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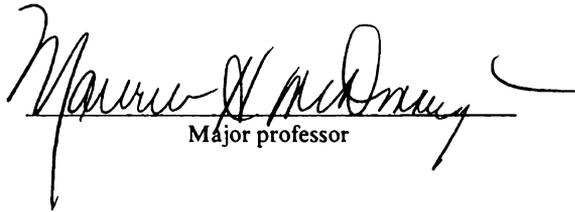
PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL EMPOWERMENT:  
COMMUNITY FORESTRY IN DETROIT

presented by

KERRY E. VACHTA

has been accepted towards fulfillment  
of the requirements for

Doctoral degree in Forestry

  
Major professor

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PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL EMPOWERMENT:  
COMMUNITY FORESTRY IN DETROIT

By

Kerry E. Vachta

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to

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Professor Maureen H. McDonough

## ABSTRACT

### PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL EMPOWERMENT: COMMUNITY FORESTRY IN DETROIT

By

Kerry E. Vachta

Rooted in historical observations of Europe and the United States, modernization theory errs in its conception of development as linear, its unsubstantiated assumptions regarding the primacy of economic development and of large scale infrastructure-centered interventions as facilitative of economic development and its theoretical treatment of participation. As evidenced by the deindustrialization and depopulation of urban centers in this country such as Detroit, Modernization Theorists accounted only for a portion of the development cycle and continued reliance on modernization strategies has failed to address the resulting economic and social ramifications in these settings.

However, collective efforts of Detroit citizens to reclaim their city in local efforts to establish mutual reliance and economic independence belie to the presumed linearity of the development process. Exploring appropriate roles for professionals in supporting such local initiatives, the Urban Resources Initiative of Michigan State University's Department of Forestry (URI/MSU) applied participatory development, in the form of social (or community) forestry 'technologies' borrowed from the South, through collaborative partnerships with community-based organizations in Detroit.

A review of the literatures in participation, empowerment theory and the sociological study of community and local organizing as well as in participatory development, determined several overlapping themes and concerns. A conceptual model

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was derived which posits that involvement in participatory development would facilitate stronger community cohesion, improved organizing capacity and eventually an increased ability of local organizations to develop and realize a collective vision for their communities. This model was tested through quarterly group interviews, bi-annual focus groups and anonymous individual mail surveys in a multi-level, multi-method evaluation of the URI/MSU community forestry program which also explored the utility of participatory development to address the objectives identified by community organizations in the urban United States.

While the participatory approach resulted in a great deal of qualitative data and important insights on the implications of the program for the seven participant groups, the sample was too small to conduct analyses necessary to determine the validity of some aspects of the conceptual model. However, there was provisional support for those aspects of the model which were specific to participatory development. The implications of involvement in participatory development activities for community cohesion were inconclusive. However, the data do imply that cohesion could be positively impacted through participatory development activities. There is much stronger evidence that involvement in the program positively influenced organizing capacity and moderately strong evidence for the program's positive contribution to organizational empowerment. In addition to these impacts relating to organizational capacity and empowerment, the program was most successful in addressing participants' aesthetic and safety concerns. Efforts to address economic objectives directly relating to forest products were less successful, although indirect economic benefits in the form of improved land values were reported.

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"Development is people's development of themselves, their lives and their environment. People cannot develop if they have no power. And development will occur if and only if the people can organize their own power in their own interests."

-J. K. Nyerere

"People's participation is based on the democratic conviction that there are extra-ordinary possibilities in ordinary people."

- D. L. Umali

This dissertation is dedicated to the extraordinary possibilities made real every day by people reclaiming power and rebuilding neighborhoods through community-based organizations in Detroit and elsewhere...

and to my grandmothers

Marie Vachta, whose strength and courage

taught me the importance of independence and self-determination

and in memory of my Nana, Mary L. Cerny,

who first showed me what dedicated and loving people could do for the world

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>LIST OF TABLES</b> .....	<b>X</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b> .....	<b>XII</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
The Current Study .....	7
<b>CHAPTER 2 OUTSIDE-IN AND TOP-DOWN: THE PROBLEM OF MODERNIZATION IN DEVELOPMENT</b> .....	<b>11</b>
Modernization And Technocratic Planning .....	14
Expanding The Development Agenda .....	16
Increasing Participation in Development .....	17
Assessing Participation in Practice .....	20
Contested Issues: Development, Participation And Community .....	25
Modernization and Urban Development in the United States .....	27
Participation in Urban Community Development .....	28
Urban Environmental Policy and Planning .....	34
Management of the Urban Forest .....	36
SUMMARY .....	43
<b>CHAPTER 3 THE CURRENT CASE: MODERNIZATION IN THE "ARSENAL OF DEMOCRACY"</b> .....	<b>45</b>
The Setting: Detroit .....	46
A Brief History .....	46
Social And Economic Conditions .....	50
A Tradition Of Local Organizing .....	51
Participatory Development in Detroit: The URI/MSU program .....	55
Gaining Access And Entré .....	56
Developing Partnerships .....	57
Collaborative Planning .....	58
Organizational Development Through Community Forestry .....	59
SUMMARY .....	61
<b>CHAPTER 4 PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFORMATIVE PARTICIPATION</b> .....	<b>63</b>
Participatory Development: Learning from the South .....	69
Social Forestry as Participatory Development .....	72
Power, Partnership and Community in Participatory Development .....	74
Defining Community .....	77
Participation in Community: Community-Based Organizations .....	82
Building Community Through Local Organizations .....	85
Community Cohesion, Organizational Capacity And Local Empowerment .....	86
The Model .....	92
Summary .....	98

<b>CHAPTER 5 METHODOLOGY</b> .....	<b>101</b>
Procedures.....	104
Collaborative Planning and Design .....	105
Evaluation .....	106
Measures .....	109
Data Analyses .....	114
Quantitative Analyses .....	114
Qualitative Analyses.....	115
<b>CHAPTER 6 RESULTS OF THE PROCESS EVALUATION</b> .....	<b>117</b>
Participants.....	118
Individual Respondents.....	118
Organizations .....	120
Organizational Profiles .....	122
Crab Apple Block Club.....	122
The Burning Bush Block Club.....	125
The Georgia Peach Block Club.....	127
The Star Magnolia Block Club .....	128
The Forsythia Neighborhood Association .....	130
The Quince Neighborhood Association.....	132
The Crimson King Maple (C.K. Maple) Neighborhood Association.....	134
Summary of Organizational Participation .....	135
Process Evaluation.....	137
Transformative Participation .....	137
Power And Resources .....	139
Community-Driven Partnership.....	142
SUMMARY.....	144
<b>CHAPTER 7 RESULTS OF THE CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS</b> .....	<b>146</b>
Attachment, Cohesion And Neighborliness.....	148
Community Attachment.....	151
Organizing Capacity .....	156
Organizational History, Mission, And Collective Vision.....	157
Membership .....	160
Increasing Diversity.....	162
Leadership: Expanding The Core .....	164
Power, Empowerment and Internal Democracy .....	165
Organizing Skills .....	166
Sense Of Empowerment (SOE) And Capacity.....	168
Resources.....	173
Interorganizational Networking.....	175
Actual Organizational Empowerment (AOE).....	178
Summary of Organizational Objectives.....	178
Subsistence.....	180
Safety .....	181
Participation.....	183

Economic .....	184
Social.....	185
Other .....	186
Aesthetic .....	187
Summary of Results Assessing the Conceptual Model .....	189
Community Cohesion .....	189
Organizational Capacity.....	193
Organizational Empowerment .....	194
Sense of Empowerment .....	194
Actual Organizational Empowerment.....	196
Implications for the Conceptual Model .....	198
<b>CHAPTER 8 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.....</b>	<b>201</b>
Research Limitations .....	215
Conclusions: Lessons of the Current Study .....	216
...in Theory.....	216
...in Practice.....	218
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>222</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: MEASURES .....</b>	<b>237</b>
Block Club/Neighborhood Association URI Needs Assessment .....	237
Quarterly Group Interviews .....	238
Sample Participant Cover Letter .....	241
Consent form for Individual Mail Questionnaire.....	242
Individual Post-Planting Questionnaire .....	243
Focus Group Discussion Guidelines .....	250

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## LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1: LEVY'S FOCI OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN RELATIVELY MODERNIZED AND RELATIVELY NON-MODERNIZED SOCIETIES.....	12
TABLE 2: THE PLASTIC TERMINOLOGY OF PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT AND CENTRAL CONCEPTS AND DEBATES.....	27
TABLE 3: FROM THE 'PARADIGM OF THINGS' TO THE 'PARADIGM OF PEOPLE' (CHAMBERS, 1995) .....	66
TABLE 4: SPEER & HUGHEY'S (1995) CONCEPTUALIZATION OF EMPOWERMENT APPLIED TO THE ORGANIZING DOMAIN .....	91
TABLE 5: QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS SORTED BY SCALE CLUSTERS .....	111
TABLE 6: NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS RESPONDING TO QUANTITATIVE MEASURE AT EACH ASSESSMENT BY ORGANIZATION .....	136
TABLE 7: FOCUS GROUP ASSESSMENT OF TRANSFORMATIVE PARTICIPATION .....	137
TABLE 8: FOCUS GROUP ASSESSMENT OF POWER AND RESOURCES .....	140
TABLE 9: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION OF COMMUNITY-DRIVEN PARTNERSHIP.....	142
TABLE 10: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION OF COMMUNITY COHESION.....	149
TABLE 11: MEANS FOR ITEMS ASSESSING SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT AMONG MEMBERS OF LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS .....	152
TABLE 12: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION OF LOCAL ORGANIZING CLIMATE.....	157
TABLE 13: MEANS FOR ITEMS ASSESSING ORGANIZING CAPACITY.....	158
TABLE 14: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION OF COLLECTIVE VISION .....	159
TABLE 15: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION OF MEMBERSHIP BUILDING .....	161
TABLE 16: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION OF MEMBER DIVERSITY .....	163
TABLE 17: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION OF LEADERSHIP ISSUES.....	164
TABLE 18: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION OF ORGANIZATION ADAPTABILITY .....	167
TABLE 19: MEANS FOR ITEMS ASSESSING SENSE OF EMPOWERMENT .....	169

TABLE  
P.

TABLE

TABLE

TABLE

TABLE 20: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION OF INDIVIDUAL ATTITUDES INFLUENCING PARTICIPATION .....	172
TABLE 21: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION OF INTERORGANIZATIONAL NETWORKING.....	176
TABLE 22: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION OF PROJECT OUTCOMES.....	180
TABLE 23: OVERVIEW OF RESULTS OF CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS .....	190

## LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: CONTINUUM OF PARTICIPATION IN NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT .....	42
FIGURE 2: THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL .....	93
FIGURE 3: MEAN YEARS OF MEMBERSHIP BY GROUP .....	119
FIGURE 4: MEAN HOURS CONTRIBUTED PER MONTH BY GROUP .....	119
FIGURE 5: ASSESSMENT OF COOPERATION AMONG NEIGHBORS BEFORE AND AFTER URI.....	148
FIGURE 6: ATTACHMENT TO NEIGHBORHOOD FEATURES .....	155
FIGURE 7: ATTACHMENT TO CITY FEATURES .....	155
FIGURE 8: ACHIEVEMENT OF PARTICIPATION OBJECTIVES .....	160
FIGURE 9: PERCENTAGE OF DISCUSSION OF RESOURCES DEVOTED TO EACH FORM.....	174
FIGURE 10: GROUP GOALS FOR URI/MSU COMMUNITY FORESTRY PROJECTS.....	179
FIGURE 11: ACHIEVEMENT OF SUBSISTENCE GOALS OVER TIME.....	181
FIGURE 12: ASSESSMENTS OF LOT SAFETY BEFORE AND AFTER URI .....	182
FIGURE 13: CHANGING ASSESSMENTS OF DANGEROUSNESS OF VACANT LOTS.....	182
FIGURE 14: ASSESSMENT OF ACHIEVEMENT OF ECONOMIC OBJECTIVES OVER TIME.....	184
FIGURE 15: ASSESSMENTS OF ACHIEVEMENT OF SOCIAL OBJECTIVES OVER TIME .....	185
FIGURE 16:ASSESSMENT OF ACHIEVEMENT OF 'OTHER' OBJECTIVES .....	186
FIGURE 17: AVAILABILITY OF CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES BEFORE AND AFTER URI .....	186
FIGURE 18: ASSESSMENTS OF ACHIEVEMENT OF OF AESTHETIC OBJECTIVES.....	188
FIGURE 19: PRE- AND POST-URI ASSESSMENTSOF LOTS AS AN EYESORE .....	188
FIGURE 20: EVIDENCE OF CONCEPTUAL RELATIONSHIPS.....	198

**CHAPTER 1**  
**INTRODUCTION**

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Since the end of the Cold War, the world has been engaged in facilitating the transition to democratic governance and market economies among the former Soviet bloc nations (Love, 1991). Billions of dollars in international aid and services of development consultants as well as the energies of numerous diplomats have been channeled toward this process. While fostering democratic reform is consistently identified as a priority in supporting development activities, there are active debates among political theorists regarding the defining characteristics of democracy (see, for example, Roelofs, 1998 and Green, 1997). Those debates include whether democracy requires the active participation of the governed in policy making or is determined by the popular election of representatives, the role of a political élite in facilitating or impeding democratic governance, and issues of equity and representation (Green, 1997). In situations where democratic and economic reform are so intimately linked, the tensions between the two and the means by which they are established have been subject to close scrutiny. Debates over development policy and globalization rest largely on the outcomes of these analyses.

Each theoretical model of democracy suggests different approaches to development. For example, the liberal democratic models presume that economic security is requisite for democratic reform to be successful. Therefore, economic development has frequently taken precedence with the assumption that democratic reform would follow (Blake, 1998). However, in recent years, a number of authors (e.g. Blake, 1998; Muller, Bollen & Jackman, 1995; Adams, 1994) have begun to question whether this approach has been appropriate or effective. At the heart of the debate is the question of whether those who have achieved economic security can or will accurately represent the interests of those who have not and whether a system developed under such

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conditions will become more democratic over time. Unfortunately, the evidence to-date would indicate that it is unlikely that it will. Muller, Bollen and Jackman (1995) documented that especially in Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s, for instance, "economic development or 'modernization' tended to be associated with declines in democracy." Key in their observation is the fact that most formal development programs have been carried out according to modernization theory with its emphasis on standardized, large-scale, economically-centered approaches.

Based on the observed patterns of development followed by the U.S. and many European nations, modernization theory presumes that land-based agricultural and social systems are "less developed" than are those characterized by industrialization and mass resource extraction systems (So, 1990). Guided by this theory, many programs rely on the technical expertise of professional economists, planners, development specialists and resource managers to determine the goals of development efforts and to design and assess projects. If local residents are involved at all, it is commonly through the physical labor of implementation and maintenance. By relying on external direction and applying "standardized" solutions, these programs are often critiqued as insensitive and unresponsive to the cultures, interests and needs of the people who will be most directly affected by them and to the specific ecological conditions within which they are implemented. Consequently, they may actually exacerbate the very problems they seek to resolve or may create unanticipated problems in other areas (Thomas, & Chhibber, 1989).

As the prototype for modernization, the development process in the United States has been characterized by large-scale projects implemented under the direction of

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technical experts with little participation among those most directly affected. Urban planning and environmental and natural resource management practices in the U.S. can be particularly technocratic. Federally funded highway and public housing projects, for instance, attempt to address critical economic problems with standardized large scale economically-oriented projects. This approach has been dubbed the 'Paradigm of Things' (Chambers, 1995) because of its presumptions that construction of the right infrastructure will provide the context within which ongoing economic improvements and, by extension, resolution of other development concerns, can take place. While these approaches have generated technological and economic gains, they have also generated a number of important unintended cultural, ecological and social consequences which, given their scale, have proven difficult to redress. Furthermore, given the level of analysis, typically regional or national, economic impacts on the local level which may be less consistent, are sometimes overlooked. For example, while metropolitan regions in the U.S. may be enjoying great economic growth and expansion, deindustrializing central cities are often experiencing critical depopulation and job loss (Boggs, 1998).

In response to the questionable success of and increasing resistance to top-down techniques, public involvement has been increasingly incorporated in planning efforts both domestically and internationally, and more participatory alternatives have been implemented in some cases. The resulting development projects would be expected to encounter less resistance, be more cost effective and require less ongoing support from any centralized authority (Lane, 1997; Adams, 1994). Public participation incorporated in the service of these professionally-defined goals has been referred to as 'instrumental' or 'functional' participation (Nelson & Wright, 1995). However, several authors have

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questioned this definition of participation (e.g. Arnstein, 1969; Wandersman, 1981; Peiris, 1997). 'True' participation, they contend, allows for shared power and responsibility as well as community control. Such 'transformational' participation (Nelson & Wright, 1995) is predicated on the need to transform the relationship between professionals and local residents to one that serves the needs and interests of the community by shifting the locus of power to community members.

Development activities relying on transformational participation are referred to as 'participatory development' and are more consistent with participatory models of democracy. These models assume the right of citizens to participate in planning and decision making that will directly affect them and their communities (Roelofs, 1998). In these approaches, professionals work in partnership with community residents to identify local needs and interests and to develop solutions that are culturally, socially and environmentally appropriate. The solutions focus on human, social and community development with the presumption that empowered communities will be better able to ensure their future needs are addressed whether directly through the products of their development projects, or indirectly through political or economic channels.

One such participatory approach to development is social (or community) forestry. Originally intended to address the needs of rural communities in the non-industrialized world, social forestry calls for the formation of close partnerships between communities and natural resource professionals. The approach results in small scale, highly participatory projects controlled by local residents to whom the benefits directly accrue. While some misapplications of these approaches have been documented (Shiva, 1989), appropriately implemented they can be more successful in meeting local interests

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and needs and are more sensitive to specific cultural and ecological settings than are more technocratic methods (Rebugio, 1985).

