

Building the Progressive City One Neighborhood at a Time: The Story of the East St. Louis Action Research Project (USA)

Antonio Raciti, Kenneth M. Reardon

Abstract

Quest'articolo descrive come fenomeni di de-industrializzazione, disinvestimenti, e forze di suburbanizzazione hanno profondamente danneggiato le condizioni di salute dell'economia e del governo municipale di East St. Louis (US), lasciando i 40.000 residenti della città privi dei servizi municipali essenziali. Ciò che contraddistingue questa storia è la presenza di un piccolo gruppo di donne Afro Americane che hanno affrontato questa situazione con iniziative di auto-organizzazione dal basso volte alla mobilitazione, pianificazione e sviluppo del loro quartiere. Più specificatamente, quest'articolo illustra come una partnership fra comunità e università – portata avanti da queste donne in collaborazione con studenti e docenti della University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign – sia stata capace di generare più di 200 milioni di dollari in nuovi investimenti che hanno permesso di stabilizzare un intero quartiere e incoraggiare i residenti di altre comunità della regione a intraprendere iniziative simili.

This article describes how powerful deindustrialization, disinvestment, and suburbanization forces undermined the health of the East St. Louis, Illinois (US) economy and municipal government leaving the city's 40,000 residents without basic municipal services. What distinguishes this story is the emergence of a small group of low-income African American women who responded to these failures by self-organizing a "bottom-up, bottom-sideways" organizing, planning, and development initiative. In particular, this article explains how a community-university partnership carried out by these women and students and faculty from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign was able to generate more than \$200 million in new investment that stabilized their neighborhood and encouraged residents from other East St. Louis communities across the region to undertake similar resident-led planning efforts.

Parole Chiave: deindustrializzazione; ricerca azione partecipata; mobilitazione di comunità; educazione popolare.

Keywords: deindustrialization; participatory action research; direct action organizing; popular education.

Introduction

While economists and policy-makers celebrate the advantages of today's rapidly globalizing economy for producers and consumers, it is important to note that this process has had a highly uneven impact on metropolitan regions within the U.S. Whereas, one third of American metropolitan regions have

significantly benefited from this process, another one third have seen few, if any, advantages from this process while another third have been devastated by powerful deindustrialization, disinvestment and outmigration forces related to globalization (Goldsmith and Blakely, 2010). This is especially true of many of the older central cities located in the Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, and Midwestern regions of the U.S., commonly referred to as “The Rust Belt”, whose economies were based on a single or small number of manufacturing industries.

So-called “legacy cities” such as Lowell, MA, Bridgeport, CT, Buffalo, NY, Erie, PA, Camden, NJ, Baltimore, MD, Youngstown, OH, Gary IN, and St. Louis, MO have experienced waves of plant closings, rising unemployment and poverty, massive public and private disinvestment and escalating fiscal problems that have forced local officials to repeatedly cut services while raising taxes. These business, employment and fiscal trends, exacerbated by reductions in Federal subsidies to cities and counties, have prompted many established businesses and residents from these communities to relocate to areas offering enhanced economic opportunities, municipal services, and quality of life (Mallach and Brachman, 2013).

Nowhere have the combined effects of deindustrialization, outmigration, and public and private disinvestment caused by globalization and well-intentioned but counter-productive local, state, and federal policies been more visible than in the once-vibrant riverfront community of East St. Louis, Illinois. Established as a riverfront trading outpost in 1820, originally called Illinoistown, East St. Louis quickly grew into one of the Mississippi River Watershed’s most successful urban communities boasting vibrant transportation, manufacturing, finance, and retail sectors. In 1957, East St. Louis was selected an All-American City by the editors of Look Magazine and the leaders of the National Municipal League. At that time, the city which was frequently referred to as “The Pittsburgh of the West” had a population of 88,000, a large number of well-paying union jobs, extremely low unemployment and poverty rates, the second highest homeownership rate in the State of Illinois and a highly-regarded municipal administration skillful at planning, financing, and implementing major housing and infrastructure projects (Judd and Mendelson, 1973).

Between 1960 and 1980, East St. Louis’ economy was ravaged

by technological changes affecting its major industries causing three-quarters of its businesses to close eliminating more than 12,000 well-paying industrial jobs (Fig. 1).



Fig.1: on the left, an abandoned meatpacking plant; on the right, the recently demolished Majestic Theater in East St. Louis (source: St. Louis Newspaper).

These plant closings and job losses devastated the city's retail sector, housing market, and municipal finances. By 1990, East St. Louis' population had plummeted to 39,000, its unemployment and poverty rates had risen to 29% and 42% respectively, and the city had amassed a municipal debt of \$88 million which consumed three-quarters of its annual revenues. By 1990, East St. Louis' deteriorating economic and fiscal condition led to additional outmigration among its working and middle classes leaving one-third of its building lots vacant and one fourth of its residential structures abandoned prompting a well-known editor of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch to refer to the city as, "The South Bronx of the Midwest" (Reardon, 2000).

As economic and fiscal conditions in East St. Louis worsened, state and federal agencies placed its community development block grant program, public housing agency, and school district under varying forms of state and federal oversight. When these steps failed to stabilize the city's economy, the State of Illinois passed the 1990 Distressed Cities Act providing East St. Louis with \$25 million in emergency aid to reorganize its finances while transferring its budget-making, financial management, and municipal hiring responsibilities to a state-controlled Financial Advisory Authority. The State of Illinois also issued its first riverboat gambling license to a company committed to opening a gaming facility along the city's waterfront that promised to generate 500 living wage hospitality jobs and \$9 million in annual gross receipts taxes for the city (Secretary of

State, August 5, 2018).

Self-Organization

While these State actions enabled East St. Louis to re-establish a number of basic municipal services that had been suspended for years, including: weekly garbage collection, street lighting, and road repairs, conditions within the city’s twenty-two residential neighborhoods continued to decline. Angered by recurring problems with basic municipal service delivery, especially police and fire protection, escalating gang violence, and ever-rising property taxes, a small group of women from the city’s Emerson Park neighborhood decided they could not wait for City Hall to address these and other problems (Fig. 2).

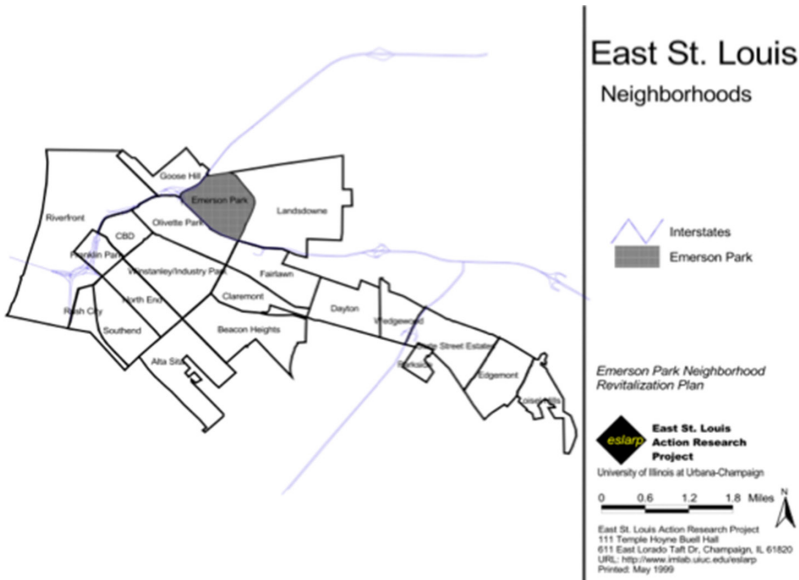


Fig. 2: Location of the Emerson Park Neighborhood within the City of East St. Louis (source: ESLARP/UIUC Plan Map).

