

EVALUATING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION TO ADDRESS HISTORIC DISENFRANCHISEMENT AND EMPOWER COMMUNITIES

Allison Smith, PhD
Louisville Metro
Community
Engagement
Strategist

Daniel DeCaro, PhD
University of
Louisville
Assistant Professor,
Urban & Public
Affairs
Psychological &
Brain Sciences

TODAY'S AGENDA

- Who we are
- How this project came about
- What we're researching
- Preliminary results
- Lessons learned and recommendations
- Where do we go from here?

THE TEAM

- Angela Storey, Anthropology
- Allison Smith, Louisville Metro
- Daniel DeCaro, Psychology and UPA
- David Johnson, School of Public Health
- Lauren Heberle, Sociology

- Student researchers:
 - Victoria Clemons
 - Jeremy Jackson
 - Christopher Wales
 - Dwan Turner
 - Juwan Waddell
 - Megan Morrison (Bellarmine)

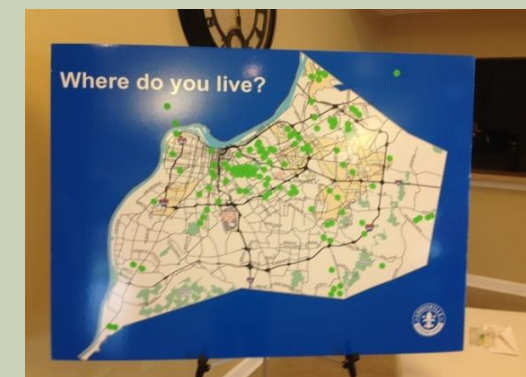


CCTSJR (“THE CONSORTIUM”)

- Collaborative Consortium for Transdisciplinary Social Justice Research
- Social justice requires research and action to:
 - Optimize freedom
 - Minimize or end discrimination through laws, policies, and practices
 - Promote empathy and community as means of greater inclusion
 - Recognize and appreciate human diversity
 - Increase substantive, equitable access to social, economic, and health resources
 - Move toward ending systematic inequalities and enhancing health, social welfare and equity