In pursuit of these objectives, participatory development practitioners such as social foresters typically work in partnership with established community-based organizations. These groups represent a form of participation-in-community evolving organically among community residents already working on behalf of community interests and aware of local concerns and resources (Pretty & Scoones, 1995). As Arnstein (1969) suggests, such groups represent an established power base among residents which may help to ensure that the principles of transformative participation are upheld in the partnership. The activities of participatory development should foster the consolidation of a shared vision for the community and collective effort in achieving that vision, in addition to providing opportunities to build new skills and greater understanding of the role and impact of existing power dynamics affecting the community. Thus, the process would be expected to contribute to the organizing capacity of participant groups and eventually to their ability to realize their collective vision. This closely parallels Rappaport's (1987) definition of empowerment, "empowerment is a process by which people, organizations, and communities gain mastery over issues of concern to them." In other words, participatory development activities should facilitate organizational empowerment (Rappaport, 1977; Speer & Hughey, 1995; Saegert & Winkel, 1996).

However, while Rappaport's (1977) initial definition reflected an ecological analysis of the concept at the individual, organizational and community levels, the extensive literature in empowerment has focused almost exclusively at the

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individual/intrapsychic level of analysis. The authors of two important exceptions have attempted to develop models of empowerment at the community/organizational level based on empirical work with networks (Speer & Hughey, 1995) and individual community organizations (Saegert & Winkel, 1996). While these models provide support for the expectation that involvement in participatory development may well contribute to organizational empowerment, they fail to explicate the mechanisms through which that might occur. Based on a synthesis of those models in combination with lessons from the literature in the sociology of community and community organizations, the current study tests a model of the *processes* of organizational empowerment through participatory development.

### **The Current Study**

The investigation takes place in the context of the Urban Resources Initiative program of Michigan State University's Department of Forestry (URI/MSU). In 1991, the URI/MSU program was established to test the potential for social forestry approaches to help address some of the social, economic and environmental issues faced by residents of urban centers in the United States. A surprising number of parallels exist between these settings and those in which participatory development initially evolved such as growing problems of air and water contamination, shifting land-use patterns, high levels of poverty and unemployment and increasing reliance by local governments on large scale technological "fixes." Additionally, the settings are each characterized by active local networking and development of citizen organizations; from farmer's alliances in rural settings to urban neighborhood associations, working to identify and develop

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innovative strategies for addressing common concerns. By applying the social forestry technologies first developed in rural settings in the non-industrialized world to the urban United States, URI/MSU represents a fundamental shift, both in the direction of flow of development thought, from North ! South to South ! North, and in domestic approaches to urban natural resource planning, from technocratic to participatory.

To-date, participatory natural resource management and development activities have been undertaken primarily in rural communities in Southern nations where, perhaps, some of the more romantic notions of community as *gemeinschaft* (Bell & Newby, 1971; The Lumpen Society, 1997) are not too far from reality. In these settings, the presumption that the majority of residents share a common heritage, religion, culture and related values may be well-founded. It is, furthermore, not too far-fetched to assume that residents of such areas are likely to benefit collectively from small-scale participatory development activities. When one farmer's fields lay baking in the sun during the dry season, everyone's fields might benefit from irrigation. When there is no more fuelwood within walking distance of the village, everyone must find an alternative fuel source. But what about communities more appropriately characterized by *neogemeinschaft* (Rivera & Erlich, 1995)? Could participatory development strategies facilitate the efforts of community organizations in urban settings to address local environmental, social and economic concerns and what other implications might involvement in such endeavors have for those organizations? The current study examines the utility of participatory development in building community empowerment through the mediating structures of community-based organizations in such settings.

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Working with block clubs and neighborhood associations in Detroit, the URI/MSU program facilitates the development of community-based forestry projects which address locally defined needs and interests, including the reclamation of the city's vacant lots. Because community residents seldom have a role in setting the agenda for traditional urban development programs and impacts on local social and political organization has seldom been an identified objective, there has been little assessment of whether such programs can meet the goals of local citizen's organizations. Thus, the current study expands on conventional program evaluations to explore the impact of the URI/MSU program on broader community-identified objectives such as building organizing capacity and political empowerment.

The purpose of the study is to contribute to both the conceptual and professional literatures exploring the mechanisms and utility of participatory development as a community-organizational empowerment strategy because these outcomes reflect both the theoretical questions of interest as well as practical considerations regarding the potential of participatory development in the urban United States. Through a blend of participatory development and participatory research strategies, the study fills two important gaps in the existing literature. First, it provides an empirical assessment of the utility of participatory development applied in the urban United States. Second, it offers an analysis of the mechanisms of empowerment at the organizational rather than individual level, as influenced by participatory development.

The problem of modernization, both in theory and in practice, are explored in Chapter 2. The history and evolution of urban areas in the United States, for example, serve as dramatic examples of the implications of modernization-driven development.

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Perhaps no city better typifies the consequences of modernization than Detroit. The history and evolution of the City as it reflects on modernization theory as well as the efforts of community-based organizations to reclaim the city, including through the URI/MSU community forestry program, constitute the case examined by the current research as discussed in Chapter 3. Given its reliance on collaborative partnerships and local identification and accrual of benefits, social (or community) forestry can be seen as a form of participatory development, an alternative development paradigm centering local human, social and community development. The theory and practice of participatory development is described in Chapter 4. Given the dearth of empirical analyses of participatory approaches to development in the urban United States, a conceptual model of the mechanisms through which such an approach might be expected to influence the capacity of local organizations to address a broad range of social and development objectives is derived from the related literatures in participation and empowerment theory and the sociological study of community and local organizing. The methods through which that model, as well as the potential for participatory development in the form of community forestry to address community-identified objectives in the urban U.S., were tested are explored in Chapter 5. Data were analyzed in two phases. The first, a process evaluation, assessed whether the URI/MSU program did indeed reflect the principles of participatory development. The results of that analysis are presented in Chapter 6. The second assessed the validity of the conceptual model. Results of that conceptual analysis are presented in Chapter 7. Finally, the implications of these results for participatory development, both in theory and in practice are discussed in Chapter 8.



**CHAPTER 2**

**OUTSIDE-IN AND TOP-DOWN:  
THE PROBLEM OF MODERNIZATION IN DEVELOPMENT**

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Early development theorists proposed modernization theory based on historical observations of the development processes of Europe and the United States (So, 1990). According to modernization theory, development is a process through which societies evolve from "primitive" to "civilized;" characterized by qualities consistent with what Tönnies referred to as *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* respectively. As described by Levy (1967, cited in So, 1990), 'relatively less modernized' societies are decentralized, informal, traditional collectives which are characterized by a high level of self-sufficiency and low compartmentalization of life; the antithesis of modernized societies (Table 1). This transition in social and economic structure was viewed by modernization theorists to be natural and desirable (So, 1990). In contrast, while community

	Relatively Nonmodernized Societies	Relatively Modernized Societies
Specialization of organization	low	high
Compartmentalization of life	low	high
Interdependency of organization	low (high level of self-sufficiency)	high
Relationship emphasis functional diffuseness	tradition, particularism, functional specificity	rationality, universalism,
Degree of centralization	low	high
Generalized media of exchange and market	less emphasis	more emphasis
Bureaucracy and family consideration	precedence of family norm (nepotism as a virtue)	insulate bureaucracy from other contacts
Town-village Interdependence	one-way flow of goods and services from rural to urban contexts	mutual flow of goods and services between towns and villages

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sociologists writing at the same time (e.g. Redfield, as cited in Effrat, 1974; Stein, 1960; and Vidich and Bensman, 1958) often agreed that such a transition inevitably evolved from the processes of urbanization and industrialization, they hardly viewed these results as desirable. Instead, for these sociologists, the transition was associated with a decay of traditional society and a loss of community, along with its presumed attendant social goods. Given that development efforts in the twentieth century, both internationally and domestically, have exemplified the proscriptions of modernization theory, it would seem that modernization theorists had greater influence with policy makers than did the sociologists. As Harvey (1990) observed, "...a corporate capitalist version of the Enlightenment project of development for progress and human emancipation held sway as a political-economic dominant." In describing the intellectual bases of modernization, Harvey goes on to explain,

The belief in linear progress, absolute truths, and rational planning of ideal social orders, under standardized conditions of knowledge and production was particularly strong. The modernism that resulted was, as a result, 'positivistic, technocratic, and rationalistic'.

Contrary to the realities of deindustrialization and the current political fashion of calling for a return to "traditional" decentralized social and political systems, modernization theorists assumed that the development process reflected a sort of socio-economic evolution: linear and irreversible. They viewed those nations which had achieved modernization as more 'advanced' than non-modernized societies. Hence, the processes of bureaucratization, urbanization and industrialization followed by the U.S. and other Northern industrialized societies characterize the hegemonic, or archetypal, expression of modernization. Since the U.S. was considered the most economically successful nation,

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as measured by growth indicators such as the gross national product (GNP), it constituted the most developed in the minds of those operating under such assumptions (So, 1990), despite the number of communities within the nation which have not benefited from its economic successes; sometimes referred to as "the South in the North" (Boggs, 1998). Thus, the task of the development professional has conventionally been perceived as facilitating the linear process through which communities and nations evolve from "traditional" collectives of extended families pursuing their own subsistence to become interdependent participants in the global market economy.

### **Modernization And Technocratic Planning**

In many cases, 'development' has been primarily construed to mean 'economic development,' which is often pursued through the construction of infrastructure conducive to increased industrial activity and commercial competition. These efforts have, as a result, frequently been undertaken on a large-scale with little participation from those most directly affected, even as demands for increased participation and local control have been growing among communities subjected to such externally-driven development efforts. Given their scale and advanced technical nature, such programs rely on the expertise of professional economists, planners, development specialists and resource managers to determine the goals of development efforts and to design and assess projects. Unfortunately, these projects are often implemented in a top-down approach by government and agency professionals, sometimes with little foreknowledge of the ecological and social factors which would potentially determine the outcome of such efforts. As a result, the benefits are often short lived and accrue primarily to the

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economic and political élite (Amanor, 1994; Colchester, 1994; Gadgil & Guha, 1994; Chambers, 1995; Curtis, 1995; Nelson & Wright, 1995). There are also often a range of unintended social (Shiva, 1989), economic (Clayton, 1983) and environmental (Uquillas, 1985; Welsh Brown, 1988; Brown, 1989) costs unaccounted for in project planning which seldom fall on the same groups who receive the benefits of the projects (Chambers, 1985).

The failure to recognize or incorporate the expertise of local people is among the most commonly cited causes for the failure of large-scale development projects (Thompson, 1991; Welsh Brown, 1988). This unfamiliarity with local conditions results, in part, from development practitioners' preference for technological, positivistic and empirical approaches over those based on indigenous knowledge. As Hatch (cited in Chambers, 1983) noted,

The development profession suffers from an entrenched superiority complex with respect to the small farmer. We believe our modern technology is infinitely superior to his. We conduct our research and assistance efforts as if we knew everything and our clients nothing.

Local residents are seldom involved in planning and decision making activities. Instead, public participation is typically constrained to non-binding input and perhaps in the involvement physical work of project implementation while development professionals and practitioners make important decisions regarding the design and objectives of development programming. In addition to the unintended negative consequences that sometimes arise as a result of the failure to include the insights of those most intimately acquainted with the local culture and environment, such reliance on technical expertise has been critiqued as being at odds with democratic principles (Press, 1994).

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## **Expanding The Development Agenda**

While economic development remains central to modernization driven development practice, practitioners have begun to realize the relationship between a broader range of social issues and development concerns. For example there is growing awareness of the inherent connection between poverty and misuse of local land and resources (Vatikiotis, 1992). Some development agencies have begun to expand their policies to include these related social factors as a result, although residents still seldom have a voice in determining which social factors are included in program agendas. Institutions such as the World Bank, for example, have begun to acknowledge the necessity of incorporating a wider range of issues in its efforts to address global poverty. The Bank now cites improving political stability and human capital, and ensuring safeguards for the poor during reform implementation as important to economic growth in Africa (Lewis, 1994). Robinson and Schmitz (1989) propose that international lending programs should further incorporate an understanding of a country's cultural, institutional, and political dynamics to minimize economic impact on the poor and to avoid social upheaval. It is believed that increasing familiarity with the cultures and lives of the people of recipient nations could lead to development and implementation of more appropriate and, hence, more successful development efforts (Clements, 1993).

Whether this familiarity will lead to more locally-appropriate solutions or simply to wider acceptance of standardized approaches is contested, however. Giddens (1990) suggests that, through globalization, modernity

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Other observers suggest, however, that the challenges and economic limitations of the expanding global economy will inherently prevent continued development of non-participatory "mega-projects" (Roeloffs, 1998; Sandstrom, 1994). According to these authors, new strategies will include increased adaptability of programs to specific cultures and to political, social and economic conditions. Additionally, guidelines for recipient nations will be focused on investment in "basic social services" and "efficient and sustainable growth" rather than strict alignment with externally-imposed economic structures (Salop, 1992). While many authors applaud these shifts, others note that incorporating a broader agenda has not necessarily led to increased involvement or control among communities affected by the resulting development efforts which, given their broader agendas, may have an even greater impact on their lives.

### **Increasing Participation in Development**

Despite, or perhaps because of, the prevalence of technocratic decision making, resistance to top-down development programs has been growing globally, as illustrated by the growing environmental justice movement in the United States (Bullard, 1994) and the grassroots movements around issues of environment and development in the South. Reviewing much of the literature on participation in development and natural resource planning to-date, however, Lane (1997) observes that participation has typically been implemented in an "enlightened top-down" approach which "can be very effective in achieving agency objectives" without challenging the underlying principles of

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modernization. Those designing such programs are typically interested in how *functional* participation (Nelson & Wright, 1995) can be utilized to facilitate achievement of the goals of the sponsoring organizations and agencies such as improving cost effectiveness and efficiency, reducing labor for staff and minimizing resistance among impacted communities. These are seen as crucial factors in generating support for development projects and recruiting participants to those efforts. Awareness of such practical benefits may attract professionals to include greater functional public participation in development planning.

Consistent with these predictions, a shift toward incorporating participation among people directly affected by the programs is building (Serageldin & Noel, 1990; Stokes, 1993). Social Dimensions of Adjustment (SDA), for example, is a formal World Bank program for increasing community participation (CP) (Adams and Rietbergen-McCracken, 1994). According to Bank policy, CP serves four goals: strengthening participants' organizational abilities; improving project effectiveness; enhancing efficiency and cost-sharing; and guiding participants toward independence. On the face of it, this policy seems to address a much broader social agenda for development including enhancing independence over facilitating economic integration, contrary to modernization's proscriptions. Yet, the policy only requires CP in cases where the *purpose* of the project is to empower participants and develop their organizational abilities, where participants will identify their own needs, where the interactions between participants and project leaders are frequent, and where Bank personnel believe the project can be better managed by participants (Paul, 1987). It does not require that Bank-funded projects incorporate any of these conditions. As a result, argue Adams and

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Rietbergen-McCracken (1994,) the Bank has not sought the required level of participation through the SDA program to achieve sustained poverty reduction. Thus, although its institutionalization is an important step in recognizing the importance of using community participation to incorporate local knowledge and values in decision making processes and to facilitate community empowerment, the SDA program has been criticized for failing to politically empower the poor (Gibbon, 1992).

Development workers in the United States, and other countries with similarly professionalized approaches to natural resource planning often rely on public involvement strategies, such as official public meetings to similar result. These methods may be culturally inappropriate for many communities, both domestically and internationally (see, for example, Knowlton, 1976). Furthermore gender or other power stratifications may systematically inhibit participation by some members of a community (Hoskins, 1980; Thomas, 1991; WIN, 1994). Moreover, in many communities, formal leadership may be more a reflection of wealth and power than of popular support (Chambers, 1983). When seeking public input, development practitioners may not realize or may fail to address the fact that self-identified community leaders may not actually represent the interests of local people. Similarly, the most vocal groups demanding involvement in planning activities may also fail to reflect the full range of values of those who will be affected by management decisions. Still, many natural resource professionals will tend to work most closely with these groups because their representatives seem knowledgeable about the issues due to their ability to present their positions in a manner the manager finds valid and easily understandable. They may also hold values similar to the manager's and they often share common language and

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communication patterns (McDonough, 1992). Thus, while opportunities for public input have been increasing, few citizens have decision-making power. As Naples (1998) noted,

Because community involvement is solicited, it does not necessarily follow that national and local governments will divide authority and decision-making powers with those whose input is sought.

A manager ignorant of these dynamics who attempts to utilize these forums may be left baffled as to why no one shows up, they show up but do not participate as s/he expects or the information provided turns out to be invalid (Cernea<sup>2</sup>, 1985; McDonough, et al, 1994).

### **Assessing Participation in Practice**

Several studies have been conducted to determine and codify the forms of involvement typically utilized by development professionals. One of the most well known and enduring models of participation derived from such a study is Arnstein's (1969) "Ladder of Citizen Participation" designed for use in practitioner training during the implementation of the Model Cities programs in the United States in the early 1970s. Beginning at the bottom, the eight 'rungs' on this ladder fall into three subsets. The 'non-participation' subset includes manipulation and therapy while informing, consultation and placation, are all labeled 'degrees of tokenism.' Partnership, delegated power and citizen control, are considered 'degrees of citizen power'. The assumption of the framework is that only those forms falling in the 'degrees of citizen power' subset constitute "true" participation. Like many of the frameworks of participation, Arnstein's indicates a preference for citizen-initiated approaches based on the assumption that local people and organizations should have the power to initiate and carry out programs on their own

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behalf (e.g. Lane, 1995; Minkler & Pies, 1997). While agreeing that responsiveness to citizen initiative is vital, others (e.g. Curtis, 1997; McDonough, et al, 1994) counter that responding only to those groups already aware of resources and expertise available upon their request does nothing to challenge the existing structure of privileged access. These authors warn that many communities will never become aware of available resources and assistance unless professionals reach out beyond the groups initiating contact with them. They thus advocate a partnership approach through which the needs and interests of a broader range of communities might be met. As illustrated by the reviews by Peiris (1997) and Wandersman (1981), however, technocratic approaches to development seldom achieve even this standard of shared power.