Under the leadership of Ms. Ceola Davis, a long-time community activist and settlement house worker, this group composed of determined mothers and grandmothers established, with the help of the Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House, the Emerson Park Development Corporation (EPDC) to carryout a series of resident-initiated improvement projects to stabilize and improve conditions within the neighborhood (Reardon, 2003).

They began their efforts by seeking site control of three arson damaged brick buildings located near the Family Life Day Care Center where many neighborhood children attended pre-school. Upon learning that these properties were being held in trust by St. Clair County due to their owners' failure to pay their local property taxes, Ms. Davis and her neighbors took two buses to Belleville, the County Seat, to formally request the transfer of title for these offending properties to their organization so they could transform them into a much needed and desired toddlers' playground. After securing temporary title to these properties, the leaders of the Emerson Park Development Corporation mobilized more than fifty local residents to "deconstruct" the abandoned structures on these sites carefully salvaging recyclable building materials, such as: windows, doors, tin ceilings, porcelain sinks and tubs, light fixtures, cooper wiring and bricks that could be sold to generate funds to construct the playground.

Following several weeks of careful building deconstruction using hand tools, Emerson Park residents transported the architectural salvage items removed from these structures across the river to St. Louis' flourishing Cherokee's Street Antiques and Collectibles District where they generated more than \$5,000 for EPCD's "playground raising" initiative. Realizing the need to raise additional funds to construct a safe, attractive, and well-equipped children's play space, the group organized a highly successful weekly fish fry which raised several thousand dollars. With these self-generated funds in hand, the Emerson Park Development Corporation then succeeded in securing matching funds for the playground project from the Ralston Purina Company located in nearby St. Louis.

The following spring, the Emerson Park Development Corporation organized dozens of residents to clear, grade, and install play structures, park benches, flowers, shrubbery, cement walkways and an attractive fountain on the land formerly occupied by the three structures which they named Shugue Park in honor of a long-time civic leader from their neighborhood. Buoyed by the success of this grassroots revitalization effort, Emerson Park Development Corporation's leadership committed themselves to rebuilding their severely distressed neighborhood one block at a time. Realizing the need to secure high quality civil engineering, architectural design, and urban planning assistance to

successfully pursue their resident-led revitalization strategy, they approached their long-time State Representative Wyvetter H. Younge (D-East St. Louis) to elicit her assistance in securing these resources.

University Engagement

Representative H. Younge (Fig. 3), who was the newly appointed Chairperson of the State Legislature’s Higher Education Finance Committee, subsequently contacted Dr. Stanley O. Ikenberry, President of the University of Illinois, to request research, planning, design, and management assistance for resident-led revitalization efforts underway in East St. Louis.



Fig. 3: State Representative Wyvetter H. Younge, D-East St. Louis represented East St. Louis from 1965 until her death in 2008 (source: stltoday.com).

Shortly after receiving this request, Dr. Ikenberry asked the Deans of UIUC’s Colleges of Fine and Applied Arts, Social Work, and Education to create a program to provide the requested technical-assistance to community organizations and municipal agencies engaged in ongoing revitalization efforts in East St. Louis’ most distressed neighborhoods. Several weeks later, Professors Lewis D. Hopkins and Kieran P. Donaghy from the Department of Urban and Regional Planning presented Dr. Ikenberry with a proposal entitled the Urban Extension and Minority Assistance Project (UEMAP). This document submitted on behalf of the College of Fine and Applied Arts’ architecture, landscape architecture, and urban and regional planning

programs proposed the establishment of studios in each of these units to address the most pressing economic and social problems confront East St. Louis. The proposal also contained several innovative ideas for increasing minority enrollment in the College's planning and design programs.

The Urban Extension and Minority Access Project was launched in the fall of 1987 under the leadership of Associate Professor of Architecture, Carolyn Dry, with \$100,000 in annual funding provided by UIUC's Provost's Office. During the next three years, nearly two hundred architecture, landscape architecture, and urban and regional planning students contributed to studio classes charged with formulating workable solutions to the city's most critical issues as identified by State Representative Younge. When local stakeholders exhibited little interest in all but two of the final reports generated by these UIUC studios, student and faculty interest in the project waned prompting the Dean of the College of Fine and Applied Arts to initiate a search for a new urban planning professor with a successful track record designing and managing collaborative research projects with community-based organizations serving distressed urban neighborhoods similar to those found in East St. Louis.

Action Research

In the spring of 1990 Ken Reardon joined UIUC's Department of Urban and Regional Planning as its newest Assistant Professor. In doing so, he accepted responsibility for coordinating the department's involvement in the Urban Extension and Minority Access Project. Shortly after arriving on campus, he made an appointment with Professor Dry to learn more about the University's East St. Louis outreach efforts and to elicit her thoughts regarding how he might best contribute to this project which was clearly struggling to gain community and campus support. During the meeting, she described the problems the project had experienced recruiting students and faculty to participate. Professor Dry explained how reluctant people were to commit to a fieldwork intensive research project taking place nearly 200 miles from the campus in a severely distressed community whose reputation had been savaged by journalists and scholars.

She then informed him that she was stepping aside as the

Faculty Coordinator for the project so he could assume leadership for the effort, which appeared, from her perspective, to be clearly related to his housing and community development research, teaching, and outreach interests. Having made this announcement, she presented him with a large box containing background reports on East St. Louis, maps of the city and its surrounding area, and copies of student and faculty research reports funded by the project. Alarmed by this unexpected turn of events Ken made a beeline to Professor Lew Hopkins, Head of the Department of Urban and Regional Planning Office, to inform him of what had taken place. He argued that it was a bad idea to have an inexperienced Assistant Professor managing an ambitious interdepartmental outreach effort in a severely distressed city during his “probationary period”.

Professor Hopkins assured him that the members of the department, college, and university promotion and tenure committees would recognize the leadership of the project as an important form of engaged scholarship. With this assurance that he agreed to serve as the Urban Extension and Minority Access Project’s Faculty Coordinator for the coming year. After reviewing Professor Dry’s collection of East St. Louis documents, he proceeded to collect and review as many East St. Louis reports, studies and plans from the University’s Urban Planning and Landscape Architecture Library to gain a deeper understanding of the origins, evolution, and current state of the city. Among the many items he read, was a remarkable Comprehensive Plan for East St. Louis, IL prepared by Harlan Bartholomew that warned St. Louis and East St. Louis’ civic leaders of the likely “hollowing out” of the region’s Central Business Districts in the event significant public investments in education, housing, and infrastructure were not made. This was a prophetic but largely ignored document that predicted, with great precision, the economic and social collapse that devastated both cities during the last quarter of the 20th century (Bartholomew, 1920).

