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## The Right Scale: Planning for Resilience in Northeast Ohio

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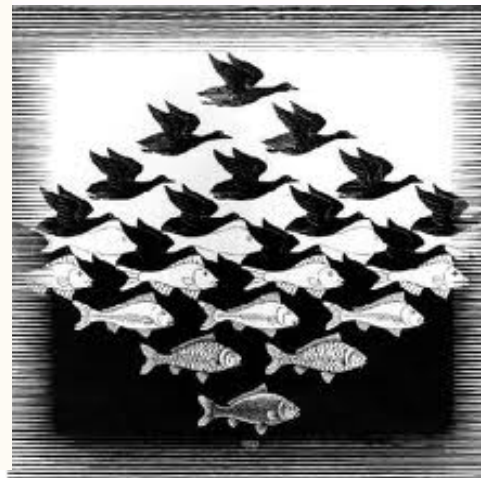
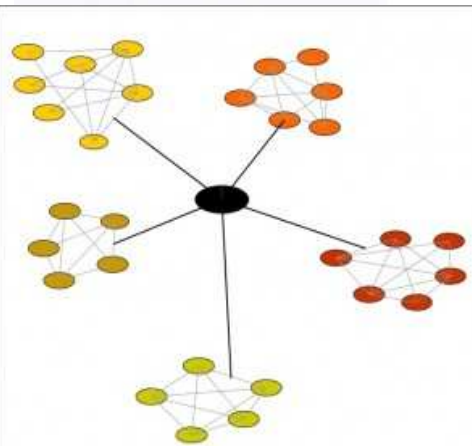
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# the right scale: planning for resilience in northeast ohio

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**robust**  
DESIGN



# Resilience and planning practice

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## We ask: what

- issues
- physical & social scales
- processes
- tools
- governance

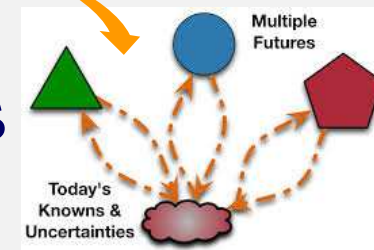
favor planning for *resilience*?



## We explore the NEOSCC case:

## We focus on: *scale & scenarios*

## We derive some cautionary lessons



# We propose that



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***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



# Case study: Northeast Ohio – a Legacy region



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

- 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*?

# Northeast Ohio – a snapshot



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## □ 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 km<sup>2</sup>)

## □ 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



# to the region



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## Environmental:

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

## Socio-economic:

- foreclosures
- poverty
- poor education
- mismatch between demand & supply of skills
- segregation
- economic competitiveness

## Political/administrative

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

# NEOSCC: The Northeast Ohio sustainable communities consortium



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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?



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## 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 4<sup>th</sup> because it was linked to a regional economic growth strategy (B. Whitehead interview, May 19, 2014)

# NEOSCC Mission: Vibrant, Resilient, Sustainable



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## 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\*



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### □ Goals:

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

### □ Organization

- 60 board members
- 7 employees
- chairperson & director
- Teams working on



### □ 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

- economic competitiveness
- environment
- housing & communities connections
- quality connected places.

\* according to NEOSCC

# Focus on scale



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Key to *meaningful* collaborative planning: participants'

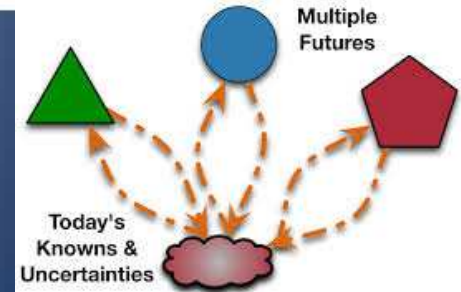
1. sense of interdependence & shared interests
2. ability to assess how plans affect them now & in the future
3. Belief they can affect the decision process

The larger the scale, the weaker all 3 factors



The weaker the incentive to participate & plan

# NEOSCC planning process



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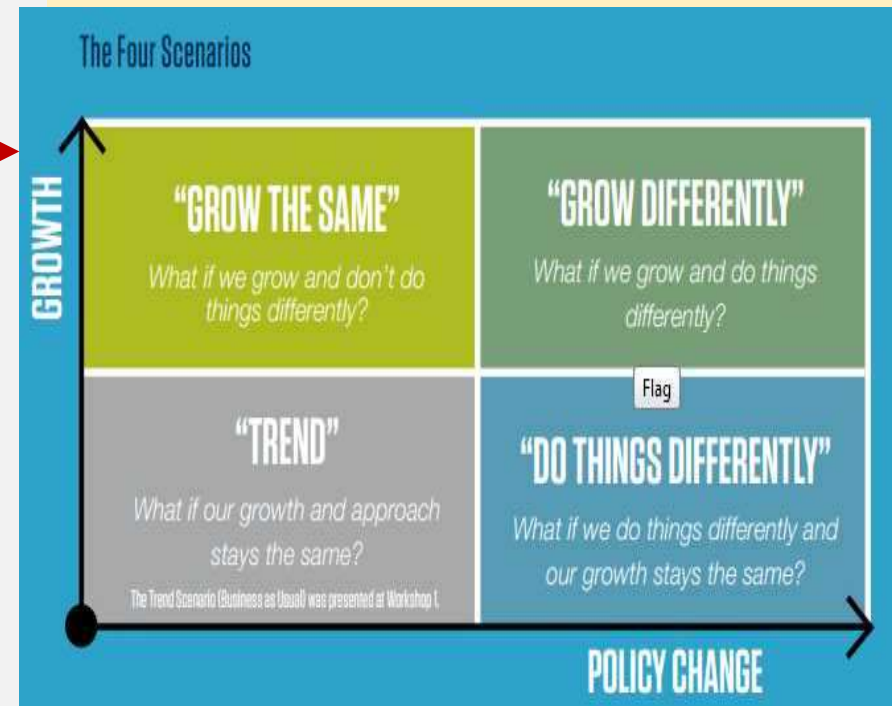


