leagues Collaborate with Memphis City parks Commissions, youth recreation organizations, local schools, community churches and area corporate and community philanthropists to establish a major new summer basketball league for South Memphis boys, girls, men and women at Southside Park—Memphis' own Rucker League!</p>	<p>Substance Abuse Treatment Initiative Develop a new substance abuse prevention, interventions, and treatment program in the community designed to address the most serious addiction problems confronting South Memphis residents. The Community's extensive network of faith-based organizations will be used to educate local residents on the basics of addiction and treatment.</p>	<p>Primary Health Care Clinic Mobilize students, faculty, and staff from the city and region's hospitals and clinics to work together to establish a cooperatively managed primary care facility in South Memphis offering medical, dental, and psychological services on a sliding scale.</p>
<p>Human Services Directory Prepare a comprehensive directory of human service programs available to South Memphis children and families. This directory would be available online and in hard copy. The directory will be updated, on a regular basis, by graduate students from The University of Memphis' Graduate Program in City and Regional Planning.</p>	<p>Farmers Market Project Conspire with local farmers, public health officials, and economic development specialists to create a high-quality retail vendor food market to provide local residents and workers with access to high quality, affordable, and culturally appropriate foods. The farmers market would also be used as a venue for public health events.</p>	<p>Community Health Insurance Project Establish a low-cost health insurance program to complement the coverage made available through Tennessee Care along the lines of Tompkins County Health Care Plan that provides a wide range of coverage for basic services for families at a cost of \$165.</p>
<p>Neighborhood Wellness Campaign Initiate a community-based health and wellness program in which peer health advisors instruct local residents on topics related to diet, exercise, family planning, parenting, conflict resolution, and other topics central to creating healthy children, families, and communities. Behavioral shifts towards healthy living will be supported by the organization of mutual support networks. Improvements in the health referral system will be carried out.</p>	<p>Healthy South Memphis on the Move Recruit, schedule, and market the public health education, screening, and direct service activities of the city and region's largest health care providers by bringing their mobile health clinics to the site of the soon-to-be-established farmers market site on a regular basis. Increase the number of local residents referred to and seen by local health providers on a regular basis as a cost effective alternative to the use of local emergency rooms.</p>	<p>Café Reconcile in Memphis Collaborate with local chefs, eateries, and the U of M Hospitality School to establish a healthy eating outlet serving tasteful food at reasonable prices that will employ and train individuals recently released from jail and prison who, following an intensive three month period, can be employed by other fine dining restaurants. This program is based upon a very successful eatery in the Midtown section of New Orleans.</p>

Immediate Year 1 & 2

Human Services Directory

Prepare a comprehensive directory of human service programs available to South Memphis Children and families. The directory would be available online and in hard copy. The directory will be updated, on a regular basis, by the graduate students from The University of Memphis' Graduate Program in City and Regional Planning.

Intermediate Year 3 & 4

Farmers Market Project

Conspire with local farmers, public health officials, and economic development specialists to create a high-quality retail vendor food market to provide local residents and workers with access to high quality, affordable, and culturally appropriate foods. The Farmers Market would also be used as a venue for public health events.