As the fall semester approached, Professor Reardon worked with a Graduate Research Assistant, named Ishaq Shafiq, to schedule approximately fifty face-to-face interviews with a cross-section of municipal, business, religious, educational, labor, cultural, and civic leaders from East St. Louis to elicit their views on the city’s most important assets and challenges, future development possibilities, UIUC’s past work within the city, and

its possible future role. The vast majority of those we called for interviews were UIUC alumni who appeared eager to share their assessment of current conditions and future development possibilities for their city. Among the major themes that emerged from these interviews were the following:

1. Economic conditions in East St. Louis were much worse than previously reported.
2. Local human service organizations and area churches attempting to respond to the human costs of the city's economic collapse were "running on empty".
3. The City of East St. Louis was viewed as a highly corrupt entity with little, if any, planning and development capacity.
4. Colleges and Universities which had undertaken East St. Louis research were generally viewed as "parasitic organizations" that used the serious problems confronting the city to secure external grants that provided few, if any, benefits to local stakeholders.

One of the first neighborhood residents interviewed summed up local stakeholders' views of University researchers in the following way, "The last thing East St. Louis needs is another university type telling us what every 6th grader in town already knows." While the overwhelming majority of those interviewed expressed little interest in collaborating with UIUC on local research projects, the recently appointed Executive Director of the Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House felt differently. William Kreeb was eager to introduce UIUC students and faculty to the small group of woman who had successfully constructed Shugue Park and were now committed to undertaking the environmental, economic, and social restoration of their once-thriving residential community one project and one block at a time. He, subsequently, introduced faculty and students to the Steering Committee of the Emerson Park Development Corporation which was staffed by Ms. Ceola Davis, a long-time outreach worker and grassroots activist, employed by the Neighborhood House.

During this meeting, Ms. Davis, a local minister, and a dozen neighborhood women described how they had worked together to design and build Shugue Park and were now committed to carrying out a series of larger-scale economic and community

development projects aimed at stabilizing their community. While they expressed a strong desire to collaborate with external partners, such as nearby colleges and universities, to carry out these projects, they said such partnerships would have to be organized differently than they had in the past. To highlight the need for a new social contract between East St. Louis' neighborhoods and colleges and universities seeking to be their allies, Ms. Davis pointed to three stacks of reports resting on the conference table around which we were meeting. She described how external agencies had funded UIUC as well as several nearby universities to undertake each of these research projects, which focused on identifying and analyzing the major problems confronting the city. Ms. Davis went on to criticize the "deficit-focused" nature of these reports while pointing out that not a single one of the planning and development proposal contained in these documents had ever been fully implemented. From the residents' perspective, the city's extreme poverty had frequently been used by academic researchers to secure grants from which they, their students, and their institutions greatly benefitted. Local residents and institutions, on the other hand, typically gained little from these grants while being asked to provide important historical information, current socioeconomic data, and access to key local opinion leaders to the researchers. Over time, the many research reports documenting East St. Louis' serious economic and social problems had contributed to a public narrative, accepted by many policy-makers, that conditions within the city had deteriorated too far to be stabilized or reversed. Ms. Davis and her colleagues fervently believed that their neighborhood and city could, in the short-run, be stabilized and, in the long-run, revitalized. However, they believed this would require a new, more reciprocal, approach to community/university partnerships. After sharing their concerns regarding academic researchers, they invited faculty and students to work with them on a series of community planning and development projects based upon the following principles for a "non-exploitive" or "non-colonial" town-gown partnerships, which they had recently formulated.

1. Local residents and leaders rather than campus officials and regional funders will determine the issues to be addressed by the new community/university development partnership.

2. Local stakeholders will be actively engaged, as equal partners with university researchers, at each and every step in the research, planning, and design process.
3. Local residents expect the University to commit a minimum of five years of collaborative research and planning in Emerson Park to enable the research results generated by the project to be translated into concrete improvements.
4. Community partners assisting the University expect the campus to include their organizations, on an equitable basis, in any external funding they seek to support common work.
5. Local leaders expect the University's help in creating a community-based planning and development organization with the capacity to implement the major improvement projects emerging from the project after the campus ends their involvement in the project (Reardon, 2000).

Following their presentation of these principles, Emerson Park Development Corporation's leaders encouraged our team to return to campus to discuss these alternative partnership principles with our colleagues and administration. Upon returning to campus, Professor Reardon shared the demands of the Emerson Park Development Corporation with the Head of the Department of Urban and Regional Planning and the Dean of the College of Fine and Applied Arts who strongly encouraged him to work with this group. He subsequently returned to East St. Louis to meet with Ms. Davis and her neighbors to discuss the focus of our first semester's work. While they wanted UIUC students to work with them to complete feasibility studies, program development plans, and grant proposals for specific community improvement projects, Professor Reardon felt that faculty and students needed to prepare a highly professional comprehensive development plan for the area that would convince potential funders that their proposals were evidence based, reflective of the best practices in community development, and workable within the East St. Louis context.

While residents were initially highly skeptical of participating in what they perceived to be another "academic" planning exercise, they were willing to work with students and faculty on the development of a comprehensive neighborhood improvement plan provided, the UIUC group refocused activities after six months on data collection and analysis efforts aimed

at advancing their “top priority” revitalization efforts. As the end of the summer approached, Ishaq and Professor Reardon plastered the campus with flyers announcing the launch of an exciting new Neighborhood Planning Workshop featuring “hands on” projects in an economically challenged Illinois community. Eleven students attended the first class in the fall of 1990 during which Professor Reardon described the research methodology they would be using to formulate a comprehensive neighborhood revitalization plan for a low-income urban community. He then informed them that they would be doing their fieldwork in East St. Louis in support of a newly established community-based planning and development organization. Unsure of how many of the students would remain in the class given East St. Louis’ reputation as a hopeless case of urban decline, Professor Reardon was delighted when all of the students returned to the classroom for the second half of the class ready to work.

The following week, the class made its first trip to East St. Louis, which is located 188 miles from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign campus. As the van entered the city, students quickly noticed the poor condition of the streets, the many vacant stores in its Downtown, the lack of functioning streetlights and traffic signals, and the many illegal-dumping sites. As the van approached the Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House located in the heart of the Emerson Park community, one of the second-year planning students asked, “What can we possibly do to help this community which appears to need so much” (Reardon, 2019). Before Professor Reardon could formulate a thoughtful response to this heartfelt question, Ms. Davis appeared outside of the vehicle inviting students to join the Emerson Park Development Corporation’s founding members for lunch, a discussion of the neighborhood’s rich social history, current challenges and future development possibilities, and a short tour of the Neighborhood House and its surrounding community.