Based on a review of community development programs active in the United States at that time, Wandersman (1981) described four forms of participation utilized in those efforts: no participation, feedback, self-planning and creation of parameters and objects. He reported that professionals and government representatives continued to make the majority of decisions that would affect communities with little or no input, despite regulatory requirements to the contrary. Thus, 'no participation' was the most frequently observed "form of participation." The author referred to cases where 'users' have the opportunity to provide their ideas or opinions, which the professional then has the choice of whether or not to incorporate in planning and implementation as the 'feedback' level. At the next level, users are offered a 'choice' between two or more professionally generated or government condoned options. This process is reversed in the 'self-planning' process where communities generate several alternate plans submitted for the approval of professional planners. Finally, Wandersman labeled cases where the

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Similarly, reviewing World Bank sponsored development projects claiming a participatory nature or component, Peiris (1987) identified four interpretations of participation utilized in international development programming: acquiescence, concurrence, feedback/co-optation and real participation. In the programs relying on acquiescence, 'beneficiaries' are passive recipients who are expected to simply appreciate the generosity of their 'benefactors.' While there are cases where the need for immediate material assistance is so great that such approaches may be appropriate, including some famine or natural disaster relief efforts, Peiris and others (e.g. Nelson & Wright, 1995) note that these programs never challenge the structures creating that need. Instead, they can exacerbate it by creating further dependence on external agencies. When donor interests shift, the community is often left in the same situation it faced prior to the 'relief' effort.

The second level of participation Peiris identified is labeled 'Concurrence.' In these cases, local residents may be allowed the option of receiving a service (such as an educational program) or not, but with little opportunity to participate in identification of the needs to be addressed or to suggest modification to the services delivered. They may be expected to participate in the implementation of the program, however, and failure to do so can reinforce the development practitioners' notions of superiority while labeling resisters as lazy or ignorant of their own needs (Lane, 1997.) In response to such thinking, Banefield (1967, cited in Bell and Newby, 1971) described a set of commonly held but simplistic and unsubstantiated explanations for the lack of community

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participation. Among these are the notions that people living at subsistence levels are too busy with survival issues to care about or have time for involvement in planning activities, even if their lives will be dramatically impacted by the decisions made. Another is the presumption that the poor are too 'ignorant' of the political forces influencing their living conditions to take effective action to change them.

Banefield hypothesized that these presumptions reflected the cultural biases of the researchers more than any actual differences in public participation among the poor; a hypothesis that was supported by Taylor's (1990) critical study of participation in the U.S. environmental movement. Taylor contended that the presumption of non-participation among people of color and the poor might be based on culturally biased definitions of the kinds of activity used to define political participation. Taylor documented that when community-based activities are included, people of color and those of low economic status are at least as active, if not more so, than are those more conventionally expected to be. Yet, some of these assumptions continue to be accepted explanations for professionals' failure to challenge conventional dimensions of power. For example, they are common sentiments in the literature pathologizing the 'permanent underclass.' Examples include the Moynihan Report of 1969, which defined the debate and response to race-based oppression in the United States in the ensuing years, and Wilson's (1987) The Truly Disadvantaged which, while examining structural causes of chronic economic and social disenfranchisement, does so within a victim blaming (Ryan, 1976) framework. Based on this thinking, many social scientists and non-governmental organizations erroneously presume that the poor are less active in democratic forums because their economic needs are too pressing to allow such involvement (Cole, 1998;

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Perkins, Brown & Taylor, 1996; Wandersman, 1981) and sometimes justify their failure to incorporate local participation on these bases.

At the third level, which Peiris labeled 'Feedback' or 'Co-optation,' residents are expected to be more active participants in the implementation of development projects but have no more voice in planning or decision making than at the previous levels. Instead, they are expected to follow instructions and show initiative through physical labor. In part because of the level of misrepresentation potentially involved in referring to such activities as 'community participation', Peiris reserves her most biting critique for this form of 'participation.' She observes that

outsiders are seen as 'benevolent despots' by the receiving communities, while the co-optation of the latter is euphemistically, but deliberately misnamed and integration into a predetermined process of development in the planning of which they have no part passes off as actual participation.

Finally, according to Peiris, "Real participation... involves three dimensions: people's involvement in decision making; their voluntary contribution to implementation of decisions; and the collective sharing of the benefits of their effort." Peiris' review of World Bank projects failed to identify any as community-initiated. Thus, her definition of "true participation" is less stringent than either Wandersman's or Arnstein's because it accepts citizen 'involvement in decision-making' rather than full community control as the most participatory model.

Peiris further notes that the prevalence of professionally-driven 'participation' she observed is consistent with an earlier study by Brodhead (1988) in which he found that only 22% of the 51 programs surveyed incorporated participation. Of these, 24% evidenced low participation, 36% utilized moderate participation and only 18%

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Beyond these differences between the efforts to incorporate participation in development programs, it is possible for those involved in the same effort to have different ideas about the purpose and meaning of that participation. Nelson and Wright (1995) note that,

Askew found five different objectives put forward for community participation by actors in the same project... To a donor agency, community participation might represent a mechanism for increasing effectiveness and making the input more organizationally sustainable; to project management, it might indicate voluntary (cheap) labour; to local women it might be the chance to have a voice for the very first time. While these objectives do not conflict, they do not completely coincide either.

Thus, participation in development activities is contested both in terms of its purposes and the types of activities that constitute 'true participation.'

#### **CONTESTED ISSUES: DEVELOPMENT, PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNITY**

While there has been increasing focus on community participation in development, there is little consensus on what that means, both in terms of how 'community' should be defined and how involved it must be in order to constitute 'participation'. Both 'community' and 'participation' are often considered "inherently" good, as is 'development' for that matter (The Lumpen Society, 1997). A great deal of

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literature explores the contested definitions of each of these concepts. Thus, the terms may be considered 'plastic' as they are used in the current debates. As Miller, Garsize and Bavington, writing collectively as "The Lumpen Society" (1997) explain, "Plastic words are those concepts which have many connotations but which do not have corresponding denotations; that is, they do not point to anything 'real.'" Thus, in reference to development, participation and community, debates regarding the 'defining' characteristics of the phenomena to which the terms might refer have dominated their respective fields. While we may long for community, strive for development and demand participation, none of these terms are yet well defined or clearly understood.

While eluding definition, each evokes a sense of being what is good, and the debates over competing definitions often center on the researchers' philosophical or personal notions of what that might be (Table 2). For example, Roelofs' (1998) and Barber's (1984) definitions of participatory democracy imply a common understanding of "community" as a collective of citizens voluntarily contributing to a common vision for the collective good and "participation" as engagement in dialog through which consensus on such a vision emerges. This definition simplifies the debates around community and participation and implies a homogeneity of values and power among community members leading to the expectation that they share a common notion of the community's interests and can be expected to work collectively to achieve them (The Lumpen Society, 1997).

Similarly, in the case of competing theories of development, those subscribing to modernization theory may consider integration into the global economy the ultimate good for any society and, thus, strive toward that goal through technocratic 'development'

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<u>Term</u>	<u>Contested characteristics</u>	<u>Overview of debate and its relationship to the current study</u>
Development	modernization or sustainable self-reliance	Striving to achieve integrated, capitalist mass-consumption economy through large-scale meta-development projects or focused on development of skills and resources necessary for self-reliance and to achieve locally defined goals and visions.
Participation	functional or transformational	In service to goals of professional, agency, or government; e.g. improved efficiency, cost-effectiveness, reduced labor and resistance. OR challenging the existing power structure and working in service to needs, interests and vision of participants.
Community	location, relation, institution	Definition of community based on propinquity, belongingness, identity, and/or function. Debates about the existence and character of urban communities and implications for response to urbanization and work in urban settings.

Table 2: The Plastic Terminology of Participatory Development and Central Concepts and Debates

programs. For dependency theorists, however, modernization generates an exploitative global class system transforming Southern nations into pools of cheap labor to meet the material demands of the Northern economic elite (So, 1990). Instead, for these authors, the goal of development should be maximized self-reliance and independence. Economic integration and the associated loss of self-sufficiency are lamentable and not 'development' at all.

### **Modernization and Urban Development in the United States**

As the prototype for modernization-driven development, the process in the United States has been characterized by large-scale projects implemented under the direction of technical experts with little participation among those most directly affected, often with similar outcomes. Urban planning and environmental and natural resource management

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practices in the U.S. can be particularly technocratic often justified with explanations similar to those described by Banefield (1967, cited in Bell and Newby, 1971). Development practitioners and natural resource professionals may presume that urban residents are especially unprepared to participate in natural resource and environmental management activities (Cole, 1998). However, modernization driven approaches to development in these settings have contributed to a host of commonly identified urban problems. While industrialization, urbanization and more recently suburbanization have generated tremendous economic growth assessed at the national or even metropolitan region, at the same time these processes have contributed to the abandonment and economic decline of urban centers. The history and development of Detroit, for example, was strongly influenced by these processes. However, closer examination of the City also reveals the efforts of local residents to reclaim their city in efforts to replace its once-booming economic system with one based on mutual reliance and economic independence. This represents a reversal of the theoretically linear modernization process, revealing the possibility that the development process may instead be cyclical in nature and that supporting these community organizations in their efforts to reclaim the local economy and to determine their own development path will be necessary in future efforts to meet the needs of urban residents.

### **Participation in Urban Community Development**

Although Harrison wrote about the importance of community participation in urban planning as early as 1925, formal inclusion of that involvement has been uncommon. As illustrated by the observations of Alexander de Toqueville, community

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development during the early history of the United States was unresponsive to local sentiment (Phifer, List, & Faulkner, 1980) and legislative solutions have proven ineffective in changing that situation. For instance, the Model Cities program, one of the nation's first and largest "urban revitalization" efforts, was critiqued for its lack of responsiveness to local concerns and failure to ensure long-term investment in targeted communities. Arnstein (1969) documented that only one of the 75 Federally supported Model Cities program plans initially included true citizen participation in the planning. Fourteen more added citizen participation components in response to community pressure. Although the stated purpose of the Model Cities legislation was to build local capacity, the balance of the programs remained entirely in the hands of service and planning professionals. In part as a result of protests to the lack of public involvement in Model Cities programming, the Community Development Act (CDA) of 1974, mandated "citizen participation" in the design of public policy in all programs receiving federal funding. However, due to the lack of formal definitions in the legislation, the requirement could be met by activities ranging from putting notices in local newspapers to binding involvement throughout planning and implementation processes (Booth & Fear, 1985).

More recent federal legislation aimed at revitalizing urban centers, such as the Federal Empowerment Zone (EZ) and Enterprise Community (EC) programs, have failed to incorporate the lessons of the experiment with Model Cities. Among other components, these programs provide federal tax incentives and exemptions from certain labor and environmental regulations to corporate participants in exchange for locating facilities one of the targeted communities. However, several authors have observed that

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the use of such incentives to foster external investment in inner-city development has seldom generated the intended benefits for local residents. Reviewing the programs in England upon which the U.S. Empowerment Zone initiatives were based, Sawicki & Moody (1996) observe,

First, there are questions about whether the incentives actually are successful in attracting jobs to poor areas. Second, there is substantial evidence that when there are net new jobs to the enterprise area, they are simply jobs being transferred from other poor areas. And finally, the jobs that do get created do not usually go to poor residents of the zone.

These failures have been attributed to the lack of investment in local entrepreneurship (Johnson, Farrell & Henderson, 1996) and minimal involvement of local citizens in decision making processes which would ensure those businesses locating within the community are supported by and provide benefits to local residents (Naples, 1998; Sawicki & Moody, 1996; Glover, 1993). Although citizen participation is required by the legislation, public input is seldom legally binding and the levels of community involvement are quite uneven across settings and programs.

Similar programming is currently being considered in the form of the proposed American Community Renewal Act (Federal Document Clearing House Congressional Testimony, 1998). The Act would effectively extend the incentives for corporate participants in the federal EZ programs indefinitely with no new provisions for local participation or control. However, given that the need for such permanent federal subsidies contributed to the eventual dismantling of the Model Cities programs which, despite their shortfalls discussed above, did attempt to support local entrepreneurship, some members of the House Committee on Small Business have questioned this

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approach (Federal Document Clearing House, 1998). They have further objected to the sponsors' contentions that it is more efficient to invest in those who already have experience managing large sums of money on the grounds that the purpose of the legislation is *community* recovery and that the federal investment should be in facilitating development of those skills among local residents. Federal programming has thus utilized a fluid definition of 'participation,' often denying residents binding input or direct economic benefit.

The failure to ensure binding public input or direct economic benefits has not solely characterized Federal development programs. Some municipal governments have also used the broadest interpretation of the term participation, excluding some residents from sharing decision making power over policies which will be central in their own lives (Wandersman, 1981; Arnstein, 1969). Highway and transportation systems which reinforced racial segregation by connecting suburbs to central business districts, bypassing or bisecting city neighborhoods were, for example, widely supported by those with influence over governmental institutions (Zearfoss, 1998; Motavalli, 1997; Benfield, 1995). Resources earmarked for transportation in general were channeled almost exclusively to massive highway construction programs to the immediate and lasting detriment of the development of public transportation (Motavalli, 1997; Walters, 1995; MacDonald, 1994), despite strong support for public transportation development among urban residents and economists who felt that efficient public transportation could contribute more effectively to local economic development (Voith, 1994).

There is a great deal of evidence that the highways have had tremendous impact on the physical and economic health of urban communities (e.g. Kromm, 1998; Benfield,

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1995). Yet, few court cases seeking to challenge the policies, which consistently impact African American communities more directly than predominantly white communities, have successfully met the legal burden of proving that the discrimination was intentional. In one recent case, the Court found that, while the agencies did not actively seek community input as required by federal highway funding policy, the residents “with reasonable effort” should have been aware that they were targeted for such development earlier in the process and, on those grounds, refused to hear the case [Jersey Heights Neighborhood Association v. Parris Glendening (CIVIL ACTION NO S-97-3127)]. Following their construction, federal funding available for such purposes should ensure standardized maintenance. In fact, however, federal highway spending tends to be concentrated in rural and suburban areas and new highway funding is specifically targeted toward development of non-urban highway infrastructure (MacDonald, 1994), although they receive less wear than do urban highways. The resulting lack of maintenance of this now-crucial urban infrastructure has reached critical levels in many U.S. cities.

Although intended to alleviate a critical need in many urban communities, federally subsidized public housing programs have had similar impacts on low income communities and communities of color in the urban United States. The chronic shortage of low income housing (defined, at that time, as affordable to those with earnings in the lowest a in the country) was recognized at the national level as early as 1917. However, it was not until 1933 that the federal government took steps toward its alleviation through establishment of the Home Owners Loan Corporation following the model of the 1916 Farm Loan Act. At that time a cycle of degrading housing stock was documented in

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which the poor inherit housing from displaced industrial workers when they move on or the property becomes too degraded to meet the expectations of skilled laborers. Once a neighborhood begins this transition, single family homes are often converted into multiple family apartments in order to make up for net rental income otherwise lost by leasing to lower income renters. Through these processes many of the poor ended up in housing that was both degraded and overcrowded. "The... result," observed Olmstead, then - manager of the Town Planning Division of the U.S. Housing Corporation, is "slum conditions unfavorable to that self-respecting family life upon which the security of our democracy rests" (Warner, 1995). Thus, prior to the widespread urban racial conflict of the mid-1940s and 1960s, frequently used to explain the phenomenon, the processes of 'trickle down housing' and degeneration in urban living conditions created through constant construction for and relocation of the middle classes may have laid the groundwork for urban sprawl.

Inferior public housing design and construction only exacerbated these problems. Initially designed as temporary housing for skilled laborers, but failing to meet their needs and expectations, problematic conditions in the design and maintenance of public housing have been documented since its initial construction. As illustrated by Bauer's statement (1957, cited by Warner, 1995), such approaches to resolving the growing urban housing crisis instead often contributed to the sense of urban social decay

Public housing projects tend to be very large and highly standardized in their design. Visually, they may be no more monotonous than a typical suburban tract, but their density makes them seem much more institutional, like veterans' hospitals or old-fashioned orphan asylums. The fact that they are usually designed as Islands- 'community units' turning their back to the surrounding neighborhood which looks entirely different- only adds to this

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Thus, these developments are seen as antithetical to an integrated neighborhood identity and sense of community.

Indeed, a number of the largest housing projects have recently been slated for demolition on these grounds, which are believed to contribute to high crime rates and other critical problems. These projects are being replaced by rent subsidies and new low-rise and single family developments, though several authors question the adequacy of the planning process for the conversion between the systems given the shortage of existing rental units in the affected areas (Lytle, 1998; Ryan, 1998; Chicago Tribune, 1997). Analyzing current federal housing policy and programming, Warner (1995) concluded that existing housing needs could be met with existing resources, but that "...underfunding, narrowly circumscribed and antisocial goals, and plain bad administration have prevented this set of tools from relieving our metropolitan-wide housing crisis." Among the bases for this failure, he cites racial segregation and the lack of public participation in design. Thus, this effort to remove the stigma of residence in 'institutional' public housing by integrating residents into the broader community may in fact swell the ranks of the homeless, or force these residents out of their communities altogether (Lytle, 1998; Ryan, 1998; Chicago Tribune, 1997).

#### **Urban Environmental Policy and Planning**

Many of these housing projects are in the same neighborhoods targeted for brownfields "redevelopment." The widespread governmental support for the Brownfield

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Remediation and Environmental Cleanup Act of 1997 in the wake of calls for reform to the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA, aka "Superfund,) is illustrative of the host of policy-related social, economic and environmental concerns these communities face. CERCLA's high penalties for polluters found liable for toxic contamination, coupled with the high costs of meeting the Act's standards for environmental clean-up have been blamed for the abandonment of urban brownfield sites and resulting urban sprawl. The Brownfield Remediation and Environmental Cleanup Act, conversely, limits liability in hopes of stimulating economic redevelopment (Kibel, 1998; Volokh, 1998). Through this convergence of urban development and environmental policy, urban lands contaminated with industrial pollutants are subject to moderated federal environmental clean-up standards and owner immunity from liability if the parties responsible for the initial contamination cannot be conclusively determined (Buente & Crough, 1998; Vig & Kraft, 1996).