Long Term Years 4-7

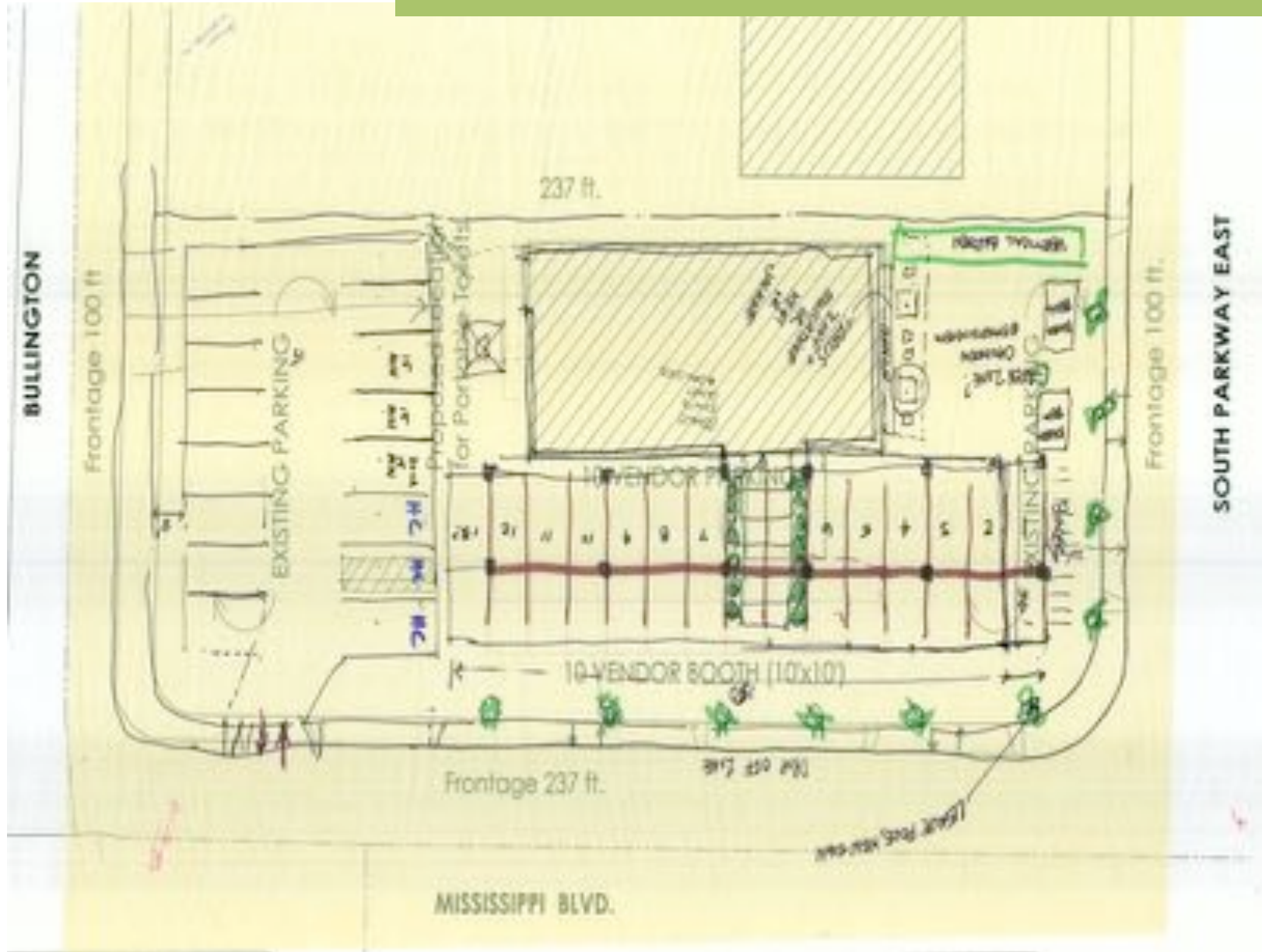
Community Health Insurance Project

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What's Next?