As the UIUC students ate lunch, Ms. Davis asked her neighbors to introduce themselves, explain when and why they had moved to Emerson Park, and describe their hopes for their new partnership with the university. Most of the residents attending the meeting had moved into the neighborhood more than twenty years ago when it was a stable white community of well-kept shotgun bungalows. They described the area as a quiet, well-maintained and highly cohesive community that offered many

services for families and activities for children. They explained how this changed when the rail yards, food processing, chemical production, and steel-making plants that employed local residents closed in the late 1960s and early 1970s. They also described how their requests for city assistance to address the emerging environmental, economic, and social problems confronting their neighborhood had gone unheeded prompting them to form the Emerson Park Development Corporation which they viewed as a self-help revitalization organization.

Following this discussion, Ms. Davis offered to take the group on a tour of the neighborhood. As the UIUC delegation followed Ms. Davis out of the building she encountered a small group of children who were leaving the Neighborhood House's Day Care Center. When the children ran to show Ms. Davis their latest artwork, she put her glasses on taking time to offer a positive comment about each drawing. As she did so, she asked each of the children's mothers how they and their families were doing. It was clear that Ms. Davis had gotten to know each of these families extremely well through decades of service in this working-class neighborhood. During the tour, Ms. Davis showed her campus visitors an abandoned public housing complex, a recently shuttered elementary school, dozens of illegal dump sites, and a city street where cash starved residents had used hand tools to remove cobblestones to raise funds for their families. The highlight of the tour, however, was the visit to the recently constructed Shugue Playground where a small group of unemployed men were removing trash from the children's play area. As soon as they saw Ms. Davis they warmly greeted and embraced her. She responded by introducing the class as her newest friends, explaining that they would be working in the neighborhood during the current year. One man stepped forward and volunteered, as a long-time resident, to help the students in any way that he could. As Professor Reardon and his students departed, Ms. Davis reminded the men that she would be cooking dinner, with all of "the fixings" at the Neighborhood House on Sunday at 3 pm. She had been quietly funding and staffing this Sunday dinner for families who were struggling to survive for many years.

Returning to the Neighborhood House, Ms. Davis and her neighbors reviewed their top improvement priorities with the students that included: a reduction in the sale of illegal drugs, the

boarding up of vacant buildings, home improvement assistance for seniors and veterans seeking to remain in their homes, and a workable strategy for addressing the community's illegal dumping crisis. The members of the UIUC student delegation voiced a strong desire to assist EPDC in formulating workable strategies to address each of these problems confronting their community. The group proposed undertaking a comprehensive neighborhood improvement plan during the fall semester to: a.) collect compelling evidence justifying these and other neighborhood improvements; and b.) expand the number of Emerson Park residents, business operators, property owners, and institutional leaders participating in and contributing to EPDC. The UIUC group described how they planned to conduct extensive outreach activities, in the form of door-to-door canvassing, at each step in the planning process to increase the number of local stakeholders supporting EPDC's projects. They justified this bottom-up/bottom-sideways approach to community planning, which was described as participatory action research, as their response to residents' demands to be fully involved at each and every step in the research, planning, and development process (Whyte, 1989).

The residents' initial response to the comprehensive planning proposal was very negative. They stressed the importance of showing local stakeholders concrete progress on the issues they had already identified in order to prevent them from abandoning the neighborhood. While the UIUC group appreciated the urgency of formulating concrete plans to address the public safety, affordable housing, and environmental challenges facing the neighborhood; they also believed that it would be impossible to secure the external funding to address these issues, given East St. Louis' reputation for municipal corruption and political infighting, in the absence of a high-quality, evidence-based, community plan enjoying broad-based support from local residents, institutional leaders, and elected officials. Assuring residents that they could complete such a plan during the fall semester of 1990, the UIUC group committed to devoting the spring semester of 1991 to formulating specific implementation strategies to combat the major issues emerging from the proposed resident-led planning strategy. Viewing this proposal as a reasonable compromise, EPDC's leaders committed themselves to working with the UIUC group to devise and implement a comprehensive neighborhood

improvement plan aimed at restoring the quality of life within their historic African American community.

During the three-hour ride back to campus, students shared their deep admiration for Ms. Davis and her neighbors' unshakable commitment to each other, their neighborhood, and their city. They also discussed their strong desire to do whatever was necessary during the coming semester to produce a high-quality revitalization plan residents could use to secure the political support and financial resources needed to implement community development projects. Towards this end, they organized the class into four (three-person) teams to: formulate an aggressive community media campaign informing residents about the launch of the proposed "bottom-up/bottom-sideways" planning process; prepare a detailed social history and demographic profile of the community; develop a snapshot of existing physical conditions; and summarize local stakeholders' perceptions of Emerson Park's major strengths, weaknesses, and preferred development scenarios. During the next class, students worked together to transform their preliminary work plan into a draft memorandum of agreement that laid out the goals, objectives, research activities, timetable, deliverables, and responsibilities of both parties related to the production of a professional-quality, five-year neighborhood improvement plan for the Emerson Park community.

Following EPDC's approval of the proposed memorandum of agreement, the class developed a schedule involving bi-weekly trips to Emerson Park by the whole class focused on data collection and community meetings. On alternating weeks, students and faculty travelled to East St. Louis to elicit EPDC's input on each phase of the planning process and to conduct door-knocking to ensure a high level of citizen participation and influence in the plan-making process. The UIUC group quickly developed a monthly work schedule in which they would hold an initial meeting with EPDC's leaders to discuss the research objective for each step in the planning process and to engage them in the development of various survey instruments. This meeting would be followed by a second monthly visit to the community during which they would collect the data they needed via property inspections, infrastructure surveys, resident and official interviews, and focus groups carried out by teams including both EPDC leaders and UIUC students. Following these

data collection activities, they would return to the community for a third time each month to personally invite local stakeholders to our planning analysis meetings organized to elicit their feedback on the data and to hold data review and discussion forums. During the fall semester of 1990, the Neighborhood Planning Workshop collaborated with EPDC’s leaders to complete the following research and planning activities aimed at producing a high-quality comprehensive improvement plan for the Emerson neighborhood.

Month	Planning Activities
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Organized a community media campaign to encourage stakeholder participation in the planning process -Conducted archival research and demographic analysis to gain a better understanding of Emerson Park’s historical evolution -Canvassed neighbors to ensure a strong planning analysis meeting turnout -Held the first Planning Analysis Meeting to elicit stakeholder feedback on the student-generated social history and demographic profile (35 stakeholders attended)
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Corrected the social history and demographic analysis based on local stakeholders’ feedback -Completed land use, building condition, site maintenance, and local infrastructure surveys (1,407 building parcels and 66 street lengths) -Canvassed neighbors to ensure a strong planning analysis meeting turnout -Held a second Planning Analysis Meeting to elicit feedback on the physical conditions surveys data and related GIS maps (68 stakeholders attended)

November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Corrected physical conditions data and GIS maps based on local stakeholders' feedback -Canvassed neighbors to ensure strong planning analysis meeting turnout -Held a Third Planning Analysis Meeting to elicit stakeholder feedback on interviews held with local residents and leaders - a.k.a. movers and shakers interviews (91 local stakeholders attended.)
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Corrected local perceptions data based on stakeholders' feedback -Canvassed neighbors to ensure strong planning analysis meeting turnout -Presented a Preliminary Draft of The Emerson Park Five-Year Neighborhood Improvement Plan at a community-wide meeting referred to as the Community Summit -Revised the plan based on local stakeholder feedback received at the Fourth/Final Planning Analysis (135 local stakeholders attended) -Distributed copies of the plan to local residents and leaders prior to a community-wide meeting scheduled for Dr. King's Birthday on January 16, 1991 at which time local leaders expected stakeholders to formally vote to endorse the plan and identify steps to advance its implementation

Advancing the Emerson Park Plan

In January of 1991, more than one hundred local stakeholders reconvened at the Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House to review the final draft of the Emerson Park Neighborhood Improvement Plan which sought to «enhance the overall quality of life within Emerson Park through the implementation of a comprehensive community development strategy featuring environmental remediation, crime prevention, housing

improvement, educational enhancement, and job generation initiatives». Following several suggestions aimed at further strengthening the plan's educational enhancement and job generation elements, the plan was unanimously endorsed by those attending the meeting (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1991). Following this vote, residents discussed the steps needed to be taken to promote their newly adopted plan. Following considerable discussion, those attending the meeting decided to devote the balance of 1991 to the following three activities which they expected the UIUC students and Professor Reardon to work on.