While the purpose of the legislation is facilitation of economic development in highly polluted and economically decimated urban communities, Bullard (1990) documented that the outcomes of such approaches are often contrary to those stated goals. The introduction or presence of a toxic or hazardous facility tends to discourage other less-polluting facilities from locating in the same area, even with the lower land values attending such development. Furthermore, the facilities tend to produce few jobs and only a small percentage of those tend to go to local residents. Those that do are typically low-wage and do not generally allow much opportunity for advancement, paralleling the failure of the Federal Empowerment Zones to provide benefits for local residents (Sawicki & Moody, 1995). Thus, while the policy will provide federal consent

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for allowing predominantly low income urban communities of color to be perpetually exposed to industrial wastes as incentive for 'economic development,' residents are unlikely to derive much benefit in the process. While an extensive public commentary period has been part of the policy development process, conventional means for identifying participants were followed. Thus, for example, policy makers sought the perspectives of the large mainstream Washington, D.C.-based environmental groups, the demographics of which have been documented by Taylor (1990), while few residents of communities likely to be affected by the new policy have been included. Furthermore, while recipients are 'encouraged to develop mechanisms for public participation' before siting a facility, there are no requirements in the policy that they do so (Federal Register, April, 1998). The Brownfields initiative thus reflects the continued dominance of top-down technocratic approaches in urban environmental planning.

### **Management of the Urban Forest**

Management of the urban forest has followed a similarly professional-driven approach. According to the 1987 National Resources Inventory (NRI), urban forest cover had increased to 50.3 million acres from 46.6 million acres since 1982. Based on that rate of increase, estimates of urban forest cover in 1989 ranged from 55-69 million acres (U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, 1989) or nearly thirty percent of urban land. Any land use representing such a large portion of the urban environment will have a significant impact on the lives of urban residents. Similarly, urban dwellers have significant impact on urban trees. Yet, residents in densely populated urban communities in the U.S. seldom have a voice in natural resource decision making that will effect them.

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Despite the direct relationship between the urban human and tree communities, the urban forest has typically remained in the hands of professionals.

Urban forestry professionals have conventionally been responsible for the planting, health and maintenance of the urban forest. This includes approximately 60 million street trees as well as those in parks and on other municipal lands. They have been responsible for identifying areas where trees are needed and for organizing community groups to assist them in tree planting. They have been strong advocates for tree care and maintenance, especially in difficult financial times when cities and municipalities were cutting back on urban forestry activities (Kielbaso, 1990). Given this range of knowledge and activities, forestry professionals in both domestic and international agencies may assume that community residents do not have the knowledge or skills to participate in forestry management and planning activities and have little interest in learning them (Cernea<sup>1</sup>, 1985; Soerianegara, 1994; Messerschmidt, 1993). This conviction may result in technocratic, rather than democratic, decision making in urban forestry programs (McDonough, Vachta, Funkhouser & Geiche, 1994). Hence, human activity is often blamed when trees planted on "ideal" urban sites are damaged or do not survive. However, planting "the right tree in the right place" includes considering the human dimensions of the place as well as biophysical conditions or the behaviors and needs of non-human species. If the active participation of local residents was incorporated in the planning stages, decisions could be made with foreknowledge of the needs, activities and preferences of people in the area. Such information may be as important to tree health and survival as soil acidity or precipitation. As a result of using only a fraction of the available information, few programs generate the full range of

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Furthermore, while the professionals may be correct that many urban residents are unaware of the full range of benefits potentially provided by urban trees, it is also true that most professionals are unaware of the full range of cultural and personal values surrounding trees in human communities (Cole, 1998; McDonough, et al, 1994; McDonough, 1992). Instead, natural resource managers who are given extensive training in biological and technical concerns, but little background in the social sciences or the development of multidisciplinary workgroups may leave their programs believing they are already armed with the tools of their trade: that they have *the* answers (Cernea<sup>1</sup>, 1985). Many of these new professionals are unprepared for the diversity of values they will face when applying their skills and the determination with which some local citizens will demand a voice in the decisions they make (Lovelace, 1984; McDonough, 1992). Given the range of cultural and personal values surrounding nature, the environment and the use of natural resources and the potential benefits and problems which can be derived from forestry projects (McDonough, 1992), no single professional can be an expert in knowing exactly what solution is most appropriate for every setting and situation.

Following the failure of some natural resource programs to adequately address the local cultures for which they were developed (e.g. Knowlton, 1976) and the sometimes explosive conflicts over logging in the Pacific Northwest among other resource conflicts, some forestry professionals in the United States have begun to recognize the need for change in decision making processes, though their success has varied greatly. Many states have responded by providing additional public hearings, longer response periods

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and utilizing "more of the same" public involvement strategies. This approach may reduce some conflict about decisions or allow managers the defense of having provided opportunity for feedback. However, if they are not implemented in a manner accessible to the entire diversity of the citizenry, true opportunity has not been provided. Other states such as Michigan have responded by eliminating public response or the option of legal challenge to management planning decisions (Engler, J., 1993). Although these strategies ensure that the biophysical goals of the managers are met, they may lead to vandalism of the resulting projects or further breakdown the relationship between citizens and governmental agencies and are, in any case, unlikely to realize the full range of potential benefits.

As the impact of trees on the health and vitality of urban communities becomes increasingly apparent, however, management of the urban forest in the United States is similarly beginning to reflect the shift toward increasing community participation. Incorporation of participation by people who are directly affected into the planning and development of urban forestry programs may allow a wider range of benefits to be derived, including meeting some of the economic and social needs identified by residents of urban communities. However, early efforts at incorporating public input in forest planning proved to be quite a challenge. For instance, when the USDA Forest Service attempted to integrate participatory dimensions into the urban forest planning process in the late 1980s, all 93 of the supposedly "cooperatively designed" plans that emerged from the experimental approach were appealed by local community groups (McLarney, 1989). Yet, the USFS Urban and Community Forestry Five-Year Plan (1992) recognizes that;

Urban forestry is the planning for and management of a community's forest resources to enhance the quality of life.

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[urban forestry] integrates the economic, environmental, political and social values of the community to develop a comprehensive management plan for the urban forest.

Community involvement is, therefore, part of the multidisciplinary ecosystem management of urban forestry. Just as a rural forester must form partnerships with farmers, ranchers, environmentalists and other natural resource management professionals to develop a comprehensive understanding of the weather patterns, soils, water systems, and plant and animal communities that are part of the rural forest and the human demands on the rural system, it is important for the urban forester to form partnerships with community residents in order to understand the cultures and values of urban forest communities. While the forester or arboriculturist is an expert in tree management and the impact of urban conditions on particular tree species, residents are experts in the values and culture of their community. Thus, while the professional certainly has a role in developing the project and providing the technical assistance and professional expertise necessary to ensure that the community's goals are successfully addressed, the process must incorporate the values and priorities of local residents. This model of the community-forestry partnership is consistent with Arnstein's (1969) definition of the minimal degree of citizen control constituting *true* participation. This perspective has been formally acknowledged at the highest levels of urban and community forestry policy making in this country. According to Frederick J. Deneke (1994), then-Director of the United States Forest Service State and Private Forestry Program, Urban and Community Forestry Project,

...the federal role is one of facilitative leadership... vesting leadership in urban and community forestry with the people who live and work in our cities and communities. It is not about forcing urban forestry management on a community.

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People who view themselves as part of the urban forest and who are actively involved in its restoration and care develop a sense of empowerment that translates into socially, culturally and economically stronger cities, communities and neighborhoods.

Despite the recognition of the importance and promise of participatory methods, however, there are many definitions of participation in natural resource management ranging from bureaucratically controlled public involvement through highly participatory community-driven approaches. In forestry, for example, "public participation" has typically referred to public involvement. In this context, any activity through which non-professionals contribute thoughts or effort to a forest management agency or program are labeled "involvement," whether or not those contributions are eventually reflected in policy or program design. Most programs fall somewhere along a continuum between these two extremes (Figure 1). Among the involvement strategies most commonly relied on by public foresters in the United States in order of increasing opportunities for community participation are; policy announcements, public hearings, community tree plantings, and information mining. Policy announcements, sometimes inviting response by mail or telephone, are often required for programs utilizing state or federal funding and may be made in local newspapers where they are not likely to be seen by members of some segments of the population. At public hearings, citizens listen to professionals or politicians explain their plans *as envisioned by professionals* to address a problem or issue *as defined by those professionals*; followed, perhaps, by an opportunity to respond or to ask clarifying questions. Local residents participating in community tree plantings provide the labor necessary to implement a project typically designed by agency personnel. Finally, information mining is the practice of extracting knowledge, interests

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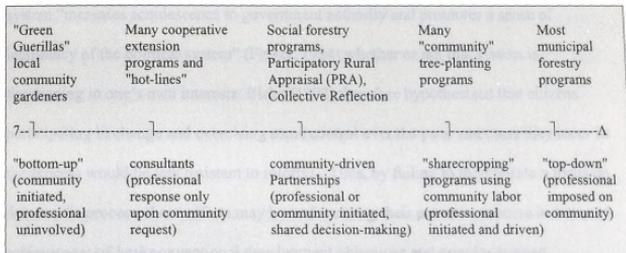


Figure 1: Continuum of Participation in Natural Resource Management (McDonough, Vachta, Funkhouser & Geiche, 1994)

or attitudes from residents without providing reciprocal services or ensuring any official response to the concerns raised by respondents (McDonough, et al, 1994). While these strategies can provide increased opportunities for citizen input, they allow continued technocratic control of decision-making processes. Communities are "allowed" to voice their preferences and concerns, but the professionals retain the power to determine what will or will not be done in the final analysis. At the opposite end of the spectrum are citizen-initiated approaches. For many theorists of participation (e.g. Wandersman, 1981; Arnstein, 1969) such approaches constitute the archetype of participatory development. Others (e.g. McDonough et al, 1994), however, note the concern that relegating professionals to solely responding to citizen-initiated efforts denies access to information and resources to those communities not already informed of the available opportunities. Development initiatives where expertise and control reside solely with either the professional or community participants and flow one way, from top to bottom or bottom to top, therefore often fail to address the full range of potential concerns. Indeed, according to mobilization of support theory, participation within the existing political

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system "increases acquiescence to government authority and promotes a sense of legitimacy of the political system" (Finkel, 1984) whether or not that system is functioning in one's own interests. Blake (1998) therefore hypothesized that citizens participating in change and exercising some control over the pace and costs they incur in the process would be less resistant to reforms. Thus, by failing to incorporate a focus on democratic process, these efforts may be undermining their potential success in terms of achievement of *both* conventional development objectives and popular support.

#### SUMMARY

Formal development thought conventionally flows from North to South and is driven by modernization theory which holds the development paths of Europe and the United States to be the theoretical ideal. The development practice which follows is typically characterized by centrally planned highly technical solutions aimed at improving conditions for economic competition in keeping with the liberal democratic and market capitalist philosophical roots of modernization. Due to their often immense scale and technical sophistication, as well as the faith in positivistic and empirical knowledge over indigenous expertise, these efforts are typically driven by professionals with little or no participation among local residents. However, there has been increasing attention given to citizen participation in the planning process. As illustrated by several reviews of participation in practice, 'participation' has conventionally been construed from the perspective of professionals (Lane, 1997) in what Nelson and Wright (1995) call the 'functional' sense. That is, participation has been sought in order to achieve the professionally-determined goals of a program more efficiently, cost effectively or with

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decreased resistance from local citizens (Chambers, 1995). While these approaches may create the appearance of democratic process, 'participants' may feel more co-opted than empowered (Wright & Nelson, 1995).

The effects of these approaches for the history and evolution of cities in the United States has been dramatic. While industrialization generated great economic and technological success, urban centers have experienced disinvestment, deindustrialization and rapid depopulation as the processes continued through urbanization and suburbanization. These impacts were greatly facilitated by the large-scale infrastructure associated with modernization, such as the federal highway system which made rapid transportation of commercial goods and relocation of industrial workers feasible. Other urban development efforts such as the Model Cities programs, the American Community Recovery Act and Federally-funded public housing have generated conditions antithetical to the sense of collective identity and mutual reliance that help to define healthy communities. Instead, urban development policy has relied on programs which perpetuate economic decline and exposure to environmental health threats. While urban environmental policy and resources could be designed help to ameliorate some of these effects, their management has been carried out in a similarly technocratic manner with professionals establishing the agenda rather than integrating local needs and values into the planning process.



**CHAPTER 3**  
**THE CURRENT CASE:**  
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Once dubbed "The Arsenal of Democracy" as host of some of the world's most technologically advanced industrial and defense manufacturing plants, the history and evolution of Detroit epitomizes the functioning of the economic, social and political forces described in the previous chapter. Like most Northern cities, its development was highly reflective of Modernization theory; the processes of industrialization and economic integration epitomized those hypothesized by that model. However, the ensuing processes of deindustrialization and economic decline belie the presumed linearity central to modernization theory and development efforts guided by it. The efforts of Detroit citizens toward reclaiming their city serves as especially compelling evidence of the need for and promise of alternatives to the continued reliance on large-scale economically-focused development interventions.

## **THE SETTING: DETROIT**

### **A Brief History**

Detroit was first settled by French traders and served as a center for trade and commerce. The waterfront site provided access to transportation routes for export and served as a departure point for expeditions further north into Canada and west across the northern forests. While Detroit grew steadily through the earlier years, its major expansion took place during the "boon" of industrialization during which the city grew to its current size of 132 square miles, while the population reached a high of approximately 1.5 million.

As in most Northern cities, industrialization was followed by the advent and growth of suburbanization in the period between 1940 and 1960 (Darden, Child Hill,

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Thomas & Thomas, 1987.) During WWII and the post-war industrial boom, immigration from the South in pursuit of factory jobs coupled with white suburban migration resulted in an increase in the concentration of Blacks within the City from 9.2% to 63.1%. Yet, Detroit was among the last cities in this country to prohibit segregation, leading to the City's status as one of the most racially segregated cities in the country. As documented by Massey and Denton (1993), the City continues to be among the most hypersegregated of all metropolitan areas in the nation along all five of their identified dimensions. These include: *unevenness* which is a measure of the distribution of a population across the geographic area; *isolation* of predominantly black neighborhoods from those of other racial or cultural groups; *clustering* of predominantly black neighborhoods in one or a very few regions within the metropolitan area; *centralization* of those neighborhoods around the urban core; and dense *concentration* of African Americans within very small areas. On all five dimensions, Detroit's segregation index was well above the "hypersegregation cutpoint" and often well above those of the other fifteen identified hypersegregated regions (Massey and Denton, 1993).

In Detroit, these processes were greatly facilitated by decisions made by the economically dominant auto industry. For example, in an effort to reduce the power of unionized labor in the Detroit plants, Ford targeted the Rouge River plant, both the company's and the City's largest employer of Black workers, for its largest investments in automation in 1950, cutting 3000 jobs. Construction of the highway system in and around Detroit in the late 1950s (Boggs, 1998) greatly facilitated these efforts. With the increasing ease of transport, the corporation was able to distribute operations from "the Rouge" across other facilities, many of which were relocated to suburban and rural areas,

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to ensure that workers in any given plant would have limited power to impact production rates during times of conflict. Over time, the plant dropped from a high of 85,000 workers in 1945 to 30,000 in 1960 (Sugrue, 1996). The plant currently employs approximately 7,000 workers (Detroit Free Press On-Line, 1999). Ford was not alone in this process. While twenty five new plants were constructed in the Detroit metropolitan area by the "Big 3" automobile manufacturers between 1947 and 1958, all were located in the suburbs, most more than fifteen miles from the city center (Sugrue, 1996). While white workers migrated to the suburbs in pursuit of jobs or were relocated to other facilities by the companies, African Americans were often left behind with little economic opportunity due, at least in part, to the practices of redlining and restrictive covenants which limited the opportunities for Black migration across the North (Sugrue, 1996; Darden, Child Hill, Thomas & Thomas, 1987; Vose, 1967).

Despite this history, the City has continued to rely on the same approaches and corporations for its ongoing economic development efforts. In 1980, for example, General Motors proposed building one of the largest new Cadillac plants within the city of Detroit. Desperate for new jobs and economic opportunity within the City, the United Auto Workers joined Mayor Colman Young in strongly supporting the plant's construction. In return for the company's investment in Detroit, the city took responsibility for clearing the "1,500 houses, 144 businesses, sixteen churches, two schools and a hospital" (Boggs, 1998) that made up the Poletown neighborhood, an integrated community of African Americans and Eastern European immigrants, over the widespread resistance among community residents. However, notwithstanding early promises of up to 6,000 jobs, the highly automated plant employed only 2,500 workers

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when it opened in 1984. While the two plants it replaced "had employed 15,000 people as recently as 1979," the Poletown plant has never employed more than its current 4,000 workers (Higgins, 1995; Boggs, 1998).

Tensions fueled by such questionable economic development decisions, coupled with the historical lack of interaction between racial groups resulting at least in part from the City's extreme segregation, has had a variety of impacts on the City and its history. Among them was the 1967 rebellion following a police raid on a popular nightclub patronized primarily by Blacks. In the decade following the rebellion, the city lost 311,000 residents- primarily through continued "white flight" to the suburbs (Darden, Child Hill, Thomas & Thomas, 1987) and that depopulation continues. With the loss of an additional 45,000 families between 1980 and 1990 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990), then-Mayor Coleman Young ordered a massive demolition program beginning in 1987 to clear the "vacant and dangerous" buildings left behind. At that time, approximately 1 of every 12 housing units in the city was classified as 'vacant or abandoned' (Detroit Empowerment Zone Development Corporation, 1997). By 1991, this program generated more than 65,000 vacant lots throughout the city (Fitzgerald, 1991). Given that the average lot in Detroit measures 110' by 70', those lots would, if contiguous, make up approximately 26 square miles of vacant land which is about one fifth of Detroit's entire land area. With renewed efforts to clear abandoned homes, the number of vacant lots has recently risen to approximately 73,000 (Anon., 1997) or almost 30 square miles of land. Budgetary constraints often prevent the city from providing adequate maintenance of the vacant lots which then become illegal waste dumps. Many Detroit neighborhood groups identify such problems with the vacant as among the most important concerns in their

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communities. But the vacant lots may also present an opportunity for Detroit communities, which have a long and rich history of organizing to confront economic and social concerns.