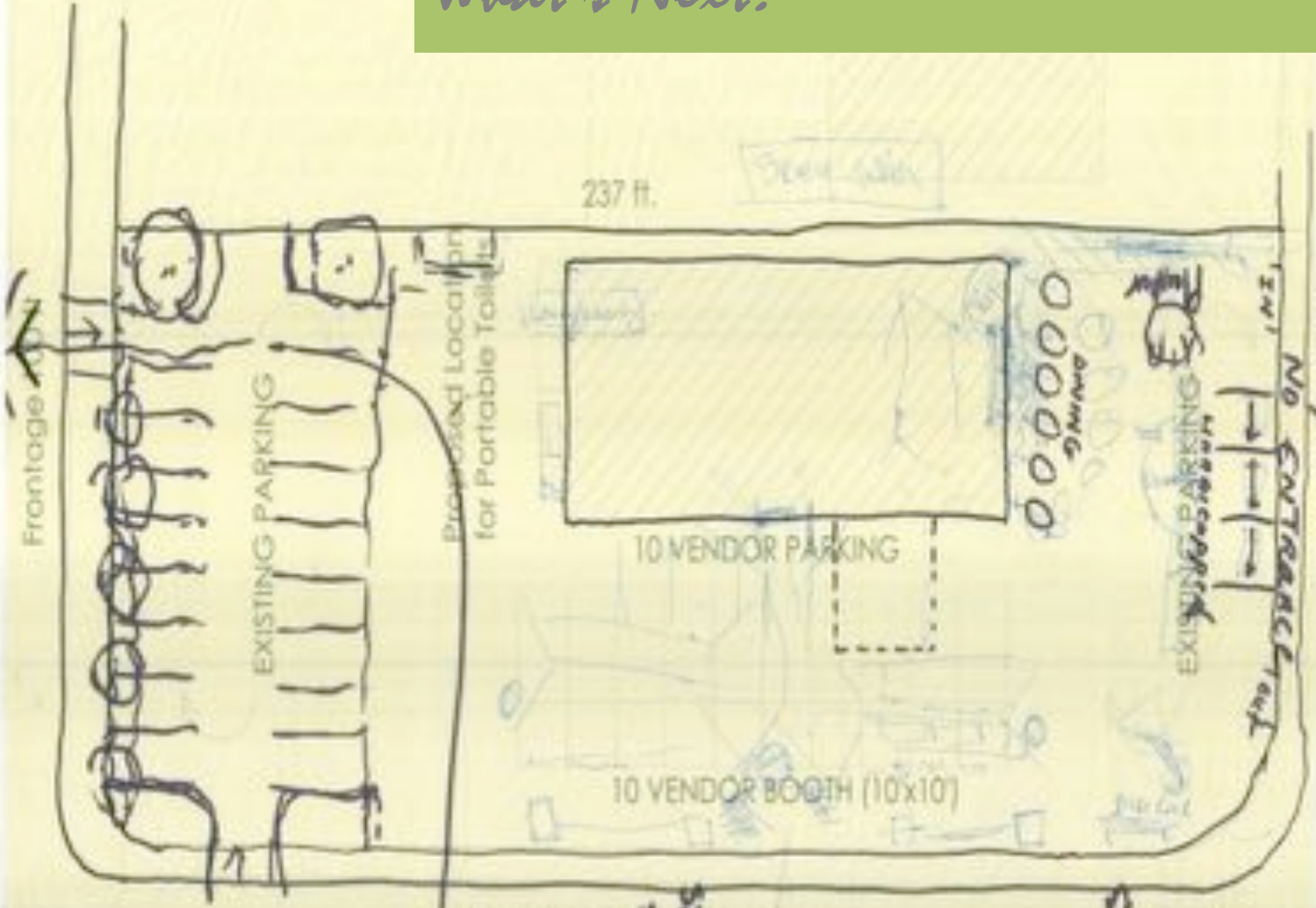
What's Next?



What's Next?



BULLINGTON



Frontage 100 ft.

SOUTH PARKWAY EAST

Frontage 237

- MISSISSIPPI BLYD.
- PAVILION
- LIGHTS
- SPEAKERS
- WIFI

MISS

- BANNERS
- ON
- STREET
- POLES

What's Next?