- Organize a *volunteer clean-up* of the neighborhood's major commercial thoroughfare (9th Street) which had become a popular site for illegal dumping.
- Initiate, with the help of local law enforcement agencies, a *resident-led crime prevention* initiative to reduce the sale of illegal drugs and the incidence of related violent street crime within the neighborhood.
- *Recruit local, regional, state, and federal funders* to enable EPDC to implement the major programmatic elements of their five-year neighborhood improvement plan.

Lobbying by students enrolled in the first Neighborhood Planning Workshop prompted Professor Lew Hopkins, Head of UIUC's Department of Urban and Regional Planning, to assign Professor Reardon to teach a second East St. Louis studio in the Spring of 1991 focused on "plan implementation". A mix of eighteen undergraduate and graduate planning students were recruited to participate in this "advanced workshop" by those who had participated in the first East St. Louis workshop. These students had become deeply committed to the success of Ms. Davis and her neighbors' community stabilization and revitalization plan and wanted to see the University maintain their support for the effort. With the assistance of several of the original East St. Louis class members who decided to enroll in the follow-up workshop, the UIUC group formed three teams to assist EPDC's leaders with their volunteer clean-up, crime prevention planning, and external fundraising campaign. Following an outreach schedule very similar with the one used in the inaugural workshop, these students succeeded in:

- Mobilizing nearly 200 community and campus volunteers to remove illegally dumped trash from more than twelve privately-owned lots along 9th Street which received extensive positive press coverage.
- Completing a resident-initiated crime prevention plan which laid the foundation for a highly successful crime reporting campaign carried out in cooperation with state and federal law enforcement agencies, which removed dozens of street-level drug dealers from the neighborhood greatly enhancing residents' sense of personal safety (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1992).
- Approaching nearly three dozen public and private funders active in the fields of housing and community development which produced considerable rhetorical support for EPDC's neighborhood improvement efforts but no significant funding commitments.

Community and campus enthusiasm for the project received a boost, notwithstanding the failure of EPDC/UIUC's initial funding efforts, in April of 1991 when the American Planning Association recognized the Emerson Park Neighborhood Improvement Plan as the Best Student Plan in the nation.



Fig. 4: Ms. Ceola Davis, Outreach Worker, Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House, R: Richard Settles, President, Emerson Park Development Corporation.

Adopting the Ready, Fire, Aim Approach

Riding a wave of local enthusiasm resulting from the success

of their highly visible clean-up of 9th Street, EPDC's leaders identified a series of improvement projects that could be implemented using local and campus volunteers, borrowed vehicles and equipment, donated supplies and small-scale donations. In the fall of 1991, EPDC leaders worked with students participating in UIUC's second Neighborhood Planning Workshop to organize a series of Volunteer Work Weekends focused on cleaning-up of dozens of remaining illegal dump sites located throughout the neighborhood and the scraping, priming, and painting the homes of dozens of low-income senior citizens, Veterans, and persons with disabilities living in the neighborhood (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5: on the left, UIUC volunteers boarding the bus for ESLARP's first neighborhood clean-up; on the right, UIUC volunteers help local residents remove illegally dumped trash from 9th Street.

EPDC's leaders believed these projects would help local residents who remained skeptical regarding the possibilities for meaningful change in East St. Louis overcome these feelings while encouraging outside funders to reconsider financial support for the projects featured in EPDC's recently completed plan.

Throughout the 1991-1992 academic year, students participating in UIUC's Neighborhood Planning Workshop II and Planning Implementation Workshop II, assisted by design students enrolled in studios offered by UIUC's School of Architecture and Department of Landscape Architecture, who had been recruited by UIUC's planning students to join the ever-expanding community/university partnership to turn East St. Louis around, began working together to inform residents about these newly organized grassroots environmental restoration and housing stabilization initiatives. As increasing

numbers of residents requested assistance with clean-up and paint-up projects, EPDC assembled a committee of local pastors to prioritize these requests and assist with the recruitment of local volunteers to work with the UIUC students on the selected projects (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6: on the left, UIUC students and faculty participating in an early paint-up/scrape-up effort: on the right, Rev. Herman Watson, Pastor of the Mt. Sinai Missionary Baptist Church, and UIUC students installing a play structure at the Illinois Avenue Playground.

Expanding into Other Neighborhoods

Growing numbers of community and campus volunteers allowed the EPDC/UIUC partnership, which we renamed the East St. Louis Action Research Project, to undertake increasing numbers of clean-up and paint-up projects during the 1991-1992 academic year. By the Spring of 1992, more than fifty UIUC architecture, landscape architecture, and urban planning students and faculty were travelling to East St. Louis each month to work with local volunteers on what started out as simple outdoor clean-up and exterior paint-up projects but soon progressed to include small playground construction projects on former illegal dump sites and step, porch, and roof repairs to the homes of low-income neighborhood residents. As the number and scale of these do-it-yourself environmental remediation and home repair projects grew two things happened. First, a well-known obstetrician who had delivered many of the city's civic, religious, and political leaders during segregation approached the partnership requesting assistance for a group of church women working well outside of Emerson Park to transform a vacant building and several adjacent building lots that has been the site of a recent sexual

assault into full-scale community playground. Second, leaders from five other East St. Louis neighborhoods asked the partnership's leaders to consider expanding their community organizing, planning, design, and development activities into their neighborhoods.

ESLARP's successful implementation of a series of increasingly challenging self-help improvement projects carried out through the combined efforts of local volunteers and architecture, landscape architecture, and urban planning students enrolled in a parallel set of fall semester planning workshops followed by spring semester design-build studios increased pressure on ESLARP to expand its activities into several low-income neighborhoods close to Emerson Park. With the help of increased funding from UIUC, a generous Community Development Block Grant from the City of East St. Louis, and a major grant from HUD's newly established Community Outreach Partnership Center, ESLARP expanded its bottom-up, bottom-sideways planning activities between 1992 and 1998 into the city's Lansdowne, Winstanley-Industry Park, Olivette Park, Alta Sita, and South End neighborhoods where a majority of East St. Louis' poor and working class residents lived in steadily deteriorating conditions.