### **Social And Economic Conditions**

At the time of the 1990 recent census, 26% of the population of Detroit was living below the poverty line. Thus, the City had the highest poverty rate of the 77 cities with populations above 200,000 in the United States. The average family income in the city is \$18,740 (Detroit Empowerment Zone Development Corporation, 1997). While Detroit's unemployment rate is about 15% (Detroit Empowerment Zone Development Corporation, 1997), unemployment among the City's African Americans was also ranked first at 33% (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990), which more closely approximates the 45% unemployment rate of blacks in South Africa at the end of Apartheid (James, 1992) than that of New York City at 10% (Johnson, 1997). Detroit's infant mortality rate of 21/1000 live births (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990), falls between that of Northern Ghana (at 23.9/1000) (Ross, Kirkwood, Binka, & Arthur, 1995) and Chile (at 19.5/1000) (Potts, 1990). Thus, the City epitomizes the concept of "the South in the North." Finally, Detroit has the highest concentration of African Americans in any city in the United States at 75.7% (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990). While this, along with the history of African American leadership in Detroit, is a source of tremendous pride within the city, Greenberg (1990) notes that "the morbidity and mortality rates of black people in the U.S. exceeds those of any other industrialized nation." Furthermore, Mason (1989) documents that Black mortality in this country exceeds that of whites at every age even

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though Blacks only make up 12% of the nation's population. Thus, until these disparities in healthcare and life chances are eliminated, the very survival of Detroit's population is in jeopardy.

### **A Tradition Of Local Organizing**

Certainly, Detroit has faced tremendous political and economic challenges. Through it all, Detroiters have responded with concerted efforts for local control and social justice, in addition to the well-documented labor movements born in the City. This tradition is especially strong in the African American community. As early as 1889 the Plain Dealer was encouraging the young black men of Detroit to join "Afro-Americans in every section of the country [in] forming leagues and societies in which are discussed the conditions of their race, and methods for its betterment" (cited in Thomas, 1992). This tradition of local organizing continued through early industrialization with the help of the Urban League, among others, which located employment opportunities for Blacks migrating in large numbers from the South. These early migrants created the foundations for later community building efforts among Black residents in Detroit.

With the support of progressive local Black churches, residents of the city responded to segregation by creating the "self-help" movement, establishing black owned and operated hospitals, insurance companies, credit unions and newspapers which were vital to the growing social consciousness in Detroit. By 1912 the Detroit Chapter of the United Negro Improvement Agency was established by Marcus Garvey followed by the Booker T. Washington Trade Association and the Housewives League of Detroit, both founded in 1930. In the late 1930's protest and conflict-oriented strategies came to the

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fore and provided the seeds for building political power among blacks in Detroit which was realized through the efforts of the NAACP and the strikes of black workers throughout the 30's and 40's (Thomas, 1992).

While the City has attempted to address more recent concerns about the lack of economic opportunity in the city by successfully applying for federally designated Empowerment Zones, with varying degrees of acceptance by local residents, the heritage of local organizing and self-help lives on in Detroit. In addition to a host of block clubs and neighborhood associations and a large number of faith-based and community service organizations, several regional and city-wide citizens' organizations struggle to rebuild the city along a number of dimensions. Groups such as WE-PROS (WE the People Reclaiming Our Streets) struggle to take neighborhoods back from drug dealers and regenerate hope among local youth. In parallel, SOSAD (Save Our Sons and Daughters) is a coalition of Detroit parents and supporters challenging youth violence and working to create a climate of support for the City's young people (Boggs, 1998). United Street Networking and Planning: Building a Community (U-Snap-Bac) is a non-profit coalition of community organizations on Detroit's East Side (Mast, 1994).

The efforts of these citizen-initiated efforts are supplemented by several externally supported organizations. Groups such as the Neighborhood Service Organization (NSO) a United Way Foundation-sponsored neighborhood organizing agency, Northern Area Association (NAA) a similar organization sponsored by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and the city-sponsored New Detroit provide organizing training and resources to local residents. They help to train officers of community-based organizations and teach the groups strategizing, leadership, and fundraising skills, and

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how to establish 501c(3) (non-profit tax-exempt) status, though some critique the press for tax exempt status which prevents the groups from taking positions in local elections. Through their efforts, there are few areas of the city without a well-trained neighborhood association (Mast, 1994).

More recently, a number of groups have evolved specifically to address the intersection of environmental and natural resource concerns, and maldevelopment in the City. Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice (DWEJ) is part of the national movement challenging the concentration of environmental hazards in communities of color in this country and the failure of existing legislation to address the inequities in exposure to such risks. The Gardening Angels and the Detroit Farming Network serve as information, training and resource exchanges among Detroit residents who have begun to use the City's vacant land resources to feed their families and communities and to provide environmental and health education. The Gardening Angels in particular direct their efforts at rebuilding intergenerational relationships by providing senior urban gardeners the opportunity to share their skills with Detroit youth who, in turn, contribute their energies to the gardening projects. Finally, Detroit Summer expands on and consolidates these visions by building "an intergenerational multicultural youth program/movement to rebuild, redefine and respirit Detroit from the ground up." The program is based on the Mississippi Freedom Summer's model of raising awareness by bringing young people from around the nation to "dramatize the idea that rebuilding our cities is at the heart of a new movement that is emerging as we come to the end of the twentieth century" (Boggs, 1998). In discussing the need for such programs, Detroit Summer co-founder Jimmy

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Boggs (1986, cited in Boggs, 1998), a long term Chrysler autoworker and grassroots organizer said,

To rebuild Detroit, we have to think of a new mode of production based upon serving human needs and the needs of community and not on any get-rich-quick schemes... If we are going to create hope especially for our young people, we are going to have to stop seeing the city as just a place to which you come for a job or to make a living as start seeing it as the place where the humanity of people is enriched because they have the opportunity to live with people of many different ethnic and social backgrounds...

We have to get rid of the myth that there is something sacred about large-scale production for the national and international market... We have to begin thinking of creating small enterprises which produce food, goods and services for the local market, that is for our communities and our city. Instead of destroying the skills of workers, which is what large-scale industry does, these small enterprises will combine craftsmanship, or the preservation and enhancement of human skills with the new technologies which make possible flexible production and constant readjustment to serve the needs of local customers...

In order to create these new enterprises we need a view of our city which takes into consideration both the natural resources of our area and the existing and potential skills and talents of Detroiters... (cited in Boggs, 1998).

In his statement, placing Detroit's development squarely in the middle of the debate regarding modernization theory, Mr. Boggs identified many of the same core critiques of modernization raised in the literature including; the scale of interventions derived from its theoretical tenets, its focus on rapid economic returns, the common focus on automation and efficiency at the expense of workers and skill development, the presumption that job creation is of higher priority than community development or local social or environmental concerns, and its ultimate objective of facilitating integration into

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the global economy. However, within Mr. Boggs' comments are also a number of promising suggestions for an alternative paradigm. Among them are: reliance on small scale community-based efforts aimed specifically at addressing locally-identified objectives, a focus on skill-building at the individual level and capacity- building at the organizational/community level, and taking a holistic view of community life and of the interdependence of development and environment within that context. The Urban Resources Initiative (URI/MSU) program of Michigan State University's Department of Forestry represents an attempt to apply such a community-driven approach to the redevelopment of Detroit

#### **PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT IN DETROIT: THE URI/MSU PROGRAM**

Detroit is a collective of communities as much as a single urban entity. Each of these communities is unique. "Top-down" approaches, where a single solution is applied uniformly across the city, would not address the rich differences that make up the whole of Detroit. Through URI/MSU, Detroit communities began to reclaim some of the City's vacant land for use in forestry-based projects with economic, social and environmental benefits. Participants in the URI/MSU program were members of neighborhood organizations in Detroit who were already working toward mutually defined goals of community development. These groups are bound by both geography and common interest.

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### **Gaining Access And Entré**

Prior to introducing the program to neighborhood organizations, URI/MSU personnel spent approximately one year becoming familiar with the city agencies and personnel who could influence the program's success. Among these were the Mayor's office, the Department of Public Works (DPW), the Parks and Recreation Department and its Municipal Forestry office, the city's Neighborhood Services Organization and Project Pride and the Wayne County Cooperative Extension service's Consumer Horticulture program. Although several would provide referrals and services for the URI/MSU program and its participants, the Department of Public works proved to be the most significant "gatekeeper" for the program.

Through these meetings, it was determined that primary oversight of the program would be the responsibility of the Department of Public Works (DPW) which supervises the maintenance of all city-owned vacant lands. Initially, each URI/MSU project was to be authorized by the DPW Associate Director, although the criteria for approval were never enumerated. However, after several projects were approved, the Associate Director determined that such centralized authority was no longer necessary and suggested that the DPW district managers be contacted for future authorization and support. These district managers determined whether identified sites were, indeed, city owned and available for community-based projects and negotiated cooperative maintenance agreements with the leadership of participant organizations. These agreements give the community-based groups effective land tenure over the sites for as long as the projects continue to be maintained by the members. Despite several requests, however, the managers failed to make copies of the signed agreements available.

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### **Developing Partnerships**

Once the necessary formal relationships were established to ensure that the program personnel were sufficiently familiar with the pertinent governmental and non-governmental structures and that participant organizations would face as few unanticipated barriers as possible, attention turned to gaining entré to Detroit community organizations. The staff of Project Pride and of the Neighborhood Services Organization proved invaluable in understanding the neighborhood association structure of local organizing in the City and providing contact information for the neighborhood associations. Most neighborhood associations in Detroit serve as umbrella organizations for a number of block clubs, although some are as active collectively as are their member block clubs. A brochure which introduced the program and its purposes and activities was developed and sent to the leadership of each neighborhood association in the City. Follow up phone calls were made to each President and the URI/MSU Program Manager attended neighborhood association meetings when invited. Through presentations at neighborhood association meetings, block club leaders were introduced to the program and invited to contact the URI/MSU program if they felt the program could serve the needs of their organizations. In this manner, the program was made available to each community without appearing too closely aligned with any governmental or other non-governmental organization or imposing its presence on any group without an invitation from a local resident. In addition to the block clubs which showed interest in the program, several neighborhood associations chose to participate in the program collectively as a result of these informational meetings.

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### **Collaborative Planning**

Through the Urban Resources Initiative, these community groups identified local needs, interests, skills, existing resources and future goals and designed forestry-based projects that were appropriate for the individual community. Thus, goals for URI/MSU projects were determined by each individual community organization in collaboration with and with technical assistance from URI/MSU personnel and their network of professional contacts and resources in a process reflective of Wandersman's (1981) "creation of parameters and objects". Consistent with McKnight and Kretzman's (1990) capacity centered approach, groups designed projects through this process based on their own collective assessments of their interests, abilities, resources and visions for their own neighborhoods and the areas in which capacity-building activities would make the greatest contribution toward achieving those visions, with as much or as little technical support from URI personnel and their professional networks and resources as they requested. These efforts were constrained only by funding and biological/environmental conditions. For example, once groups identified their objectives and the benefits they hoped to derive from the projects, URI personnel would often be asked to suggest appropriate species which could be successfully grown in the Southeastern Michigan climate and conditions which could be expected to provide those benefits. Groups were provided a Community Resources Manual (Vachta & Buncic, 1994) which included lists of species suitable for various types of projects as well as directories of resources and technical assistance to ensure that they were aware of the forms of assistance available.

For example, many block clubs have trouble raising enough money to do all the things they would like to in their community. Through participation in the URI/MSU

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program, these groups tried to design and implement community forestry projects that could be used for long- or short-term economic benefits. Among these were community orchards, community tree nurseries, and Christmas tree plantations. Other communities have a large number of people interested in community gardening in order to make fresh, nutritious vegetables more accessible to their families. In these cases, URI offers temperate agroforestry solutions which combine fruit trees, berry bushes and nitrogen fixing trees and shrubs with garden plots to maximize food production from the sites while reducing the expense and potential environmental contamination of chemical inputs. Several communities have used a combination of these models. There is also a range of potential environmental benefits from planting trees on these sites. Planting trees in urban settings can help reduce air pollution, increase shade and decrease the temperature in the surrounding areas in the summer and they can attract birds and butterflies and other desirable wildlife (Lipkis, 1990).

### **Organizational Development Through Community Forestry**

In addition to addressing economic, environmental, educational, and subsistence needs, many URI/MSU participant groups cite local organizing objectives as among their primary purpose for developing a community forestry project. Many community groups have a small core of people who do most of the work and have great difficulty getting younger residents to participate in their activities. These groups are often seeking solutions to attract teens and young adults who do not, traditionally, participate in block clubs and neighborhood groups. Since the projects require regular maintenance and provide participants with a constant reminder of the contribution they are making to the

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community, group members hoped that those involved in planting the projects would remain involved over the long-term (McDonough, & Vachta, 1997).

Through these processes, most of the groups identified important organizing goals among their purposes for choosing to participate in the program, as will be discussed at length below. Thus, at the center of the current study is an exploration of the implications of the program for those organizations in terms of building local organizing capacity and meeting goals for organizational development and local empowerment although other community-identified objectives are also assessed. This is a departure from traditional program evaluation methodology as advocated by Marcus and Fisher (1986) who identified the need to center

improvement in organizational collaboration, increased levels of community involvement and action and promotion of healthier public policies or environmental condition... characteristics of successful community collaborations [such as] shared vision, strong leadership, access [and] process versus task achievement

in social scientific research in order to meet the current crisis of accurately representing groups across cultures.

Assessment of previous efforts to increase participation in development activities would suggest that the participatory nature of the URI/MSU program would reduce costs and resistance to the program as a development effort. However, the question remains as to whether engagement in the development process can contribute to the achievement of this much broader range of community building objectives. While use of participation in modernization-driven development activities has not sought these objectives and, therefore, has seldom explored the implications for development activities for local organizations and empowerment, an alternative conceptualization of development might

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### SUMMARY

Like most northern industrial cities, Detroit's history and development epitomized the patterns postulated by modernization theory. The city evolved from a small fort and transportation hub to one of the largest and most advanced technological centers in the nation through the processes of industrialization and urbanization. Eventually, however, segregation and the processes of suburbanization and depopulation, which continue today, contributed to a major decline in economic and social opportunity in the central city, implying that development may not be the linear process presumed by that model.

Conventional responses to these declines have been unsuccessful to-date. Interventions such as the large Poletown Cadillac plant and the federally subsidized Empowerment Zone initiatives have yet to generate the promised jobs and economic opportunities within the city. Instead, many observers feel these efforts have reinforced existing problems. For example, the coexistence of Empowerment Zones with federally designated Brownfields may allow for increasingly automated industrial production and resulting environmental problems which may no longer be subject to Superfund-required standards of pollution remediation, but with little economic return to the local communities.

However, the City does have a long history of local organizing and self-help initiatives. Citizen groups have undertaken extensive efforts to rebuild the City through grassroots and community-based initiatives aimed at reducing youth violence and

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rebuilding intergenerational relationships. More recently, the vision proposed by James Boggs (1987, cited in Boggs 1998) of utilizing the City's land resources to improve environmental conditions and provide for local subsistence has begun to become a reality.

In this context, the Urban Resources Initiative evolved as a pilot effort, building partnerships between professionals and community-based organizations to compliment local initiatives with collaborative efforts addressing locally-defined objectives. While true community-professional partnerships have been relatively rare in urban environmental and natural resource planning in the U.S., collaborative efforts undertaking small scale, localized and participatory approaches to development have a longer history in Southern nations. Such locally-driven approaches to development are referred to as participatory development. The scholarship exploring participatory development reflects the promise of such approaches to address the concerns at either end of the development cycle. In contrast with modernization driven development, such efforts center human, community and organizational development. Such efforts often prioritize establishing the organizing capacity and political power to determine and achieve a local vision for the community and control over future paths of development.

**CHAPTER 4**  
**PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT AND**  
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While modernization-driven development has focused on the 'big picture,' generating infrastructure for national or regional economic development, the implications for citizens at the community level are seldom considered. The tacit presumption is that economic improvements at the national level will 'trickle down' to citizens through improved access to resources and employment opportunities. While such large scale economically focused approaches have been successful in facilitating integration into the global economic system, improvements in conditions for citizens within recipient nations are not as evident. For example, a review of the 15 governments receiving the majority of World Bank aid revealed that, while the economic position of recipient nations relative to other nations was improving, economic conditions *within* the countries were not (Thomas, & Chhibber, 1989). Thus, such 'top-down' approaches to development have yet to demonstrate promise for improving actual living conditions for most citizens. As a result, even some of modernization's strongest proponents have begun to reconsider these positions in recent years. For example, Walt W. Rostow (1997) who, as Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs in the Kennedy administration, proposed one of the most influential models of modernization which guided much of international development policy, recently wrote that, "the lesson of Vietnam is that hegemony is a futile policy" (Rostow, 1996). Although he maintains that the Marshall Plan was "the right plan for the right place," he now contends, having served as Director of the Austin Project urban renewal program, that,

Such a plan can not do the same for Africa, inner cities, and other developing entities, because of the economic factor. The debt relief is not there. And after years of neglect, neither is there an already developed economic and industrial infrastructure waiting to be revitalized (Rostow, 1997).

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The need for an alternative approach to development where the needs and interests of local communities are central to the development process has been identified in response to these implications of the continued reliance on modernization-driven approaches. Inverting the presumptions of modernization, participatory development centers the concerns of these citizens, sometimes with the 'bottom-up' intention of eventually influencing national or regional economic status by increasing the capacity and opportunity of local citizens to participate in economically and socially productive activities. Chambers thus describes participatory development as a shift from the 'paradigm of things' to a 'paradigm of people' (Table 3).

Referring to modernization theory, the paradigm of things presumes that construction of the right facilities and infrastructure (such as highway systems, hydroelectric dams or shopping malls) will facilitate commercial and industrial activity fostering economic competition and development. Thus, this paradigm relies on centralized planning of standardized technological solutions of which beneficiaries are passive recipients, consistent with the model Peiris identified as 'acquiescence'. Conversely, participatory development is centrally concerned with the development of people, their communities and community-based organizations to establish a climate conducive to collective self-reliance. The resulting approaches would be expected to encounter less resistance, be more specifically appropriate to the social, cultural and ecological conditions of the local area and would require less ongoing support from any centralized authority (Lane, 1997; Adams, 1994).