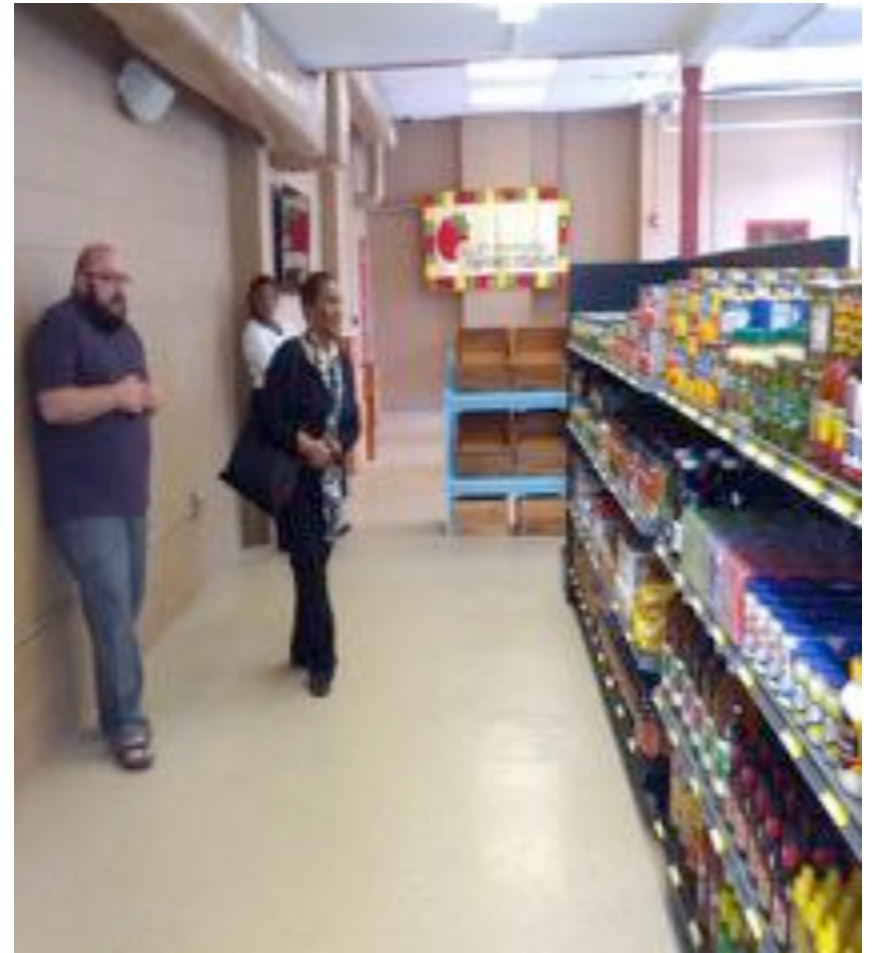
The Green Grocer



The SMFM Green Grocer



Inside the Green Grocer



Demonstration Kitchen









**Simeto River
Watershed**

Catania

Free reconstruction of the 'Mendolito city' (Lamagna 2007)



Dionigian Greek Wall, Adrano



The Biscari aqueduct in a 1871 painting

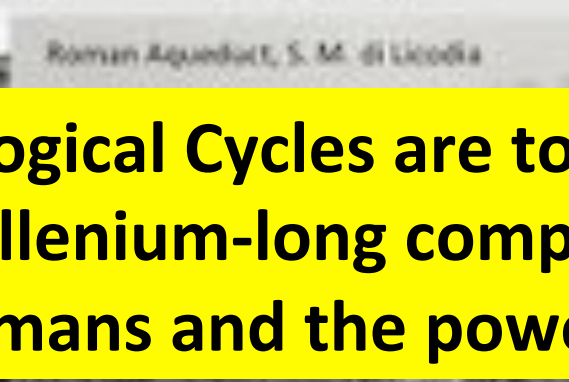


3000 a.c.

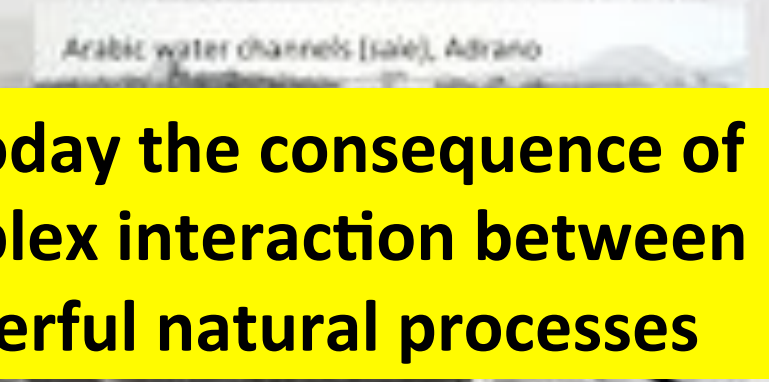


Lavic Neolithic Tomb, Adrano

Roman Aqueduct, S. M. di Licodia



Arabic water channels (saie), Adrano



Ecological Cycles are today the consequence of 5-millennium-long complex interaction between humans and the powerful natural processes

1991-1994 EU Directives (91/156 CEE, 91/689 CEE, 94/62 CE)

Ask “Regions” to change their waste management approach

WASTE → RESOURCE



Governor Salvatore Cuffaro

EU special commissioner for the “waste emergency”

2002 WASTE MANAGEMENT REGIONAL PLAN

Call for tender for 4 privately-owned
waste-to-energy facilities





No! Let's Stop Them!!