## □ Approach:

- 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



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## 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



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## 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

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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

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## EAST GATE

- 5 programs:
  - traditional MPO (transportation and air quality)
  - Local Development district under Appalachian Regional Commission
  - 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



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## 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



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## 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



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## 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:

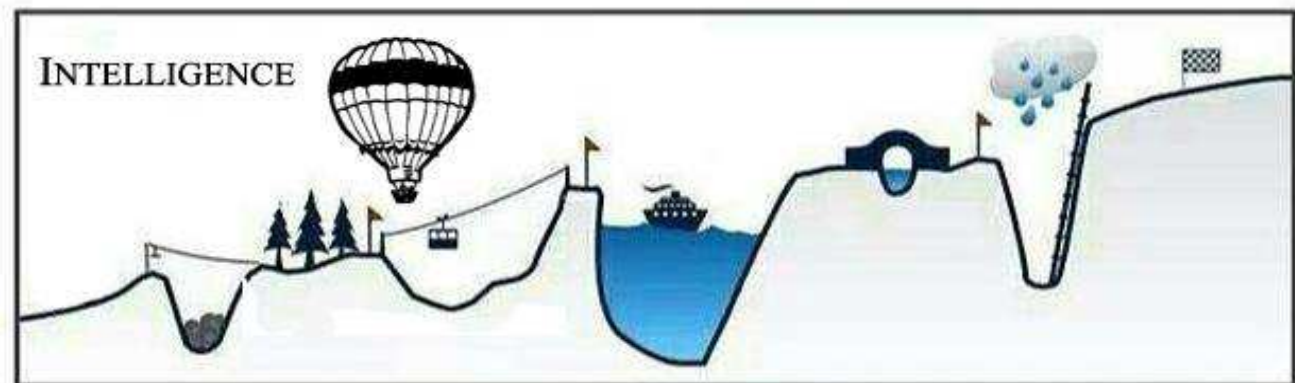
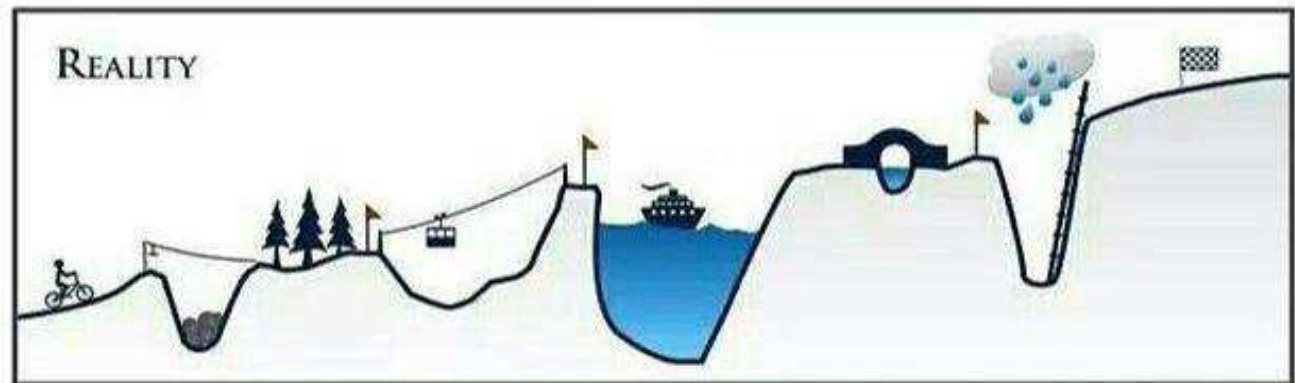
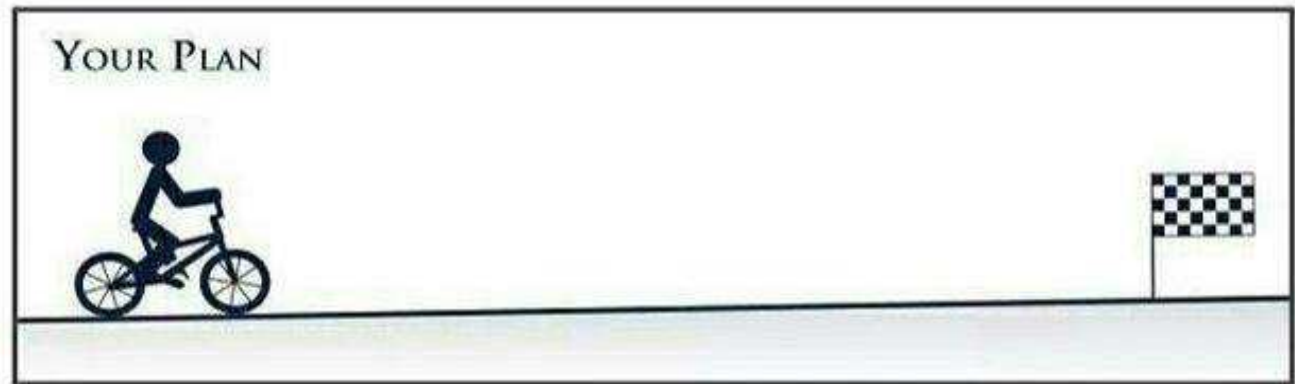
- Opportunities/resources for adaptation & transformation should not be missed
- Big shows with few results undermine participation & collaboration
- Lack of implementation undermines resilience

# Thank you!

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planning for resilience



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