However, the shift in intent from meeting such professionally-identified objectives to identifying and addressing concerns of local citizens implies an even deeper

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Point of departure and reference	Things	People
Mode	Blueprint	Process
Keyword	Planning	Participation
Goals	Pre-set, closed	Evolving, open
Decision-making	Centralized	Decentralized
Analytical assumptions	Reductionist	Systems, holistic
Methods, Rules	Standardized Universal	Diverse Local
Technology	Fixed package (table d'hôte)	Varied basket (B la carte)
Professionals' interactions with clients	Motivating Controlling	Enabling Empowering
Clients seen as	Beneficiaries	Actors, partners
Force flow	Supply- push	Demand- pull
Outputs	Uniform Infrastructure	Diverse Capabilities
Planning and Action	Top-down	Bottom-up

Table 3: From the 'Paradigm Of Things' to the 'Paradigm Of People' (Chambers, 1995)

challenge to conventional development thought. Rather than holding economic development and integration into the global economy as the ultimate objectives which justifies heavy reliance on technical and scientific expertise, the focus is on increased collective self-reliance (which may or may not be defined in economic terms), independence and empowerment which precludes such technocratic decision making. In contrast with *decentralization*, through which government delegates responsibility for local development to citizens in the name of 'local control', participatory development recognizes that effective development activities evolve in a manner directed by and

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consistent with local needs and values, investing decision making power in local residents without denying the accountability of government and public agencies to these constituencies. This shift in perspective has tremendous implications for the way development is defined and assessed. Meeting the needs and interests of participants is the *purpose* of people-centered development, not a secondary goal; participation is not an 'input,' but an end (Lane, 1997). Such a development model would be expected to prioritize development of the necessary skills for active participation in local self-governance. Thus, consistent with Arnstein's, Wandersman's, and Peiris' models of participation, truly *participatory* development replaces functional participation with *transformative participation*. That is, it strives to redistribute power in a manner which facilitates the efforts of local peoples to meet the collective needs and interests of their communities (Nelson & Wright, 1995). Power implies agency; the ability to influence one's own "chances, abilities and capacities for action" or those of one's social group or, in its more exploitative forms, those of other peoples and groups. Thus, power underlies any discussion of development and participation.

As illustrated by the preceding discussion, decision-making power in most development projects is often retained by professional development personnel, consistent with Gaventa's (1980) framework of the manifestation of organizational power. In this sense, power is reflected in an organization's ability to use its superior access to resources as a bargaining tool which, according to Gaventa, can lead to a coercive element in negotiations, whether or not the more powerful party or organization intends to utilize its power in that manner. Examples of this might include an employer's ability to set levels of compensation and benefits in order to reward or punish workers for

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responsiveness to management's interests or a municipality's ability to withhold or delay services to areas with a history of protesting the administration's policies. Another element of organizational power Gaventa identifies is the ability to control the development of shared beliefs and ideologies through defining public debate, access to information and the messages expressed through media. The shift from calls for greater governmental accountability to the more victim-blaming (Ryan, 1970) fashion of demanding 'personal responsibility' embodied, for example, by the rhetoric preceding welfare reform illustrates the expression of this form of power.

The final element in Gaventa's framework, which may have the most direct and obvious relationship to development practice, is the ability to construct barriers to participation through agenda setting and defining the issues. As illustrated by the preceding discussion, professionals and governmental agencies frequently determine the objectives of many development projects. These groups also often determine whether and to what extent public participation might be incorporated in the planning and implementation processes. When it is included at all, participation in such programs is often limited to 'instrumental' or 'functional' forms (Wright & Nelson, 1995). Local residents may participate in the implementation or maintenance of a project, but their participation serves the goals of the planning body or sponsoring agency and not necessarily those of the community itself.

In contrast, participatory development is concerned with *transformative* participation, often discussed in terms of empowerment (Wright & Nelson, 1995). In this context, empowerment refers to the transfer of power from government, professional agency, or other typical decision-makers to those most directly impacted by its

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expression. Thus, participatory development strives to channel the energy of community participation toward the generation and realization of a collective vision among participants rather than that of the professional or agency. Hence, programs claiming the label 'participatory development' tend to fall within the range of what Arnstein labels 'degrees of citizen power.' While many use the term 'partnership,' the definition of that term according to Arnstein's model suggests a less equitable relationship than that typically connoted in the context of participatory development. In participatory development partnerships cooperating participants and professionals are equal contributors to the process; both groups share planning and implementation responsibilities including shared authority in all decision-making processes (Lane, 1997; McDonough, et al, 1994).

#### **Participatory Development: Learning from the South**

While modernization theory, and the international development efforts derived from it, have sought to implement northern development patterns in southern nations despite the economic and social disparities between the settings, participatory development efforts have been most systematically implemented and tested in the South. Thus, as the failure of modernization to explain post-industrial development patterns or to provide solutions for the resulting social and economic crises generates calls to begin exploring alternative paths, such as that issued by Jimmy Boggs (1986, cited in Boggs 1998), it may be time to turn to the South for lessons. While the disparities between Northern and Southern settings continue to pose challenges when transferring 'development technologies,' the literature regarding participation-in-community and

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empowerment suggests that participatory approaches may hold promise for Northern communities by building the opportunity and capacity for local communities to meet their own needs and interests.

Just as a variety of citizens' groups have formed in Detroit to address problems arising from deindustrialization and economic decline there, parallel organizations have formed in a wide variety of locations globally to address the failure of large-scale "top down" development efforts and highly centralized funding structures to meet local needs with ecologically and culturally appropriate solutions. Underlying these efforts is the need for local control and definition of what "development" means and the choice of paths taken to achieve it. Among these are the Chipko movement in India, the Greenbelt Movement in Africa, the Rubber Tappers' unions in Brazil. While these groups may seek technical assistance from professionals on occasion, the effort is community-based and professionals are involved only at the request of these citizens. Thus, these efforts fall within the category of 'bottom up' initiatives in McDonough, et al's (1995) Continuum of Participation in Natural Resource Management (Figure 1).

Where professionals do remain involved, the shift to localized natural resource planning has led to the innovation of highly participatory and localized approaches. Such approaches require a close and equitable relationship between community members and professionals based on realistic expectations among all parties. For professionals, this often means giving up the notions of the appropriate place of technical and empirical knowledge at the root of conventional development thought. Such partnership-oriented approaches to development share a common trend toward highly participatory development of small-scale community-driven solutions to local problems. Instead of

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gathering empirical data and determining the most 'rational' solution to the development issues at hand, the professional is responsible for providing information and resources community members may not otherwise have access to so that local participants can make fully informed decisions regarding the development path they choose to take and the activities that will, or will not, be included in that effort. The professionals may also facilitate development of the necessary skills among residents to minimize future dependence on professional assistance.

Participatory rural appraisal (PRA), collective reflection and social (or community) forestry are examples of such approaches that have been utilized to meet community needs in non-industrialized countries. The goal of these approaches is to facilitate local access to and control of development. Through PRA, for example, local people analyze their own lives and situations. The resulting innovative approaches and solutions are shared (for example, between farmers in different locations) and modified through local experience. This approach can lead to increased participation by and empowerment of local people and development of more solutions that are more culturally and ecologically appropriate to the local setting. However, there is some concern regarding the impact of applying non-indigenous or "fashionable," but ineffective, approaches (Akula, 1993; Chambers, 1994). Collective reflection, a Freirean method through which participants engage in continual cycles of collective problem solving, action and shared reflection (Goodman, et al, 1998,) can also serve as a tool for incorporating non-traditional perspectives into sustainable development, social change and network development efforts (Brown, 1993). Similar "participatory management"

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### **Social Forestry as Participatory Development**

One approach to participatory development that may be particularly promising for northern applications is social forestry. Consistent with McDonough et al's 'community-driven partnerships,' social (or community) forestry programs attempt to find a balance between externally imposed programs and professional unresponsiveness by establishing genuine partnerships with community residents and organizations (McDonough, et al, 1994). First developed in rural villages of the non-industrialized world, these programs utilize community-professional partnerships to develop small-scale projects, the benefits of which accrue to the local community. Social foresters work with local residents to identify the needs and concerns of the community, and to identify culturally, socially, and environmentally appropriate forestry-based solution. By centering local values and conditions, the resulting projects can directly address the concerns of each community throughout the process (Cernea<sup>2</sup>, 1985; Ismawan, et al, 1994).

Truly participatory community forestry projects share several important characteristics that differentiate them from those implemented according to a more conventional paradigm. As defined by McDonough, et al. (1994), community forestry projects are community-centered, the process is community-driven, decision-making is shared between the professionals and community members, and power is distributed equitably across those groups. By applying these principles, community and social forestry projects have utilized participatory approaches to meet the full range of forest

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management goals through optimally democratic and holistic processes. These characteristics are consistent with definitions of true participation provided by Arnstein (1969), Wandersman (1981), and Peiris (1997) among others (e.g. Nelson and Wright, 1995 and Minkler and Pies, 1997). Although social and community forestry programs may have larger-scale cumulative goals (such as reforestation of a watershed to prevent erosion or provision of fuelwood for an entire region), these landscape-level management concerns are addressed through the blending of multiple autonomous local efforts in a manner similar to the idealized landscape management approach proposed by Woiwode (1994). Thus, the needs and interests of local residents in each community are held primary over the objectives of management professionals throughout the development, implementation and maintenance of the resulting projects (Cernea<sup>2</sup>, 1985; Ismawan, et al, 1994). As summarized by Rebugio (1985),

While social forestry is concerned with the development of forestry areas, this is just a means toward the development of human communities. In this sense, the people and the community, not the forest, are the final indicators of success of a social forestry program.

Thus, successful programs result in improved local conditions and abatement of economic and environmental constrictions on self-determination (Davis-Case, 1989; Messerschmidt, 1993).

However, implementation of these approaches have not been entirely without problems. For example, Shiva (1989) noted that, given the belief among many development practitioners that participation in the global market will result in improved standards of living for those previously engaged in subsistence agriculture, some projects labeled 'social forestry' have actively encouraged production of cash crops. Many of

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these programs relied on relatively few commercial crops such as coffee and bananas. The ensuing flood of these products to the market resulted in decreased wholesale prices. As a result, many of the communities were no longer able to provide for their own needs either commercially or agriculturally (Shiva, 1989). In the long run, these programs failed to meet the ideals of either the professionals or residents. Thus, even social forestry programs, though based on principles of participation and community development, can fail to meet local needs or exacerbate existing problems if not implemented carefully in accordance with those principles. However, where implemented appropriately, social forestry may be a means to achieving the visions of urban forestry proposed by Deneke (1994) and the USDA Forest Service forest service 5-year plan (1994) by offering an approach that "integrates the economic, environmental, political and social values of the community" (USDA Forest Service, 1992) to "develop a sense of empowerment that translates into socially, culturally and economically stronger cities, communities and neighborhoods" (Deneke, 1994).

#### **Power, Partnership and Community in Participatory Development**

As implied by the term 'transformative participation,' in order to ensure effective and equitable partnerships, decision-making and other dimensions of power must be balanced between the entities involved in participatory development efforts. It is especially important to consciously develop processes to equalize power among participants (Schrijvers, 1995) in those cases where structural dimensions of power, as described by Gaventa (1980), Green (1997) and Polsby (1995,) tend to be represented more by members of one of the partner groups. This may be particularly pertinent in

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relationships between low-income communities or communities of color and professionals with connections to traditional power bases such as government agencies, universities or non-governmental organizations. The professional must acknowledge that such dimensions of power have often contributed to the very problems they are hoping to address through the partnership and that their social location may be, itself, an impediment to full and honest partnership. The burden of overcoming such impressions lies squarely on the shoulders of the professional hoping to gain entr9 to such a community (Fairweather & Davidson, 1985), although convention and convenience may impede their efforts.

Many professionals, for example, tend to rely on local NGO experts, 'opinion leaders' or other self-appointed representatives to serve as the voice for the community in development planning, perhaps because they are more able to participate in a manner comfortable and familiar to the professionals (McDonough, 1992, Woiwode, 1994). They may be able to provide insight on the community perspective in a manner that seems, to the professional, to be appropriate to the project at hand. Further, as described by The Lumpen Society (1997),

Communities, especially with reference to resource use, are assumed to be incapable of deliberately choosing options which would be harmful to their members, since, under a definition of community which is tied to place, communities are supposed to consist of people who must live with the results of their actions.

This impression may be rooted in presumptions about the meaning and character of community. As described by Sarason (1982), a sense of community is the perception of similarity to others, an acknowledged interdependence with others, a willingness to maintain interdependence by giving to or doing for others what one expects from them-

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the feeling that one is part of a larger dependable and stable structure. The implication is that members of a community are homogenous in that they share common basic values and desire to do the same things and to be treated in the same ways, and that members can derive a sense of stability from belonging to such a collective. Several authors caution that this aspect of the community idyll masks the true heterogeneity and power differences that exist among any group of people (The Lumpen Society, 1997; Young, 1995). Perceived stability may, in fact, simply reflect the preference and power of the élite to protect the status quo (Pretty & Scoones, 1995; The Lumpen Society, 1997; Peiris, 1997). Just as professionals responsible for failed technocratically imposed development programs are protected from 'unintended consequences' by their relative power and distance, powerful community representatives may be insulated from any negative results of their actions and, instead, may benefit at the expense of others.

Thus, participatory development efforts must be undertaken with careful consideration of the power dynamics among community members as well as between participants and professionals. However, unexamined interpretations of community and its meaning for residents affected by 'community-driven' development may undermine the best of intentions. While discussions of community-driven participatory development frequently invoke popular conceptions of 'community,' efforts undertaken with the explicit purpose of relying upon or building 'community participation' require a more considered exploration of the concept. Just what is it we hope to build and who is it we intend to involve when we turn to 'community-based' or 'community building' alternatives? Reviews of the sociological literature exploring the concept of community, separated by twenty years, have identified scores of 'definitions.' Hillery (1953, cited in

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Bell and Newby, 1971), Bell and Newby (1971) and Effrat (1974), have each helped to distill that wealth of material down to some essential concepts which may define community, or at least help to frame the debate.

### **Defining Community**

As early as 1953, Hillery was able to identify 94 different definitions of community in the literature (Bell and Newby, 1971). Interpreting this work in the context of their own analysis of the literature, Bell and Newby (1971) identify two major branches of community studies; those exploring "Generic Community" and those classified as studies of "Rural Community". As such, their system shares with Effrat's (1974) an acknowledgment of the dichotomy of definitions between *community as rural settlement versus community as locality-based complex of personal and/or institutional relationship*. At the core of this debate are disagreements over locality as itself deterministic of community (e.g. Hillery, 1953, cited in Bell and Newby, 1971) or as context within which community, as a complex of social (e.g. Hawley, 1950, cited in Bell and Newby, 1971) and institutional (e.g. Stacey, 1969, cited in Bell and Newby, 1971) relationships, occurs. Several themes are consistently explored within both of these branches, however, including the role of self-sufficiency; common life and kinship; consciousness of kind; possession of common ends, norms and means; and the collection of institutions, locality groups and individuality. Based on this work, Bell and Newby (1971) derive three elements almost universally considered in the classic works endeavoring to define community: area, common ties and social interaction.

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Building on similarly descriptive work, Effrat (1974) developed a typology based on what she saw as the two dichotomous dimensions along which the operationalization of 'community' differed across the research. These dimensions included the range and number of functions provided by the community and whether or not "community" refers to a territorially defined entity, thus expanding on Bell and Newby's (1971) framework by acknowledging a tradition within the literature which identified some non-locality bound groupings as a form of community. Expanding on the two branches of community studies identified by Bell and Newby (1971), Effrat's typology identifies four traditions within community research; the Compleat Community, Communities of Limited Liability, Community as Society, and Personal Communities. Each is characterized by the degree to which each of the two dimensions is considered to be of importance in defining "community" and associated with particular theoretical underpinnings. Of particular interest in the effort to apply participatory approaches to urban forestry are the tensions between the first two traditions, both grounded in territoriality, but differing in the authors' perceptions of the necessary functioning of social relationships and institutions and, thus, in their conception and treatment of urban settings.

Authors working within the first tradition, similar to Bell and Newby's (1971) "Rural Communities" branch, assume that "true communities" are microcosms of society, embodying the full range of necessary social and institutional relationships and providing for the basic needs of their members. Their research frequently takes the form of holistic ethnographic analyses or case studies of small towns or villages. Theorists within this tradition are often concerned with the rural-urban continuum and the community-eroding

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force of "mass society." 'Community,' as typified by this tradition, is often equated with Tönnies conception of *Gemeinschaft*. As described by Bell and Newby (1971),

In *Gemeinschaft*, human relationships are intimate, enduring and based on a clear understanding of where each person stands in society... roles are specific and consonant with one another... Members of a community are relatively immobile in a physical and social way... There will be community sentiments involving close and enduring loyalties to the place and people. Community makes for traditionalistic ways and at the very core of the community concept is the sentimental attachment to the conventions and mores of a beloved place... This results in a personalizing of issues, events and explanations, because familiar names and characters inevitably become associated with everything that happens...

These authors typically equate urban settings with alienation, loss of cohesion and autonomy; urbanization is held responsible, at least in part, for the demise of community (Redfield, as cited in Effrat, 1974; Vidich and Bensman, 1958; Stein, 1960).

According to Bell and Newby (1971), the roots of these perspectives on the urban community are in the writings of such influential thinkers as Marx, Weber, and Durkheim. As they explain, Marx and Weber describe urbanization as an ultimately alienating process and the city as devoid of emotionally rewarding intimate relationships which are replaced by economically driven contractual relationships. Despite Durkheim's concern with "anomie" resulting from social disintegration, however, Bell and Newby (1971) point out that

what he perceived in contemporary society was not so much the breakdown of community as the transition from community based on one kind of social relations to community based on another, from mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity- solidarity based upon the interdependence of specialized parts, on diversity rather than similarity.

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This notion forms one of the theoretical foundations for the second tradition identified by Effrat (1974). Those concerned with "Communities of Limited Liability" contend that urban neighborhoods simply constitute a different, and not an inferior, form of community (Martindale, 1990). The possibility of anonymity and isolation in the city is, according to these theorists, balanced by increased freedom, the opportunity to interact with neighbors and to identify social groups voluntarily, based on common needs, interests and activities versus simple proximity. It is this sense of voluntaristic relationships which leads authors within Effrat's (1974) first tradition to consider relationships among urban dwellers to be "impersonal, superficial, transitory and segmental."