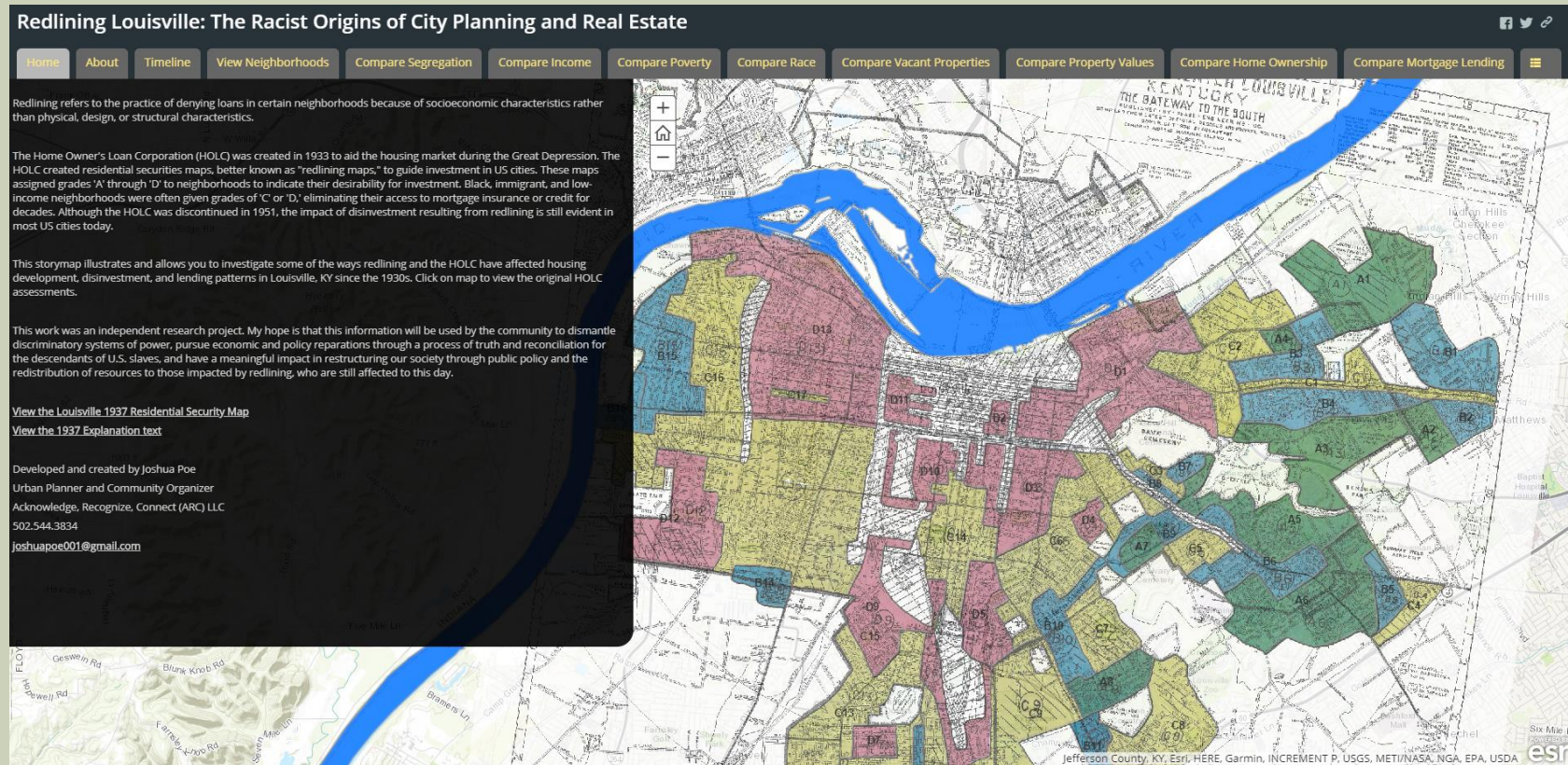


TOOLS OF THE TRADE



HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- Louisville, Kentucky is highly racially segregated with a history of Redlining, Urban Renewal, and decades of disinvestment in west Louisville.



Poe. 2017. *Redlining Community Dialogue, Office of Redevelopment Strategies, Louisville Metro Government.*
<https://louisvilleky.gov/government/redevelopment-strategies/redlining-community-dialogue>

CURRENT CONTEXT

- COVID-19 has changed the face of community engagement.
- New issues:
 - Communication
 - Digital divide
 - In one Louisville neighborhood, around 50% of households do not have internet access
 - Priorities during a pandemic