The March of 5000 in Adrano



Informal Mobilization



Coalition for the Sustainable Development of the Simeto Valley



Formal Organizations



Successful Anti-incinerator Campaign

Not just legal action but broader community organizing and political strategy

vivisimeto

2006
16-17-18 GIUGNO

SI al Parco Fluviale del Simeto



Yes to the Simeto River Park

NO al termovalorizzatore

PROGRAMMA

venerdì 16

No to the incinerator

sabato 17

domenica 18

COMITATO CIVILE

CONSIGLIO

1 termovalorizzatore

0932 921111

0932 921112

www.comitato1706.it

per informazioni

www.comitato1706.it

tel. 093 921111

“The reason why somebody can decide to build an incinerator on our river is because there there is not a better vision of the future”

**Workshop on
Community Organizing
June 2009**



Collective Reflective Practices - Phase 2

The "Casa delle Acque" fall retreat
November 2010

Stakeholders
Support the local
economy through
policy design



Community members
Historic preservation
Environmental issues



Researchers
What strategy
makes the most
sense?

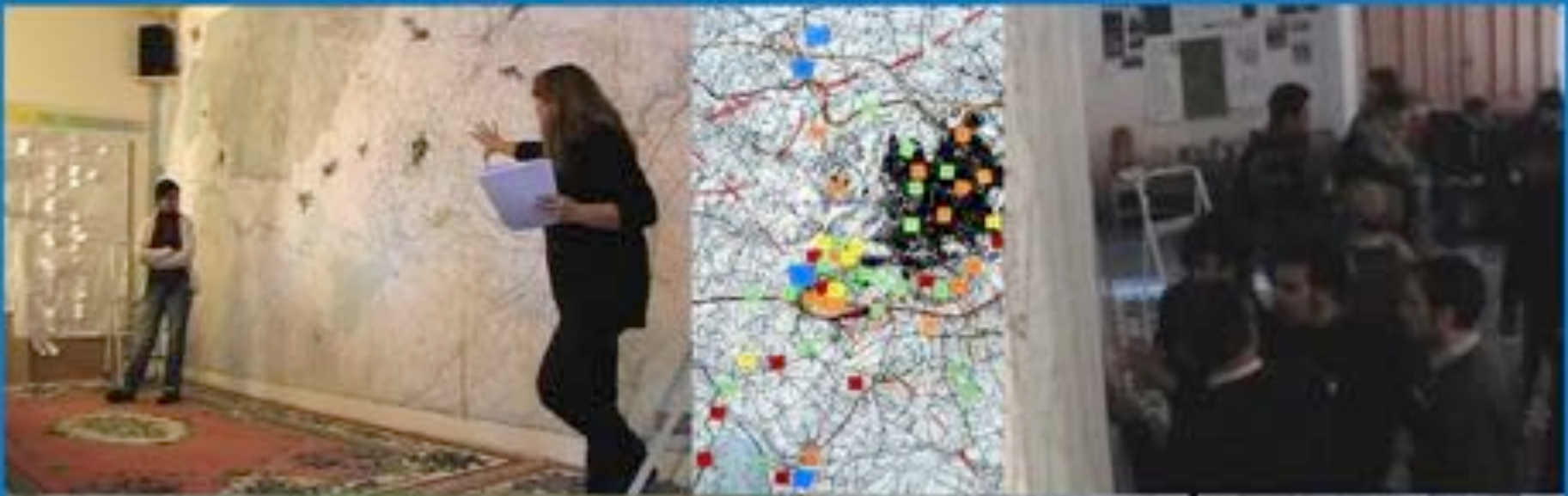
Grass-roots groups
Improving the area
Strengthen the sense of
community





Community Mapping Initiative





**The large
collective
maps**



Mapping activities have been carried out:

- ✓ In 10 different locations, in the **countryside** and in **4 small towns** along the river;
- ✓ improving the tools used each time;
- ✓ involving more than **500 individuals**; among them: representatives of **22 community groups** and non-profit associations and **City Officials** from three of the four small towns.



ii Community meetings

Individual Interviews

Progetto di Mappatura di Comunità



mental mapping





Community Mapping Initiative



HOW?