With financial support provided by these and other funding sources, ESLARP was able to significantly enhance its support for resident-led planning and development in East St. Louis. These funds enabled ESLARP to hire a full-time director with extensive economic and community development policy-making, programming, and fundraising experience. These resources also permitted the program to offer Graduate Research Assistantships to ten to twelve architecture, landscape architecture, and urban and regional planning students who assisted faculty in recruiting students for their workshops/studios, carrying out the detailed planning, design, and logistical work required for successful work weekends, serving as "crew chiefs" supervising students carrying out clean-up and restoration projects, and preparing funding proposals needed to support ESLARP's rapidly expanding list of neighborhood improvement projects. Finally, these resources allowed ESLARP to establish a fully-staffed community organizing, planning, and development research center in the city, called the East St. Louis Neighborhood Technical

Assistance Center, which offered local residents interested in undertaking new economic and community development projects with a full range of no-cost planning, design, legal and funding assistance. These services were provided by a four-person staff consisting of a: community organizing, urban planner, architect/designer, and a lawyer who were supervised by ESLARP's participating faculty.

ESLARP's Accomplishments

As its tenth anniversary approached in 2000, ESLARP's accomplishments had earned the partnership a well-deserved regional, national, and international reputation for community planning and development excellence. It was asked to host the annual conference of HUD's Community Outreach Partnership Center in 1996, it received highly favorable coverage in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, the Washington Post and The Economist, and was one of only two American development projects invited to participate in the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development's Voluntary Action for Local Democracy Project enabling its staff to present its resident-led model of community planning and development at UN Headquarters in Geneva, the UN's Social Summit in Copenhagen, and the UN's Habitat II Conference in Istanbul (Pierce, 1996).

During its first decade of operation, this unique community/university development partnership achieved a number of significant outcomes. First, it supported residents, business operators, property owners, institutional leaders, and elected officials from five of East St. Louis' most economically challenged neighborhoods in creating citizen organizations whose leaders possessed the knowledge, skills, and competencies to design and implement significant economic and community development. Second, it provided high quality community planning and design assistance that enabled East St. Louis-based development organizations to successfully implement more than \$200 million in needed economic and community development projects in the city's long abandoned older residential neighborhoods. Among the projects ESLARP helped advance was the Parsons Place Residential Development in Emerson Park, the extension of the MetroLink into East St. Louis (Fig. 7), and the construction of Eagle's Nest, a special

needs housing complex, for wounded Gulf War Veterans.

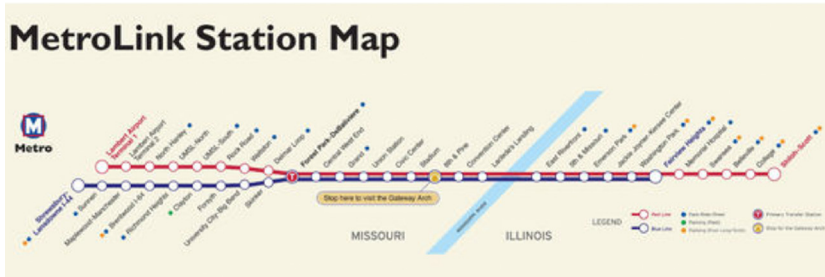


Fig. 7: Map of the MetroLink System which was originally designed to end at LaClede's Landing on the Missouri side of the Mississippi. However, pressure from ESLARP's community partners supported by student research extended the project through East St. Louis to Belleville providing low-income residents with access to living-wage jobs in Downtown St. Louis and in the Lambert Airport District.

Third, it provided a deeply transformative professional education for thousands of architecture, landscape architecture, and urban and regional planning that prompted a disproportionate number of these students to choose non-traditional professional careers with community-based development organizations, faith-based institutions, and public agencies promoting sustainable forms of development in many of America's poorest communities. Fourth, it exposed hundreds of low-income students of color from East St. Louis to the significant intellectual, professional, and community service opportunities available within the planning and design fields prompting dozens of these young people to pursue careers in architecture, landscape architecture, and urban and regional planning where historically they have been grossly underrepresented. Fifth, the success of the project inspired poor and working-class residents and institutional leaders from other economically challenged cities in the United States and abroad to undertake similar bottom-up, bottom-sideways planning and development efforts. Finally, ESLARP's community leaders and academic partners co-created a highly effective approach to community planning and development which represents a significant contribution to the progressive planning literature which is described, in some detail, in the following section of this paper (Clavel, 1984, Krumholz, 1990).

The Evolution of ESLARP's Planning Model

Participatory Action Research

ESLARP's initial Emerson Park planning activities were carried

out using participatory action research methods as described by Kurt Lewin, (1951) William F. Whyte, (Whyte, Greenwood, and Lazes, 1998) and Davydd Greenwood (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). UIUC students sought to actively engage EPDC leaders and Emerson Park residents at each and every phase of the planning process from the: inventorying and prioritizing of planning issues, organizing data collection and analysis, formulating development goals and objectives, creating detailed action plans, devising workable implementation strategies, pursuing project implementation efforts, and structuring monitoring and evaluation schemes.

The ongoing engagement techniques UIUC students and faculty used in Emerson Park and its surrounding neighborhoods produced plans which benefited from the integration of what Clifford Geertz described as the “local knowledge” possessed by well-respected community/institutional actors and the “expert knowledge” possessed by skilled university-trained researchers (Geertz, 1985). These plans which were co-produced by local leaders and university researchers for the Emerson Park, Lansdowne, and Winstanley-Industry Park neighborhoods between 1990-1993 garnered enthusiastic support from their local sponsors as well as a cross-section of other institutions within these communities. Despite the existence of a broad-base of non-partisan political support from what Lewis Wirth (1939), Suzanne Keller (1969), and other described as “local intermediaries” such as block clubs, homeowner associations, tenant organizations, and religious institutions these groups lacked the political power to compel local government and their allies to fund even the most modest improvement projects included in their plans.

Reflecting upon the failure of their participatory action research-based approach to community planning to produce meaningful levels of public and private support for their efforts, local leaders and their university allies re-evaluated their model. While their participatory action research approach had generated plans that their community partners and allies wholeheartedly supported, these networks of local intermediary institutions which had been devastated by the high level of out-migration affecting these neighborhoods, lacked the membership base, leadership cadre and political power to pressure the city to support their work. Referencing Robert Putnam’s widely-cited “Bowling Alone”

article and book which documented the weakening and collapse of many of the civic networks that produce the social capital that enable residents of local communities to come together to solve critical problems, local leaders and their University allies quickly acknowledged the need to fundamentally change their planning process (Putnam, 2000). They articulated the need to devise a planning process that would go beyond engaging residents who were participating in already organized groups. They described the need to reach out to the vast majority of neighborhood residents who were uninvolved in any local institution to encourage them to become active members in the community-based planning and development organizations in East St. Louis that were fighting for more redistributive development policies and participatory planning and policy-making processes.