CURRENT CONTEXT



Breonna Taylor, Louisville, KY
June 5, 1993 to March 13, 2020
Day 76 of protests



RESEARCH METHOD

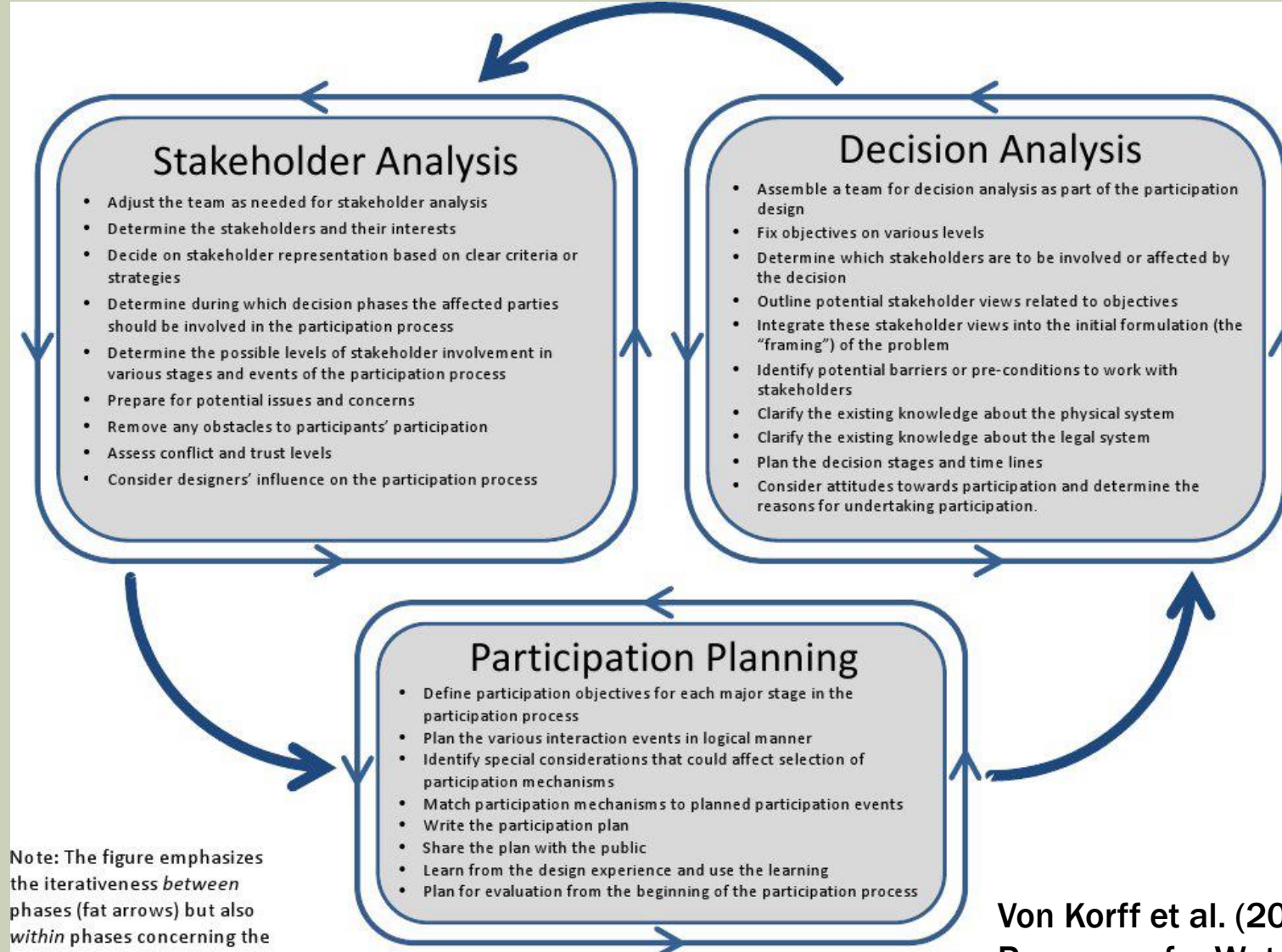
- Quantitative Research
- Qualitative Research
- Preliminary results...

Public Engagement Surveys

☐ Purpose

Develop a rapid assessment tool to assess public engagement events to help guide and inform design and implementation.

Adaptive (Iterative) Design of Public Engagement



Survey Tool

Von Korff et al. (2010) Designing Participation Processes for Water Management and Beyond. *Ecology & Society*.

Public Engagement Surveys

□ Purpose

Develop a rapid assessment tool to assess public engagement events to help guide and inform design and implementation.

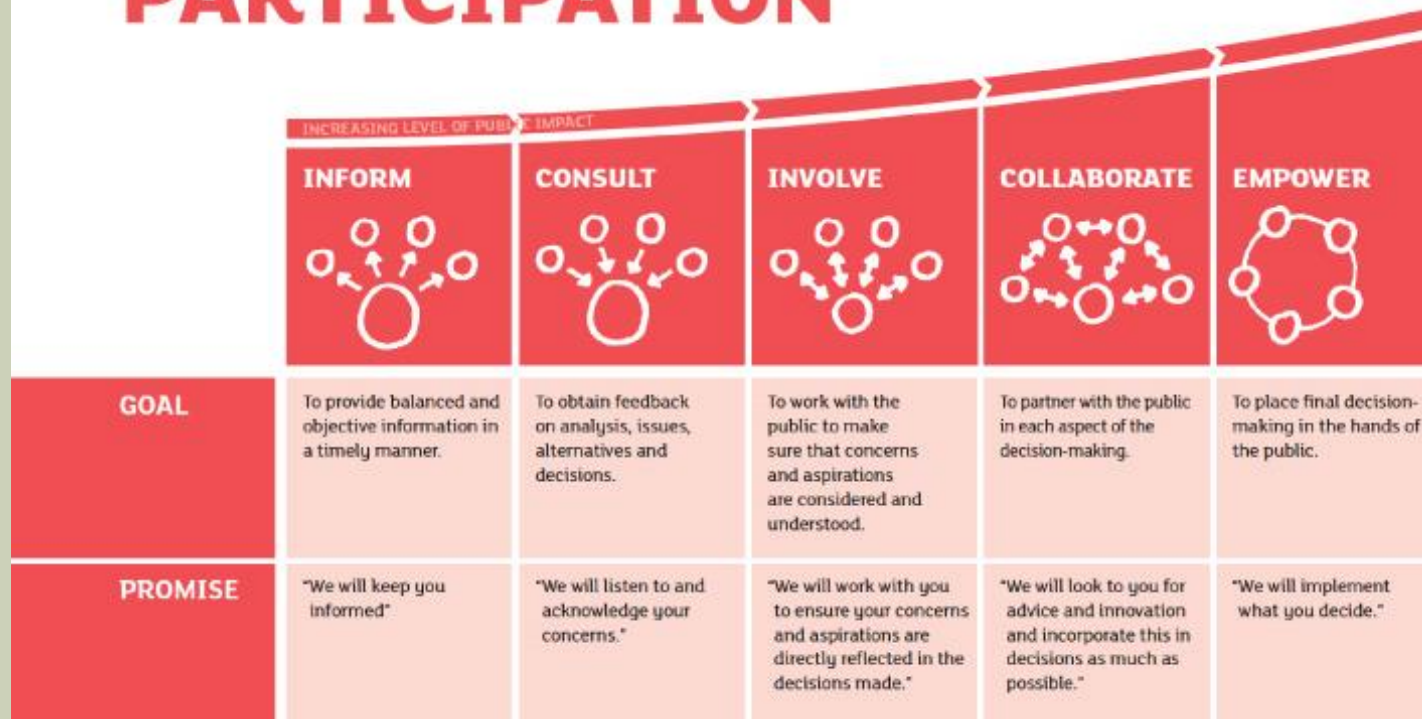
- Maintain a good working relationship (e.g., trust, legitimacy), improve decisions, and reduce long-term costs.
- Better satisfy community needs.