In an effort to dispel the notion of the city as embodiment of "anomie" and "social disorganization," however, researchers exploring Communities of Limited Liability (Effrat, 1974) have described the institutions and landmarks which make urban life meaningful for residents and explored the role of neighboring in urban communities. For example, Ahlbrant & Cunningham (1979) found that those who were most satisfied with their urban neighborhood viewed it as a small community within the larger city and tended to have a stronger sense of loyalty to that neighborhood than to the rest of the city. Thus, while the city may appear to be an alienated and isolated mass from the outside, people within them do not interact with "the city." Instead, they interact with one another within mediating structures such as neighborhoods, churches, and community organizations. This tension around the character of the 'urban community' has been an important debate within the sociological study of community.

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Furthermore, with the world's growing urban population and the impact of globalization on even the smallest village, authors within Effrat's "Compleat Community" tradition are sometimes accused by their detractors of clinging to an ideal of community which no longer exists, if indeed it ever did. "We might say that this idyllic picture of community is playing on white, North American nostalgia for the clean, safe, suburban 1950s" note the Lumpen Society (1997). Raising the racism, sexism and rigid class structure that can be masked by such romanticized images, the authors go on to note, "those communities were not quite the places we like to imagine... This is an image which does not relate to any real community past or present..."

Indeed, while the relative social immobility in intimate rural settings (associated with Tönnies *gemeinschaft*) where social location may be determined by neighbors' pre-existing knowledge of family history, occupation and prospects is perceived as security and stability by whites, for people of color it may instead represent yet another structure limiting economic and social opportunity (Bell & Newby, 1971; Hummon, 1978). Based on data from the Housing and Urban Development study of 1978, Hummon further determined that while rural America represents an idyllic lifestyle for whites, African Americans are more likely to identify the city as a source of emotional and social fulfillment. In fact, Rivera and Erlich (1995) suggest that urban communities of color are "characterized by *neogemeinschaft*... strong social support systems and relationships that are personal, informal and sentiment based rather than formal, specialized, and utilitarian." Thus, as described by Green (1997,)

At its heart, the black community building process has been driven by the oldest and deepest felt vision of black people in America- the struggle for freedom and equality... It

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As noted by Minkler and Wallerstein (1997), however, the designation '*neo*' in *neogemeinschaft* "refers to the fact that 'these communities life experience takes place within a causal, deterministic reality, based on racism and exploitation.'" Thus, in the face of structural barriers, collectivist identification among urban people of color may characterize a different form of community than those commonly identified by early community theorists where territorial boundaries constituted the basis for mutual identification, yet fulfills the same roles and functions in the lives of its members. Community organizations rooted in such collectivist identity in addition to conventional dimensions of community such as shared locality and reliance on common institutions serve myriad functions within such communities, not the least of which is to consolidate power among residents in protecting or promoting their collective interests (Wandersman, 1981).

### **Participation in Community: Community-Based Organizations**

The poor and disenfranchised in every society, however 'democratic,' may face similarly limited access to political benefits, such as public services, because of limited political power and access (Lineberry, 1989). One common response is the formation of mediating structures such as farmer's cooperatives, women's organizations and neighborhood associations, through which traditionally disempowered peoples consolidate political and social power in the effort to ensure local needs are met (Fischer, 1994; Adams & Rietbergen-McCracken, 1994; Wandersman, 1981). These groups are frequently selected to be participants in cooperative development and other participatory

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efforts based on the presumption that they are able to represent local interests and concerns. In urban centers these may take the forms of community organizations such as block clubs and neighborhood associations. The term, 'community organization' refers to a group of concerned citizens engaged in self-help efforts to improve the quality of life in their immediate residential vicinity (Mott, 1977) through locality development, social planning and/or social action (Rothman, 1968). "In general," writes Fischer (1984), "the term neighborhood organization refers to an institution in which people who identify themselves as part of a neighborhood promote shared interests based primarily on their living or working in the same residential area." While this organizational form does have a long and varied history (Minkler & Wallerstein, 1997; Fisher, 1995; McKenzie, 1994), block clubs and neighborhood associations working toward progressive social change have proliferated throughout the United States, especially in low-income communities and communities of color, building locally on the work of the national civil rights and black power movements (Minkler & Wallerstein, 1997).

What these organizations have in common is their struggle for a greater voice within what they hope will be an increasingly participatory democracy; often sharing the belief that a locally-defined agenda will be more responsive to the interests of their community. These expectations are supported by empirical explorations of the efficacy, equity and efficiency of decentralized neighborhood-level municipal governance (Hallman; 1984; Yates' (1973) Such local control would ideally create improved governmental responsibility and a stronger sense of efficacy among local residents (Haerberle, 1987).

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In his interpretation of Nisbet (1962), Wandersman (1981) hypothesized that the "quest for community" arises from the need for such an intermediate structure through which individuals feel meaningfully connected to the larger society. In urban settings, the neighborhood in general or a neighborhood association or block club in particular may serve as this mediating structure. Through an enhanced sense of community and political empowerment among their members, they provide a channel through which urban dwellers can collectively have greater influence over the larger municipality (Lineberry, 1989; Florin & Wandersman, 1992; Chekki, 1997; Green, 1997).

In order to illustrate the role and functioning of participation in the community, including through these organizational forms, Wandersman (1981) proposed a model of community participation which integrates the scholarship concerned with the study of participation across disciplines, including community/ecological psychology and community sociology, addressing multiple levels of analysis; individual, organizational, and community. Through this integration, the model offers insights on the interrelationships between participation and its antecedents and outcomes at each of these three levels.

According to Wandersman's framework, there are five main elements to understanding community participation. Briefly, the major elements included are:

I. Environmental, Ecological and Social Characteristics of the Community;

II. Individual Differences in Participation, which includes demographic, personality, relationship, resources and interaction between the person and the situation ('person x situation') considerations;

III. Parameters of Participation such as the setting and scale, the stage of organization, the organizational characteristics of the community

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IV. The Effects of Participation at the individual, organizational and community levels and questions regarding who evaluates those outcomes;

V. Mediators (Wandersman, 1981).

## **BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS**

Wandersman's framework consolidates and complements a great deal of literature regarding the role and function of community organizations exploring aspects such as: the purposes of such organizations within disempowered communities; the necessary pre-conditions for effective organizing; and the characteristics, skills and resources necessary for successful organizations. Wandersman's own work has focused primarily on the second element, at the individual level and the interactions between personal and situational variables (person x situation) that influence the individual choice to participate, making important contributions to our understanding of participation at those levels. Thus, though he presents a thorough analysis of organizational and community level considerations and relationships in his explanation of the framework, the framework itself explores the individual level antecedents to participation in far more depth than organizational or community characteristics or effects of participation on those levels. For the purposes of the current research, however, his consideration of organizational participation is of particular interest.

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### **Community Cohesion, Organizational Capacity And Local Empowerment**

While participation at one level may have no effects on some of these parameters (i.e. individual demographic characteristics do not often change as a function of organizational participation) others may (e.g. outcomes of organizational participation may influence individual perceptions of the potential impact of future involvement). As the group's skills evolve, for instance, potential participants may see new opportunities where they could make unique contributions. Others may feel more sympathetic with new goals the group takes on as it is able to address a wider array of concerns. The increasing interaction among residents through the growing organization and its activities may provide an opportunity for building cohesion and a "sense of community" among residents. Often considered the first step in engendering political power by community organizers, cohesion fosters a sense of shared values and visions for the neighborhood (Sarason, 1982). Once established, community cohesion may be important in the development of a successful community organization, especially among traditionally underrepresented groups (Janowitz & Street, 1978; Hirsch, 1986; Fisher, 1987). Therefore, prior to forming an organization and a collective voice, residents begin to establish "neighboring" relationships and recognize their mutual interest (Weenig, Schmidt, Midden, & Cees, 1990; Unger & Wandersman, 1983).

Community cohesion is influenced by a wide range of factors. Some, including the availability of gathering areas such as porches, courtyards or other green spaces (Weenig, Schmidt, Midden, & Cees, 1990; Bady & Lurz, 1993; Louv, 1995) may be pre-determined by the physical structure of the community. If they do not currently exist and no land is available for them, the community may need to create alternatives. One way to

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do this may be by holding community events. In addition to creating a common space at the event itself, the planning effort may provide an opportunity to work together for a mutually pleasurable and socially or economically constructive activity (Aronoff, 1993; Louv, 1995). Participation in community forestry may provide yet another opportunity to build cohesion among local residents. Through the process, residents have the opportunity to identify collective interests and concerns as well as the strengths and resources existing within the community. In parallel, such organizations may help to protect and center community interests and power within the relationship with development professionals. As Arnstein observes, 'partnership can work most effectively when there is an organized power-base in the community...' to ensure shared local interests remain central on program agendas and that those representing their interests remain accountable to the community. For this reason, many participatory development programs work in partnership with established community-based organizations (Lane, 1997). This approach respects the organic forms of participation in community arising among local residents and, consistent with the principles of participatory development, can facilitate community building and organizational capacity initiated by community-based organizations in addition to more conventional development concerns.

Pretty and Scoones (1995) recognize that in addition to providing a power base for community residents, community-based organizations are often "good at having an integrated view of problems." For example, because they are intimately acquainted with the problems and directly impacted by the costs and benefits of the various potential solutions, they may be able to provide insights that could prevent 'unintended consequences' not anticipated by the professionals. Pretty and Scoones (1995) note

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further that, while their ability to influence political structures independently may be limited, many local organizations have a network of relationships, providing a potential opportunity to broaden the impact of participatory development programs.

A number of factors contribute to the potential success of community organizations once formed. These may include knowledge of strategy development (Vogel & Swanson, 1989; Bobo, Max & Kendall, 1991), presence of skilled leadership and a large and active membership (Oropesa, 1989), cultural diversity and willingness or ability to address and maintain it constructively (Saltman, 1990; Lichterman, 1995) all of which contribute to organizational capacity (McKnight & Kretzman, 1990). Political empowerment (sometimes referred to as PE) is also frequently identified as a critical factor in the success of local organizations. Although Rappaport's multi-level definition that "empowerment is a process by which people, organizations, and communities gain mastery over issues of concern to them" (Rappaport, 1987) is frequently cited, the concept has most often been assessed as an individual psychological characteristic. This is illustrated by Zimmerman's synthesis of earlier definitions generating the following explanation of the theoretical construct,

These three components of PE merge to form a picture of a person who believes that he or she has the capability to influence a given context (intrapersonal component) understands how the system works in that context (interactional component), and engages in behaviors to exert control in the context (behavioral component) (Zimmerman, 1995).

This tendency is reflected in and reinforced by Zimmerman and Zahniser's (1991) well validated and widely used measure of empowerment. Its scales assess respondents' sense of the receptivity of political structures and actors to constituent interests, referred

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Research utilizing Zimmerman and Zahniser's measure has contributed important insights on how PE is developed in individuals and how it can be influenced through a range of personal experiences. As noted by Saegert and Winkel, (1996, discussing critiques initially raised by Riger, 1993), however, there are

two shortcomings of the empowerment literature: (a) an overemphasis on feelings of efficacy coupled with a neglect of the achievement of real power; and (b) an emphasis on autonomy at the expense of a recognition of the importance of community...

despite the critical role of collective identification and local organizations in facilitating empowerment in many communities.

Two recent studies have helped to expand the conception of empowerment to more fully reflect Rappaport's (1987) original multi-level definition. Speer and Hughey (1995) and Saegert and Winkel (1996) have each generated models which look beyond the implications of participation for an individual's 'sense of empowerment' to explore the processes by which organizations and communities become empowered and the characteristics by which they may be identified as such. Reinforcing the ecological nature of the empowerment concept, Saegert and Winkel (1996) state, "[e]mpowerment comes about through intertwined changes in behavior, self-concept and actual improvements in the conditions of the individual, the group and the community."

Resolving many of the conflicts within the empowerment literature by integrating a number of common conceptualizations, Speer and Hughey (1995) developed a model which illustrates empowerment at each of the three levels of analysis; individual,

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organizational and community (Table 4). At each level, empowerment may each be either a process or an outcome variable. For example, through participation in a politically active organization (process) an individual may gain knowledge about the role and functioning of power within their community (outcome) and, in turn, an increased or decreased sense of political empowerment (outcome). Such individuals may gain empowerment through the experience of organizational membership or the resulting understanding of power and its influence in their communities gained. While this example may imply a reciprocal relationship between the levels of empowerment, the authors caution that empowerment at the different levels may not always work to facilitate empowerment at the others. It is possible, for instance, for an empowered organization to work in coalition with other groups in effective pursuit of its organizational mission at the expense of the empowerment of members or participants. For example, participants may have little opportunity to influence the agendas of highly bureaucratic organizations. As a result, they may feel that their own concerns are unlikely to be addressed although the group may be quite successful and, thus, feel personally disempowered even as they contribute to successful change efforts.

However, empowerment for these authors is not necessarily an individualistic and competitive characteristic as it is commonly constructed (Riger, 1987). Instead, it is built reciprocally with social and political power, especially among marginalized groups. At the organizational level, for instance, participation of individuals may aid in membership recruitment because groups that have already successfully recruited a core membership are perceived to have the "critical mass" necessary to be successful will attract new

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participants. Thus, successful community organizations are both empowering to their members and empowered in their pursuit of change (Speer & Hughey, 1995).

	Process	Outcome
Individual	organizational membership relationship building action / reflection	knowledge of power emotional connectedness organizational participation
Organizational	participatory niches inter-organizational relationships organizational actions	reward and punishment define topics & extent of debate shaping community ideologies
Community	multisector development institutional linkages target community issues	multiple empowered organizations cross-sector collaborative efforts

Table 4: Speer & Hughey's (1995) Conceptualization of empowerment applied to the organizing domain

Saegert and Winkel carry this hypothesis a bit further arguing that, "empowerment as reflected in individual attitudes and actions is the consequence rather than the cause of collective action at the [community] level." While these authors do acknowledge that a certain level of personal empowerment may be important in mobilizing community or organizational involvement, they contend that individuals manifesting a strong sense of individualized or personal of power are less likely to be active participants in collective activities except, perhaps, in leadership roles. Their empirical study of community participation among residents in low-income co-op housing determined that for most participants individual empowerment changes as a function of community organizational successes. That is, individuals' beliefs that they can create change is based on the outcomes of collective efforts. Thus, their study also contributes an essential component to the empirical testing of empowerment theory; consideration of the role of *action* in *actual* empowerment, measured by positive changes

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in living conditions. These observations were the result of a long-term relationship between the researchers and those living in co-op housing, though there is no indication that the researchers took an active role in facilitating empowerment among local residents. Instead, Saegert and Winkel (1996) sought to observe and record the processes of empowerment among participants in the collective efforts.

### **The Model**

As illustrated by the preceding discussion, the concepts of transformative participation and of empowerment are quite complimentary. While empowerment refers to the sense or ability of people to determine the conditions of their communities and lives, often by influencing existing political structures and actors, transformative participation is characterized by the shift as those in conventional positions of power respect their right to do so (Wright & Nelson, 1995). It follows then that participation in successful participatory development activities which embody transformative participation and provide direct experience with opportunities to define and implement a shared vision for community development would contribute to a growing sense and experience of a collective ability to realize such visions. The model (Figure 2) examined by the current study posits that building such organizational empowerment would take place through reciprocal processes influencing participants' sense of cohesion or community attachment and by building the organizing capacity of participant community-based groups, both critical to the success of community-based organizations (e.g. Unger & Wandersman, 1983; Hirsch, 1986; Fisher, 1987; Weenig, Schmidt, Midden, & Cees, 1990; Zimmerman & Zahniser, 1991; Speer & Hughey, 1995). While the primary relationships observed are

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expected to follow the model in a linear fashion, with improved community cohesion contributing to organizing capacity which facilitates organizational empowerment, reciprocal relationships between the components are also expected. The logic supporting those expectations will be reviewed in brief as it applies to the developing model of organizational empowerment.

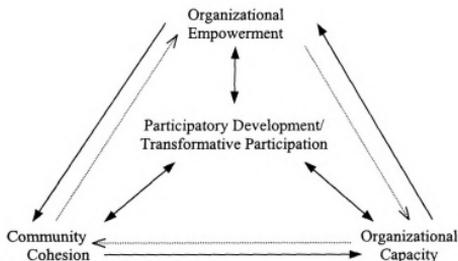


Figure 2: The Conceptual Model

Community cohesion and attachment are necessary precursors to establishing effective community-based organizations (Janowitz & Street, 1978; Unger & Wandersman, 1983; Hirsch, 1986; Fisher, 1987; Weenig, Schmidt, Midden, & Cees, 1990). A sense of cohesion and community attachment reflects a level of reciprocity and neighboring relationships among residents which provide the opportunity to identify common interests and concerns often catalyzing local organizing or participation in existing organizations. Participatory development offers opportunities to build such relationships through collective exploration and definition of local needs and interests, establishment of a common vision for the community and the opportunity to implement that vision. Furthermore, once implemented, the outcomes of the participatory development project may include additional public gathering spaces as well as places for

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collective celebration through which new members may be drawn into such a relationship with the community and organizational participants. These public spaces can also provide "neutral" meeting grounds as alternatives to the common practice of holding organizational meetings in private homes which may prove to be a barrier to participation among new residents. Finally, engagement in the participatory development process may generate the sense that people are mutually concerned, watch out for one another and work together to improve conditions, creating a climate within the community conducive to participation. However, if the sense of cohesion is too strong or exists too exclusively among group members, others may feel like "outsiders" in their own community and feel less attracted to the organization or to the neighborhood.

Ideally, through their involvement with participatory development activities, community-based organizations will increase the opportunities for non-members to participate in expanding and implementing a shared vision for the community to offset such potential difficulties. Establishment of new niches within the organization is a component of the organizational capacity building that may take place through successful participatory development efforts. As discussed by Haeblerle (1987,) while a large and active membership will help to attract new members to an existing community organization because of the impression that the group is able to successfully take on important issues, it is also critical for groups seeking growth in membership to expand their agendas and offer new opportunities to draw new membership. Involvement with participatory development activities can, for many organizations, provide just such an opportunity. For example, projects may be designed specifically to attract non-member residents with particular underrepresented skills and interests. Identified by Florin and

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Wandersman (1984) as a critical dimension in the decision to participate, non-member residents may perceive that they can influence the agenda of the organization as well as identify a niche within which they can make a unique contribution through these expanded opportunities. The approach can also help to attract particular demographic groups such as younger residents who are frequently underrepresented in community organizations. Increasing the diversity of skills and interests as well as the representation of the full diversity of demographic groups present in the community are, as discussed above, vital components to improving organizational capacity (Oropesa, 1989; Saltman, 1990; Lichterman, 1995). Furthermore, the process of determining these organizational objectives for a participatory development program as well as the process of designing and implementing the project itself may contribute to improved strategic planning and leadership skills (Oropesa, 1989; Vogel & Swanson, 1989; Bobo, Max & Kendall, 1991), which are also important components of organizational capacity.