Direct Action Organizing

After considerable discussion, they decided to integrate the principles and methods of direct action organizing as advocated by Saul Alinsky (1971), Wade Rathke (2018), and Michael Gecan (2004) into their future neighborhood planning activities. In doing so, they began referring to this new power-focused approach to resident-led planning and development as empowerment planning. They articulated the goals of this new approach as, “enhancing the capacity of community-based organizations representing poor and working-class families to affect the public and private investment decisions that, to a large extent, determine the quality of urban life” (Reardon, 2005). The incorporation of direct action organizing into ESLARP’s ongoing planning activities had a number of immediate impacts. The empowerment approach to neighborhood planning placed the recruitment of concerned, but previously uninvolved neighborhood residents, into groups that were leading local resident-led planning efforts on par with the collection and analysis of high quality data needed for these plans. It also made the identification and development of new leaders a top priority within ESLARP’s future planning efforts. Local leaders, with the assistance of UIUC students and faculty, soon designed a systematic approach to moving neighborhood residents with little previous political experience through a series of increasingly challenging leadership activities, with appropriate support, to expand the pool of experienced activists.

Furthermore, local leaders were discouraged from viewing the formal adoption of community plans by local residents as “the end” of the planning process. They were also trained to identify the key political leaders and bodies responsible for delivering economic and community development services their community needed. Using a basic approach to power analysis formulated by Chicago’s Midwest Academy, they learned how to use their organization’s expanding membership base to pressure these officials and their organizations to support resident-generated development plans (Bobo, Kendall, and Max, 2010).

Beginning in 1993, ESLARP’s leadership applied their new empowerment approach to community planning in their work in East St. Louis’ Winstanley-Industry Park and Olivette Park neighborhoods. The combination of technical planning and grassroots organizing activities central to this new approach enabled ESLARP to secure the support of local officials for their work in these neighborhoods which resulted in the first commitment of significant external funds from the City of East St. Louis, St. Clair County and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Growing external interest in and support for ESLARP’s work among public and private funders enabled the partnership to plan and implement increasingly ambitious community projects. Among these initiatives were the:

- Renovation of the original Mt. Sinai Missionary Church to serve as ESLARP’s East St. Louis planning and design center.
- Moderate rehabilitation of ten low-income family residences using funds provided by HUD’s Home Program.
- Construction of four new homes through the collaboration of EPCD, ESLARP and East Louis’ Family Housing Program.
- Creation of East St. Louis’ first public access computer laboratory at the site of the newly constructed Mt. Sinai Missionary Baptist Church
- Establishment of a “revolving loan fund” to stabilize homes occupied by low-income seniors at risk for abandonment
- Adaptive re-use of a former used car lot as a public market offering affordable, fresh, and culturally appropriate fruits, vegetables, meats, fish, and dry goods.
- Restoration of the historic carriage house at the Katherine Dunham Museum enabling it to be used for classes

and rehearsals for the Katherine Dunham Youth Dance Ensemble.

The success of these and other resident-identified neighborhood improvement projects significantly increased the number of community residents, regional funders, and university students and faculty participating in ESLARP (Fig. 8).

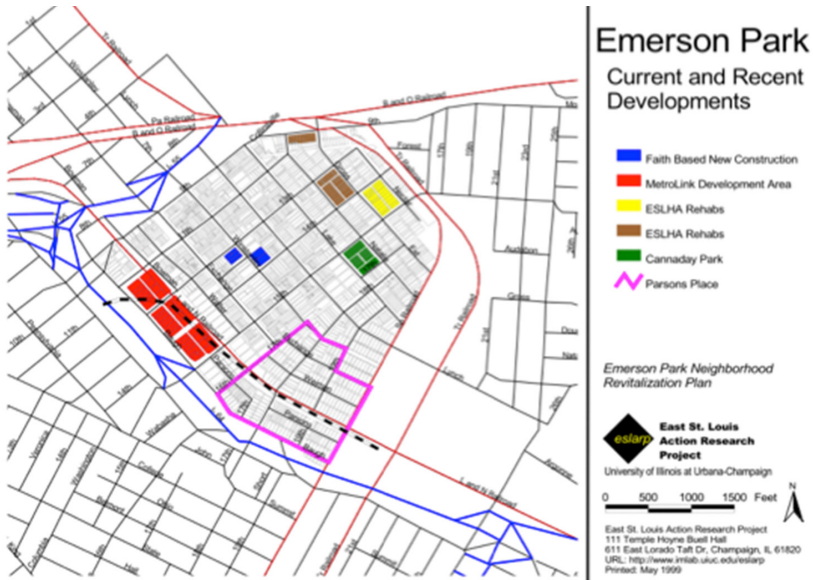


Fig. 8: Map of selective neighborhood improvements in the Emerson Park neighborhood.

These additional human and financial resources enabled ESLARP to undertake increasingly complex, visible, and impactful projects whose success generated increased regional and national press coverage and recognition of the project. Between 1993 and 1996, ESLARP’s leaders were the recipients of a number of prestigious urban planning and community excellence awards. Among these were:

- Award-Winning Project for Socially-Responsible Design, Architects and Designers for Social Responsibility
- National Award for Program Innovation, Economic and Community Development Division, National Universities’ Continuing Education Association
- Interdisciplinary Teaching Award, Association of Collegiate

Schools of Architecture

- Frederick J. Miller Award for Distinguished Public Service, University YMCA, Champaign, IL
- Public Service Awards, Illinois Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects
- National Excellence Award (Co-Recipient), U.S. Preparatory Committee, U.N. Habitat II World Summit

Popular Education

Therefore, it came as quite a surprise when leaders of the neighborhood organizations ESLARP was working most closely with invited the faculty working on the project to an emergency meeting at the Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House. Arriving at the meeting, students and faculty encountered more than forty neighborhood leaders within whom they had been working for a number of years. Ms. Davis began the meeting by stating that she and her colleagues had never had the opportunity to work with a group of outside “allies” as eager and committed to supporting their work as ESLARP’s core faculty. She then proceeded to share the definition of empowerment planning that we had worked with them to develop which appeared earlier in this chapter. Ms. Davis then asked students and faculty if they were still committed to pursuing this type of transformational planning practice. Following their affirmative response, she asked «So, when are you going to get started! ».

Sensing confusion and rising anger, Richard Settles who was then serving as EPDC’s President said, «In your model of community/university development partnership, community residents and grassroots leaders are not even the tail on the dog. INSTEAD, we are the fleas hoping to land on the tail of the dog». He described how ESLARP brought many of the nation’s most talented students together with local leaders, most of whom have never had the opportunity to attend college, to solve complex urban problems. In doing so, the faculty felt it necessary to provide their relatively privileged students with nine to twelve credit hours of graduate instruction in community organizing, physical planning, affordable housing, and non-profit management each semester to enable them to make inspired contributions to the planning and design projects being advanced by the ESLARP partnership. At the same time, ESLARP has failed to develop a single course in economic and

community development, or related fields, for the East St. Louis residents participating in the partnership to enable them to make their highest and best contribution to these efforts. Ms. Davis followed up Mr. Settles remarks by saying, «The bad news is that you inadvertently replicated a racist, sexist, and classist approach to town/gown collaboration. The good news is that redemption is always possible within the Black community».