Test practical and scientific questions: What types of engagement do particular stakeholder groups prefer and why? What is fair, effective?

- Understand felt/perceived history of public engagement.
- Identify desirable modes of public engagement.
- Identify relationships among important factors (e.g., context specific preferences, perceptions of fairness, effectiveness, etc.).

Selecting the Right Tool for the Job

IAP2 SPECTRUM OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION



Participatory Fit

DeCaro & Stokes (2013) Public Participation and Institutional Fit: A Social-Psychological Perspective. *Ecology & Society*.

(c) International Association for Public Participation www.iap2.org (Source: [Place Speak](#))

Public Engagement Surveys

□ Survey Scope and Design (Overview)

- 5–10 minute survey at end of event.
 - Modular: can be shortened (1-2 minutes), expanded, reordered.

■ Sections:

Part A: Today's Event

- Evaluation (e.g., satisfaction, usefulness, voice, choice, etc.)

Part B: Preferences for Public Engagement

- Which type(s) do you prefer? How fair?

Part C: Metro Government's Past Public Engagement

- Evaluation (e.g., satisfaction, usefulness, etc.)

Part D: Demographics

- Standard demographics, plus neighborhood, experience, etc.

Evaluate Metro Government's Public Engagement Behavior over the Past Several Years:

Strongly Agree

3. The people in my community could have a say in the activities that Metro Gov did in the community, if we wanted to.	Voice
4. Metro Gov has typically taken the community's input seriously.	
5. Metro Gov has usually been polite and respectful when speaking with people in my community.	Interpersonal
6. We could count on Metro Gov to provide my community with accurate information about its activities.	Informational Justice
7. Metro Gov has typically been quick to report any negative effects of its activities in the local area.	
8. Metro Gov has made decisions for my community in a fair way.	Fairness
9. Metro Gov has made decisions in a way that supports my community's freedom of choice and decision making.	Self-determination
10. Metro Gov's past public engagement has been effective.	Effectiveness
11. Metro Gov's past decisions have been effective.	
12. Overall, I am satisfied with Metro Gov's past behavior.	Satisfaction

**WHICH TYPE(S) OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT DO YOU PREFER METRO GOVERNMENT
USE WHEN IT MAKES DECISIONS THAT MAY AFFECT YOU?
AND, HOW FAIR DO YOU FEEL THESE ARE?**

PREFERENCE

Not at all A little Moderately Very much

1. Delegate (give the decision authority to the community)	Do you prefer this type?	0	1	2	3
	How fair do you feel it is?	0	1	2	3
2. Partnership (partner with the community; make decisions together)	Do you prefer this type?	0	1	2	3
	How fair do you feel it is?	0	1	2	3
3. Consultation (gather public input; may not use the input)	Do you prefer this type?	0	1	2	3
	How fair do you feel it is?	0	1	2	3
4. Information (provide information)	Do you prefer this type?	0	1	2	3
	How fair do you feel it is?	0	1	2	3
5. Manipulation (not genuine) (For example, Metro's decision is already made. Engagement used to manipulate or mislead the public)	Do you prefer this type?	0	1	2	3
	How fair do you feel it is?	0	1	2	3