Produce "papers" more difficult for local politicians to ignore

Final product: much more than a simple map

Help the community know and then love their place

Community mapping = educational campaign

Community Mapping Initiative

The follow-up projects are identified as part of something bigger

Create a portfolio of community projects ready to be funded by EU (with and without institutional partnerships)

Enlarge the base supporting the partnership

Networking and involving other association in the steering committee of the initiative

Mappa di Comunità

della Valle del Simeto

- SAS
- ACQUARO
- ARFIO
- MASERA
- STAZIONE
- REALOVA
- SARIELLE
- POZZO
- SPACENTE
- MILAZI
- CAOTTA
- STO
- ARZUFFANO
- ENZI
- MARAFUGA
- MAZZI

LA VALLE DEL SIMETO
La valle del Simeto è un territorio ricco di storia, cultura e natura. È caratterizzata da paesaggi suggestivi, vigneti e uliveti, e da un clima ideale per la coltivazione di prodotti di qualità. La valle è attraversata dal fiume Simeto, che ha dato origine al nome della valle.

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The Design Contribution



Landscape Architecture

Community Design



COMMUNITY/UNIVERSITY
PARTNERSHIP

LONG-TERM
RECIPROCITY

- ✓ Implementing pilot projects included in the community map
- ✓ Expand possibilities for local firms and designers
- ✓ Make it "happen"!



Adrano



Paternò



The Community Design Experience in “contrada Nicoló”, Paternò



Co-creation of design proposal for a riparian garden



Final draft of the design

WISMETO PRIMI VERDI AL SIMETO 2011
COSTRUIAMO UNA RETE PER CONTRADA NICOLO'

ADOPT A TREE
ALBERO



Come ci immaginiamo questo luogo?

Alcuni spunti per proseguire a progettare e lavorare assieme

Zona in regime di deposito del Fiume

Zona in regime di erosione del Fiume



Tutti insieme abbiamo cominciato a realizzare il nostro progetto...



?...Nuove idee

Lasciate i vostri commenti

Capanno di osservazione
per il birds watching

Possibile
fitodepurazione

Fruticose

Percorsi verso i capanni

Possibile sistemazione planimetrica



Inspired by a
NEW model of
“development”



VERSO UN PATTO PER IL FIUME S
TUA ISTITUZIONI E COMUNITA'

Settembre 2013 - maggio 2014

materiali elaborati nell'ambito del progetto
SALVARE LA COMUNITA' DEL SIMETO



VALORI, PROGETTI E PRIORITÀ CONDIVISI
NELLA VALLE DEL SIMETO

Allegato B al Patto di Fiume Simeto

Presentato alla comunità per revisioni e integrazioni il 23/1/2014 - Aggiornato dal gruppo di Ricerca dell'Università
degli Studi di Catania il 10/10/2014

Simeto River Agreement

Implementation Strategies

MOBILITY

Accessibility/ Security /
Connection / Enhancement of
existing structures / Sustainability