East St. Louis Neighborhood College

On behalf of the approximately 50 neighborhood leaders attending the meeting, Ms. Davis proposed a solution to our “uneven partnership” problem. She asked students and faculty to work with ESLARP’s community partners to create a People’s School for Planning and Design in East St. Louis modelled after the Highlander Research and Education Center founded by Myles Horton, Don West, and James Dombrowski in 1932 (Adams and Horton, 1975). This famous center for popular education based upon the Norwegian folk schools of the early 1900s played a pivotal role in training labor, Civil Rights, environmental justice, gender/human rights activists in the South for decades. Ms. Davis suggested working with her neighbors to identify three to four courses focused on critical community organizing, planning, and development topics of importance to a cross-section of local leaders given the stage of community development they were currently pursuing. She encouraged offering the courses on Saturday mornings when people were not working and/or engaged in church activities.

While initially irritated by Ms. Davis’ critique of their East St. Louis work, faculty and students quickly realized how our partnership model had unwittingly contributed to reinforcing racial and class privilege within the field of community development in East St. Louis. They subsequently worked with Ms. Davis over the next three years to design and offer more than a dozen courses for community leaders seeking to enhance their community organizing, planning, and development knowledge and skills in order to enable them to provide more skillful leadership of resident-led planning in their neighborhoods and throughout the city. Between 1996 and 2000, more than two hundred East St. Louis residents completed adult education classes in community planning and development offered through

ESLARP's Neighborhood College (Fig. 9).



Fig. 9: Ken Reardon co-teaching, along with Ms. Ceola Davis, the Neighborhood College's first course on direct action organizing.

Among the classes offered through this unique community/university education partnership were the following:

- Fundamentals of Direct Action Organizing
- Community Planning 101
- Urban Design for Beginners
- Basic Grantsmanship
- ABC's of Non-Profit Management
- Principles and Practice of Affordable Housing
- Community-Based Crime Prevention
- Urban Food Systems and Food Security

Completing the New Model: One Size Does Not Fit All?

When a cross-section of local leaders was asked what the most important contribution ESLARP made to the city on the project's tenth anniversary, the overwhelming majority of respondents identified the courses offered by the Neighborhood College as the most significant contribution UIUC had offered to advance resident-led change in the city. The importance local leaders attributed to the courses offered by the Neighborhood College, prompted ESLARP's leaders to incorporate the popular education

principles and practices embedded within the adult education courses offered through this unique social invention as the third element of their empowerment model of community planning.

During the coming years, this three-pronged approach to resident-led planning and development in East St. Louis produced a series of increasingly impressive community development accomplishments within the city culminating in the extension of a planned light rail line connecting Lambert International Airport and Downtown St. Louis into East St. Louis. Local leaders using the empowerment planning techniques they had acquired through ESLARP were able to pressure local, regional, and federal transportation officials to extend the train line across the river into East St. Louis significantly enhancing residents access to living wage jobs on the Missouri side of the river. Leveraging this massive public investment in mass transportation in East St. Louis made possible by their organizing and planning knowledge and skills, these leaders were able to recruit one of the nation's most highly respected affordable housing builders, Richard Baron, of McCormack, Baron, and Salazar to work with them in locating, designing, and constructing Parsons Place a 140-unit, mixed-income, mixed-finance residential development project which has been highly successful. More recently, the Sasone Development Company has taken advantage of Emerson Park's new commuter rail access and the success of the Parson's Place Project to construct a new four-story, mixed-use complex, called Jazz @ Winter Circle, which features 74 units of affordable senior housing, an attractive "small foot-print" neighborhood grocery featuring fresh foods, and a doctor's office.

During the past twenty-five years, ESLARP's Empowerment Approach to Community Planning has been successfully replicated in a number of economically distressed communities in the United States. Among these are Liberty, NY; New Brunswick, NJ; Memphis, TN and Charlotte, NC. The projects undertaken in these communities using an empowerment approach to community planning are in several important ways similar. First, they took place in urban communities that were severely distress where there was intense competition among local communities and institutions for limited public and private housing, economic, and community development investment. Second, these projects were undertaken in towns and cities where the political power needed to advance large-scale development projects was highly

concentrated in the hands of a small number of elites. Third, they took place within neighborhoods where the overwhelming majority of people engaged in local organizing, planning, and development activities differed substantially from the professional researchers and planners assisting them in terms of race, class, gender, and age (Fig. 10).

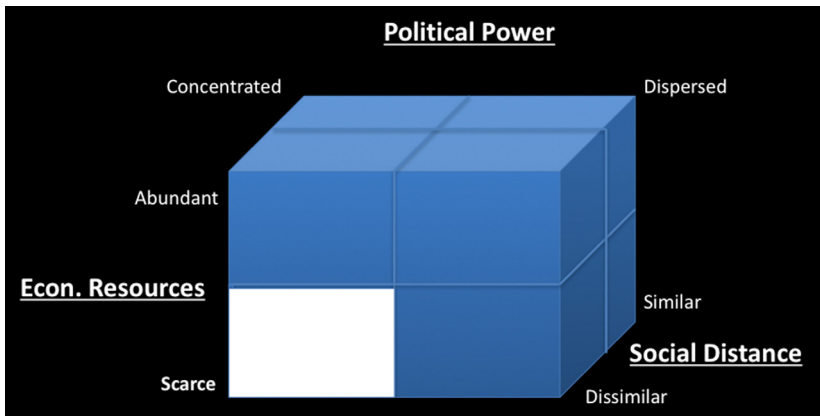


Fig. 10: Image showing alternative planning contexts in which professionals might work.

It appears as though the three elements of the empowerment approach to community planning, namely, participatory action research, direct action organizing, and popular education, are particularly well-suited to address the unique challenges confronting planners seeking to advance the advocacy planning and design efforts by poor and working-class communities in places with few resources, highly concentrated political power, and significant social distance separating those organizing for change and those planning professionals who are supporting them. In this coming years, additional low-income communities should be funded to pursue empowerment-based planning to determine whether or not this suggested relationship is true. If this is found to be the case, alternative models should be development to promote bottom-up planning and design in communities where existing conditions (economic resources, power concentration, and social distance) are different. Those alternative approaches to practice should then be effectively tested. Only in this way, can we hope to formulate an empirically-based approach to community planning practice that is sensitive to the conditions local activists

and professional planners confront. This will enable us to provide future community planners with a contingency theory of community planning practice that will empower them to adopt theoretical frameworks, analytical methods, and professional practices best suited to the conditions they confront.

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Antonio Raciti earned his Ph.D. in City and Regional Planning and Design at the University of Catania, Italy. His research interests focus on relational approaches to ecological planning and design. He has been working in partnership with several community organizations in Sicily (Italy), Memphis (TN, US), and Boston (MA, US). He is currently an assistant professor in the MS in Urban Planning and Community Development Program at the University of Massachusetts Boston. antonio.raciti@umb.edu

Kenneth M. Reardon earned his Ph.D. in City and Regional Planning at Cornell University. He served as the faculty director of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's East St. Louis Action Research Project (ESLARP) from 1990 to 1999. He is currently a Professor and Director in the MS in Urban Planning and Community Development Program at the University of Massachusetts Boston. kenneth.reardon@umb.edu