Surveyed Events

❑ 21 Events (263 total participants)

- Primarily in West End neighborhoods

❑ Many Topics, 5 Types of Engagement:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| ▪ 4 Redlining Public Dialogue | Informational (w/ public dialogue) |
| ▪ 5 Public Arts & Monuments | Informational (w/ public dialogue) |
| ▪ 4 Impound Lot | Informational (w/ public dialogue) |
| ▪ 1 Waterfront Development | Informational (w/ public dialogue) |
| ▪ 2 EPA Reports | Informational (w/ public dialogue) |
| ▪ 1 Brownfields Reuse Workshop | Informational Workshop |
| ▪ 3 Comprehensive Plan | Consultation (open house) |
| ▪ 2 Resilient Cities | Consultation (workshops) |
| ▪ 1 Heritage West (WLCC) | Partnership (community-led consultation) |

Summary of Findings

❑ Attendance (Diversity and Reach)

- Events ranged in size.
 - WLCC (80 people, 43% surveyed). Comprehensive Plan (8 or less, 100%).
- Mostly attended by White, affluent people (except WLCC Heritage West).

❑ Metro Government's Past Engagement

- Generally neutral (neither good nor bad):
 - **Good:** polite and respectful (*Interpersonal Justice*).
 - **Poor:** (1) notifying communities of negative impacts (*Informational Justice*), (2) taking public input seriously (*Procedural Justice*).

❑ Current Engagement Events

- **Generally Satisfied:** high satisfaction: useful information, positive impact, voice, decision influence, honesty/non-biased, polite, etc.
 - WLCC Heritage West (Partnership) very high!
 - One Redlining Public Dialogue very low, among Black participants!

Summary of Findings

☐ Preferences for Public Engagement

- **Partnership** with Metro Government most preferred method.
- Participants preferred multiple types of engagement to be used simultaneously (e.g., Partnership w/ Information and Consultation).

LESSONS LEARNED

Applied:

- Community engagement is messy: embrace it
 - This is easier with a supportive institutional environment (Louisville Metro is supportive)
- Partnering with credible community organizations increases legitimacy
 - And can empower those communities (e.g., West Louisville Community Council)
- Even when residents don't trust Metro from past experiences, they still express appreciation for efforts at authentic engagement
- The facilitator can make or break a meeting

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) **Partnership between local government and universities** can provide authentic evaluation.
- 2) Stakeholder participation needs to be underpinned by a **philosophy of empowerment, equity, trust, and learning** (not just “public input”).
- 3) Participation should be **used as early as possible** and throughout the process.
- 4) Relevant **stakeholders need to be represented** systematically.
- 5) **Clear objectives** for the participatory process should be agreed upon upfront.
- 6) **Highly skilled facilitation** is essential.
- 7) **Community and expert knowledge** should be integrated.
- 8) Participation needs to be **institutionalized (as common practice)**.
- 9) Methods of participation should be selected and **tailored to the decision-making context** (consider history, goals, participants, resources/obstacles, phase)

Items 2-9: Reed (2008) Stakeholder Participation for Environmental Management: A Literature Review. *Biological Conservation*

HOW DOES THIS WORK TODAY?

■ Challenges

- No in-person meetings
- Mistrust of government
- Online outreach and engagement
 - Our hardest to reach populations may not have internet access
 - Have you tried to facilitate an online meeting? It's not easy!

■ With an active social justice movement, is it easier to reach leadership?

- Movement is leaderless. Multiple groups, representing many interests.
- Pretty much any engagement requires, at the very least, acknowledging what's happening. In some cases, it may be incorporated into the work you're doing.

GROUP DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What has been your experience with engagement since COVID?

GROUP DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- How have you addressed the movement for social justice in your work?

QUESTIONS

Allison Smith

Louisville Metro Government, Community Engagement Specialist

allison.smith@louisvilleky.gov

Daniel DeCaro

University of Louisville, Assistant Professor, Urban & Public Affairs, Psychological & Brain Sciences

daniel.decaro@louisville.edu