CULTURE

Historic-Environmental Assets/ Public
Spaces / Historic Centers / Identity

AGRICULTURE

Agro-District / CSA / Training and
Education / Ethics

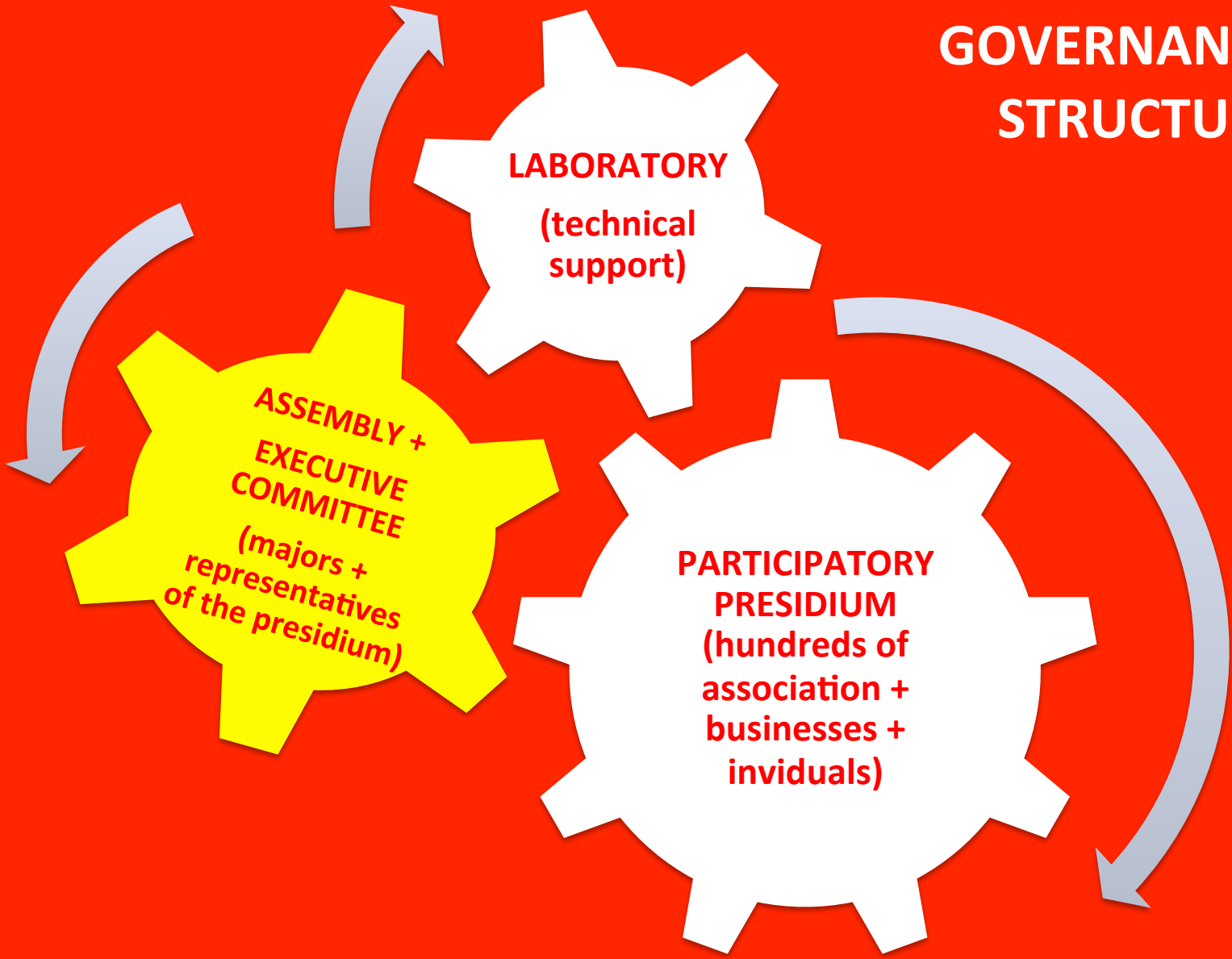
WASTE

Zero-Waste Strategies / Growing
Strategy for Municipal Management /
Participant Observatory

WATER

Participatory Observatory +
Regional Management Authorities

PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE





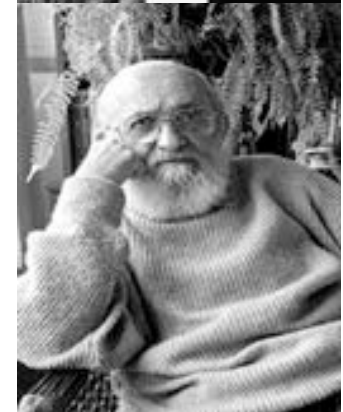
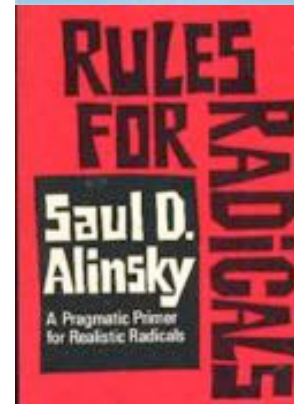
**Revolutionary
Governance
Structure**

**“THE SIMETO RIVER
AGREEMENT”
General Legal Framework**

Signed on May 18th, 2015

Empowerment Approach to Community Planning/Design

- **Participatory action research** - produces better analysis and prescriptions (W.F. Whyte)
- **Direct action organizing** - builds political base of support for redistributive policies (S. Alinsky)
- **Popular education** - generates social capital through membership/leadership development (M. Horton/P. Freire)



Contact Information

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