8-21-2014

The Right Scale: Planning for Resilience in Northeast Ohio

Sanda Kaufman
*Cleveland State University*, s.kaufman@csuohio.edu

Kathryn Hexter
*Cleveland State University*, k.hexter@csuohio.edu

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Resilience and planning practice

- We ask: what
  - issues
  - physical & social scales
  - processes
  - tools
  - governance

  favor planning for **resilience**?

- We explore the NEOSCC case:
- We focus on: scale & scenarios
- We derive some cautionary lessons
We propose that

Planning in complex systems has to *adapt* because:

- **Specifics matter:**
  - **Context**
  - **The initial state** (e.g., Legacy)
  - **Scale** – the level at which stakeholders feel interdependent & willing to collaborate

- Resilience, adaptation & transformation are choices
- Long-term predictions are faulty
- End-points (arbitrary target years) have little/no meaning
In this Legacy context, resilience could mean:
- Returning to previous “splendor”
- Adaptation to current/predicted conditions
- Transformation into a new regional/urban regime

Who should decide? How?
What is the role of planning?

- 12 counties in population, economic & environmental decline since the 1950s
- Political & administrative fragmentation
- Short- mid- & long-term challenges
Northeast Ohio – a snapshot

□ Population:
  ○ 3.8 million – 1/3 of Ohio on 14% of total area
  ○ 7% fewer people in 2010 than 1970, but
    ■ 5% more land developed
    ■ < 23 people/acre (4 km²)

□ Land use:
  ○ 50% agriculture
  ○ 25% residential
  ○ 2.5%: industrial
  ○ 3.5%: commercial
  ○ < 5%: parks, open spaces

□ Housing stock:
  ○ 75% single-family
  ○ 50% > 50 years old
  ○ 70% owner-occupied

□ Poverty concentrated in central cities:
  ○ 52.8% of residents earn < $50K (36K €) / year.

□ Pattern of out-migration from central cities:
  economic development incentives
  ○ encourage it
  ○ do not reckon with infrastructure

Planning for resilience

Kaufman & Hexter
Threats to the region

Environmental:
- climate change effects on Lake Erie
- air, water & soil pollution
- open, agricultural land and wetlands shrinking
- ecosystem fragmentation
- invasive species

Political/administrative
- fragmentation
- Intra-regional competition for development
- lack of coordination across administrative borders
- Rising costs of government

Socio-economic:
- foreclosures
- poverty
- poor education
- mismatch between demand & supply of skills
- segregation
- economic competitiveness
NEOSCC: The Northeast Ohio sustainable communities consortium

☐ Since 2011, with $4.25M grant from the Partnership for Sustainable Communities (HUD, DOT & EPA, 2009)
  ☐ to coordinate housing, transportation, water, & infrastructure decisions.
  ☐ to help residents live closer to work, save household time & money, & reduce pollution.

☐ Includes 33 entities
  ☐ organizations
  ☐ agencies

☐ Seeks to
  ☐ be vibrant, resilient, and sustainable
  ☐ produce
    ■ shared vision
    ■ mission
    ■ dashboard
    ■ recommendations
    ■ toolkit
Why in Northeast Ohio?

☐ Cleveland
  - was part of the federal planning for the grant (HUD, DOT, EPA)
  - is the locus of many regional initiatives:
    - Sustainable Communities 2000
    - Fund for our Economic Future/Advance Northeast Ohio
    - EfficientGovNow
    - Regional Prosperity Initiative

☐ Northeast Ohio’s proposal ranked 4th because it was linked to a regional economic growth strategy
  (B. Whitehead interview, May 19, 2014)
NEOSCC’s mission:

- create conditions for a more VIBRANT, RESILIENT, and SUSTAINABLE Northeast Ohio:
  - full of vitality
  - a good steward of its built and natural resources
  - adaptable and responsive to change
  - VIBRANT – Full of energy & enthusiasm; vigorous, lively, and vital.
  - RESILIENT – Responsive to change; adaptable; able to spring back; rebound
  - SUSTAINABLE – Meeting present needs while retaining the ability to meet future needs
**NEOSCC**

**structure & operation**

**Goals:**
- Improve quality of life
- Connect communities
- Diversity
- Protect natural resources
- Competitive economy

**Modus operandi:**
- Inspire people to create solutions & matching goals
- Be data-based, nonpartisan
- Obtain citizen participation
- Provide tools for regional planners to make good decisions

**Organization**
- 60 board members
- 7 employees
- Chairperson & director
- Teams working on:
  - Economic competitiveness
  - Environment
  - Housing & communities connections
  - Quality connected places.

* according to NEOSCC
Focus on scale

Key to meaningful collaborative planning: participants’
1. sense of interdependence & shared interests
2. ability to assess how plans affect them now & in the future
3. Belief they can affect the decision process

The larger the scale, the weaker all 3 factors

The weaker the incentive to participate & plan
**Approach:**
- Take stock – baseline, *trends* (population / land uses/policies)
- Construct scenarios for 2040 + indicators
- Back-link *the end-image* to actions to be taken now
- Ask the public to choose a preferred scenario
- Recommend actions to make it happen.

**4 scenarios + effects on**
- communities
- economy
- costs of policies
Focus on scenarios

- Scenarios should:
  - Represent hypotheses about drivers outside stakeholders’ control, & their interactions
  - Allow exploration of ranges of variation in system responses
  - Test the robustness of decisions
  - Reveal unintended consequences

- NEOSCC scenarios were:
  - Rooted in (unrealistic) long-term trends
  - Explorations of decision rather than driver effects
  - Pre-favoring specific strategy for the target year 2040
  - Opaque with respect to unintended consequences
Outcomes - The balance

Costs

Most funding went to consultants for base data & scenarios leading to:
- preconceived
- non-robust
- non-specific recommendations

Benefits

- Networking among politicians & administrators
- Land use maps (widely accessible)
  - both side-effects, not goals/objectives
  - would have cost a fraction of the total
Future: Implementation

- Can NEOSCC be sustained?
  - Membership dues?
  - Value added?
  - Champions?

- Who should act and how?

- Role of MPOs:
  - Champion?
  - Expand scope beyond transportation & environment
  - Can a nonprofit model work in a public sector role?
Future: Implementation

EAST GATE
- 5 programs:
  - traditional MPO (transportation and air quality)
  - Local Development district
  - EDA district
  - capital planning
  - watershed planning

NOACA
- traditional MPO (transportation and air quality), water quality

NEFCO
- traditional MPO (transportation, air & water quality), EDA district

AMATS & SCATS
- transportation only
Future – responsibility for sustaining the collaborative process

**NEOSCC**
- only as strong as the commitment of the public officials involved.
- had a planning (not implementation) grant.
- did develop a dashboard, tool kits, resilience metrics but who cares?

**Gov’ts**
- Who is accountable if citizens don’t care?
- At what level? Local? State? (Is there a role for the State?)

**Private sector**
- Would it help to bring it in?
- What are their stakes?
- Would they consider the community’s benefit as their benefit?
Conclusions – some predictions

☐ NEOSCC
- not self-sustaining
- bit more (land and population) than it can chew
- has low likelihood of implementing plans

☐ The partners will act as in a commons dilemma
  - participate in the process
  - make unilateral decisions for their communities

☐ The public will remain largely unaware of the Vibrant NEO initiative

☐ The planning discourse will continue to tout the virtues of regionalism
Conclusions: resilience & planning

- **Failed change processes worse than none:**
  - The scale of the undertaking led to reinstating the “rational planner” as “consultant”
  - Collaboration very limited, undermining trust in future initiatives

- **Weak outcomes detrimental:**
  - Opportunities/resources for adaptation & transformation should not be missed
  - Big shows with few results undermine participation & collaboration
  - Lack of implementation undermines resilience
Thank you!

**Your Plan**

**Reality**

**Intelligence**