Finally, organizational empowerment may be realized through these improvements in organizational capacity, including increased strategic planning skills among others, as well as direct experience with a community-driven development effort. Additional experiences which are likely to be encountered through the participatory development effort and which can also influence political empowerment include increased contact and familiarity with the political structures and actors who can influence the group's access to the resources and opportunities necessary to realize their collective vision (Speer & Hughey, 1995; Saegert & Winkel, 1996).

The model further posits reciprocal relationships between the three components. For example, while it is discussed as the final step in the process, organizational

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empowerment may lead to increased attachment and cohesion as more neighbors perceive the ability to create the neighborhood in which they would wish to remain. Empowerment also contributes to organizational capacity building in that the sense that change can be made may contribute both to increased participation in the organization and to the group's willingness and ability to take on "bigger," more challenging issues and concerns. Similarly, increasing organizational capacity includes the ability to attract new residents which would logically contribute to an increased sense of community cohesion and may contribute to an improved sense of attachment to community among those recruited to participate. Thus, while the solid lines in Figure 2 denote the most direct relationships among the concepts as they are expected to relate to and build upon one another through involvement with participatory development, the dashed lines denote the reciprocal relationships through which the process is expected to reinforce and perpetuate itself in successful organizational empowerment efforts.

The preceding discussion suggests several questions which must be answered in order to assess the validity of this model as well as, by extension, the utility of participatory development in facilitating organizational empowerment. The three primary research questions are: 1) Does involvement in participatory development activities contribute to increased community cohesion and attachment, 2) Does involvement in participatory development activities contribute to improved organizational capacity, and 3) Can organizational empowerment be enhanced through involvement in participatory development?

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Each question suggests a number of hypotheses derived from the preceding discussion of the literature and supported by the priorities established by organizational participants in the URI/MSU program. These include:

Q1) Does involvement in participatory development activities contribute to increased community cohesion and attachment?

- 1a. Participants will report an increasing attachment to neighborhood among local residents.
- 1b. Participants will report an increasing attachment to the City among local residents.
- 1c. Participants will report greater attachment to the neighborhood than to the City among local residents.

Q2) Does involvement in participatory development activities contribute to improved organizational capacity?

- 2a. Organizations will report an increased number of participants over time.
- 2b. Organizations will report increased level of diversity (age and gender) among participants.
- 2c. Participants will report an increased average length of membership.
- 2d. Participants will report an increased average number of hours contributed.
- 2e. Participants will report greater development of leadership skills among a wider percentage of members.
  - 2ei. Participants will report holding a greater number of leadership positions.
  - 2eii. More participants will report having held such positions.
- 2f. Is there evidence of improvements in strategic planning and consensus building skills?
  - 2fi. There will be evidence of increased consensus around the group mission statement or shared vision.
  - 2fii. Participants will report increased consensus with the group's choice of activities.

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Q3) Can organizational empowerment be enhanced through involvement in participatory development?

- 3a. Organizations will report increased networking with other similar situated organizations?
- 3b. There will be evidence of increased individual and organizational sense of empowerment?
- 3c. There will be evidence of increased actual empowerment through changes in local conditions consistent with collective objectives?

### SUMMARY

Given the unintended social, environmental and economic consequences emanating from the lack of real citizen power in the development process, a number of authors argue that transformative participation is necessary for development to begin to embody democratic ideals and to truly address the needs of most citizens. Rooted in community-initiated approaches from the South, participatory development utilizes an equitable partnership approach to design small scale community-driven projects that address locally-identified needs and interests which strengthen indigenous communities and organizations. Such an approach may be useful in addressing the negative consequences of the development cycle, such as deindustrialization, urban degeneration and economic decline in the North as well. However, defining appropriate partners for community-driven partnerships can be a challenge especially in urban settings.

Despite shared feelings of warmth and nostalgia in reference to 'community,' for example, it is actually quite difficult to establish a theoretically sound and acceptable definition. In fact, the effort to do so has dominated the sociological study of community

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as illustrated by the summaries of the literature carried out by Hillery (1953 cited in Bell and Newby, 1971), Bell and Newby (1971) and Effrat (1974), all of which attempted to summarize and systematize the understanding of the concept. Several common themes emerge including the debates over the primacy of location, relation and institutions.

One core debate, which is central to the current study, is over the character of the urban community. While several researchers characterize urban centers as the embodiment of anomie and alienation (Vidich and Bensman, 1958; Stein, 1960), others document the existence of close relationships and mutual reliance among urban people of color which match those of the rural communities proffered as the prototype of the concept (Hummon, 1978). They, thus, argue that the urban community constitutes a different but not an inferior form of community (Martindale, 1990; Rivera & Erlich, 1995). It is argued that the community building process and level of participation in community among urban people of color rivals that of communities fitting the nostalgic and romanticized rural 'ideal' (Taylor, 1995; Green, 1997). In fact, because local organizations are often so active in these communities, it is suggested that they may serve as ideal partners in urban participatory development efforts in this country. There are a number of characteristics and conditions which influence the effectiveness of such organizations including factors such as: their success in bringing neighbors together to generate a collective vision for their community, their ability to develop and implement a strategic plan and to mobilize the necessary resources for achieving that vision and, ultimately, their ability to exercise social power either directly or through increased influence over decision makers.

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The review of literature regarding urban community organizations and participatory development demonstrates parallel concerns and lessons including the critical nature of transformational participation and local control in development planning and decision making that affects the living conditions and lives of citizens. The emerging model of the organizational empowerment process promises to fill several important gaps in these literatures; to test the implications of participatory development for participant organizations and to explore the process of empowerment at the organizational level.



**CHAPTER 5**  
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To reflect the principles of transformational participation in any assessment of such partnerships, it is important to explore their success in terms of their impact on the community organizations and in achieving their goals and objectives for taking part in the participatory development process rather than using typically professionally-identified objectives as outcome criteria. Such an approach is consistent with empowerment evaluation (Fetterman, Kaftarian, & Wandersman, 1996; Small, 1995) as well as other participatory research strategies. These participant-centered methodologies posit that the research process is often an intervention itself which can be either empowering or disempowering to research participants. In this case, the combination of community-centered development and research provides an ideal opportunity to fill an important gap in empowerment research; to explore the processes of empowerment at the community organizational level. While this limitation of empowerment research has been previously noted (Riger, 1993) and several authors have attempted to develop models of organizational empowerment which explicate the characteristics of the empowered organization and the relationship between individual and organizational empowerment (Speer & Hughey, 1995; Saegert & Winkel, 1996), these models have not addressed the processes through which organizational empowerment develops independently from the involvement of empowered individuals. Thus, in addition to exploring the utility of participatory development to address the concerns of urban community residents the current study used that effort as a test of a model of the mechanisms through which such activities might contribute to organizational empowerment.

In order to carry the participatory nature of the URI/MSU program through the research process, collaborative methods were employed represented by activities such as:

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local identification of project objectives which then served as outcome criteria for the current research; shared decision making at all phases of design, implementation and assessment; and a long-term and ongoing relationship between the researcher and the participants. Though, in keeping with the community-centered approach of social forestry, this assessment is based directly on those organizational and community building goals cited by the groups, their project goals are well-supported by the theoretical literatures in urban and community sociology and ecological psychology, especially addressing concerns such as community-cohesion, -organization, and -building and citizen and community participation, further challenging the assumptions of some professionals regarding the limitations of indigenous knowledge.

Methods were selected, in part, on the basis of their potential to equalize the relationship between researchers and community participants and to facilitate a collaborative partnership characteristic of both participatory research and participatory development. The approach was capacity-building rather than deficit focused and the research process itself, in addition to the program activities, contributed to organizational and strategic development among participant groups, consistent with action research and empowerment evaluation methodologies. Thus, in addition to reflecting the principles of participatory research, the methods employed were consistent with the tenets of participatory development such as meeting locally-identified needs and goals, facilitating local capacity building and empowerment, and employing participatory methodology in pursuit of transformative objectives.

It must be noted, however, that while participants exercised great influence over the development of research methodology and criteria, their involvement in that process,

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was indirect. For instance, the multi-level, multi-method blend of individual and group evaluation processes evolved, in part, on the basis of suggestions by the president of one block club who pointed out the inconsistency of working toward community-building objectives but assessing the success of that effort individually (Anon., 1996). Similarly participants were not actively engaged in measurement development, though interview and questionnaire items specifically reflected the objectives identified by participant organizations. As result, the study does not constitute a true application of participatory action research methodology, although it is consistent with action research and empowerment evaluation as defined by Small (1995).

For example, consistent with action research principles, the current study provides an opportunity to explore the relationship between community-identified objectives and the academic literature in community theory and participation most pertinent to participatory development. Thus, in addition to the community-centered evaluation of the program's success in meeting locally-defined objectives (which constitute an assessment of 'actual' empowerment), the current study explores those aspects of empowerment at the organizational level which may be of concern for local groups trying to build community participation.

### **Procedures**

During the introductory meetings, the community forestry approach and the purposes of the URI/MSU program, including both its community-centered objectives and its status as a research project of Michigan State University, were explained. Participants were introduced to the research process and informed of the related activities

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that would be asked of participant groups. For participant organizations, the Urban Resources Initiative program, including its evaluatory components, can be described as taking place in several chronologically overlapping phases. These include: collective determination of project objectives and assessment criteria; planning and design; and a multi-level, multi-method evaluation approach. The evaluation component consisted of two parallel processes, quarterly assessments of immediate objectives (such as improvements in aesthetic, economic and social conditions) achievement of which serves as a measure of actual empowerment; achievement of changes in neighborhood living conditions consistent with the collective vision of the group. This quarterly evaluation process was complimented by more in-depth biannual assessments of organizational development and capacity building outcomes.

### **Collaborative Planning and Design**

The determination of project objectives and assessment criteria took place early in the URI process. During this phase, members of the organization were asked to reflect on the existing resources and skills available to the group within the community, their ideal vision of the community and the types of activities and resources that might be necessary in order to achieve this vision. The instrument used to guide these discussions is provided in Appendix A. Based on this assessment, groups identified their goals and objectives for participating in the URI program and began to identify forestry-based projects which might facilitate achievement of those objectives.

The planning and design phase built on this work through more detail-oriented activities. These included: determining the specific project type to be implemented,

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selecting appropriate tree and shrub species, identifying and contacting supporters who could be helpful (such as church groups, neighboring block clubs and other groups that might be willing to participate in "planting day" activities or local businesses that might contribute refreshments or tools), scheduling the planting day event, making the necessary arrangements with DPW and other pertinent agencies.

### **Evaluation**

The multi-level, multi-method approach to the evaluation of the program included both quarterly and biannual assessments. The quarterly evaluations took place during regularly scheduled group meetings every three months following the initial planting. They were conducted as group interviews and opened with statement of informed consent describing the rights and responsibilities of participants, including the right not to participate. Barring objection by any member, a representative of the group leadership signed the form on behalf of the organization. A copy of the form is described further in the measures section and included in Appendix A, as is the instrument used to guide the group discussion, which is also described more fully below. During these meetings, the group was asked to recall its initial objectives for the community forestry project and to assess how well each objective had been achieved to-date. Additional items explored whether or not groups encountered any unintended consequences either positive or negative, whether they were gaining increased access to technical assistance through networking with related agencies and organizations, and any organizational changes they observed such as increased or decreased participation of men, women, older or younger residents. All of the participant groups took part in this process, although local events

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The process of the assessment of organizational development and community building objectives was somewhat more complex. For the neighborhood associations these assessment procedures were simply integrated into the ongoing quarterly evaluation process at the six and twelve month data collection points. However, because this assessment was instituted several years following the planting of the block clubs' community forestry projects, members were asked to participate in one "long term" follow up meeting, four or five years following the initial project implementation. The purposes and processes of the additional assessment were explained during a regularly scheduled organizational meeting where possible and interested members were invited to volunteer their participation. Though most participants were recruited at these meetings, non-attendees who had been highly involved in the project development and/or implementation were contacted directly if they were not present. Also, consistent with their informed consent materials, all participants in the first round of focus group meeting were sent materials for the second round of data collection. In those cases where the group was no longer meeting, contact was made through the group President who typically provided contact information for those members who had been active when the project was implemented and initially evaluated. In any case, those members who indicated interest in participating were mailed copies of a written questionnaire (included in appendix A and described in detail below). The mailed packet also included a postcard explaining the rights and responsibilities of participants which recipients were asked to sign and mail at the same time, but separately from, their questionnaire responses to

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indicate their informed consent without sacrificing the confidentiality of their responses and to indicate their interest in attending the focus group meeting. Finally, a cover letter described these procedures and provided information regarding the time and place for the focus group meeting to follow. Approximately two weeks later, follow up calls were made to ensure return of mail surveys and to remind participants of the scheduled meeting, the responses of which were compiled to provide a respondent-driven agenda for the focus group meetings.

Focus group meetings, which were videotaped for later coding, were typically held in the same place where regular meetings took place. Most often, participants were those members who had been most active in the planning and implementation of the community forestry project. In smaller groups, this typically included most if not all members. However, in some of the larger groups, such as the neighborhood associations, this group represented either a core membership or a group that had indicated particular interest in planting and beautification efforts, constituting a sub-committee of the organization. As indicated above, the meeting agenda followed similar topics as those included in the mail surveys. Discussions, leading to consensus about the implications of participating in the URI program, were initiated through presentation of the aggregated responses from the individual mail surveys. A copy of the guidelines for introducing and facilitating these meetings is included in appendix A. These guidelines ensured that issues of importance were consistently covered in each focus group evaluation while the agendas remained flexible to ensure an opportunity for discussion of issues or concerns raised in the individual questionnaires or during the group meeting, as required by a community-driven approach.

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## Measures

In order to achieve the objectives described above, measures (Appendix A) addressed issues that reflect both a) the theoretically appropriate concerns to examine the relationship between involvement in participatory development activities and organizational empowerment as outlined by the conceptual model and b) the identified goals of the participant organizations such as:

- ✓ participants sense of community and attachment to key aspects of their neighborhoods and the City (COM)
- ✓ whether participation in the URI/MSU program contributes to organizational capacity building (OCB) including: increased membership number and involvement in group activities, diversity across age and gender; development of leadership skills, and a common organizational vision
- ✓ whether political empowerment (PE) and political capacity (PC) change following participation in the URI/MSU program.
- ✓ how well the URI/MSU program adhered to the principles of participatory development including transformative participation, community-driven partnership and local identification of objectives and assessment criteria (URIP).

The questionnaire items pertinent to the current study fell into three clusters (Table 5). The first cluster explores participants' "sense of community" and attachment to the city in general and specifically to their own neighborhood (COM). The second cluster includes those items assessing the outcome of the URI/MSU program on the organizing capacity of the local organizations (OCB). Finally, items reflecting political capacity (PC) and political empowerment (PE) are included in cluster three. Items from

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the "URIP" scale were cross-referenced with either the "COM" or "OCB" scale and analyzed in terms of whether the program successfully contributed to achieving group identified goals in those areas as well as contributing to the process evaluation component of the study. While many survey items were specific to the URI/MSU program and its participant organizations, standardized measures with well-established reliability and validity were used to assess political empowerment (PE) and political capacity (PC). These were derived from scales developed by Florin and Wandersman (1985) and Zimmerman and Zahniser (1991).

Questionnaire items specifically requested information such as:

- ✓ the pre-existing availability of skills and leadership experience within the organization,
- ✓ the perception of the community and the community organization's efficacy and its history of success in addressing local issues,
- ✓ the existence of a widely accepted "organizational mission" or shared vision,
- ✓ the ability to build consensus and to resolve conflicts among members,
- ✓ the pre-existing sense of responsibility toward the organization and the community, and
- ✓ participant's sense of political empowerment and the efficacy of community-based change efforts.

As discussed above, each of these has been identified to be a major component in successful community organization development. Each is also consistent with the aim of increasing the number and diversity of organizational members often identified as a key goal by participant organizations through the URI/MSU needs assessment.

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Table 5: Questionn

Cluster 1: Items Assessing Sense Of Community / Community Attachment (COM)

How strong is the sense of community in your neighborhood?

In the blank next to each item, please indicate how much you would miss each of the following if you moved out of Detroit

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> neighborhood schools        | <input type="checkbox"/> my church   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> my neighbors                | <input type="checkbox"/> my block club   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> my neighborhood association | <input type="checkbox"/> neighborhood events (block parties, picnics, garage sales, cabarets, etc) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other: (please list below)  |  |

In the blank next to each item, please indicate how much you would miss each of the following if you moved out of Detroit.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> museums, theaters and other artistic venues (DIA, the Fox Theater, etc)   | <input type="checkbox"/> African American leadership   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> city wide holiday celebrations and annual events (i.e. Thanksgiving parade, 4th of July, children's day the auto show). | <input type="checkbox"/> sporting events (i.e. Tigers and Red Wings games)                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> tradition of organizing (labor unions, community organizing, etc)   | <input type="checkbox"/> special places/areas of the city (Greek Town, Mexican Village, Belle Isle, etc) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other: (please list below)  |  |

All things considered, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with this block (or neighborhood) as a place to live?

Cluster 2: Items Assessing Organizational Capacity Building (OCB)

Are you currently an officer (i.e. President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, etc) of your block club or neighborhood organization?

If yes, what position(s) do you currently hold?

Have you ever held any other positions in the block club or neighborhood organization?

If yes, what positions have you held and during what years did you serve in them?

For how long have you been a member of your block club or neighborhood organization?

About how many hours per month do you spend on block club or neighborhood organization work per month?

In comparison with before your group participated in the URI/MSU community forestry program, would you say more people, about the same number of people or fewer people attend your group's meetings?

Would you say more women, fewer women or about the same number of women attend your group's meetings?

Would you say more men, fewer men or about the same number of men attend your group's meetings?

Table 5: Questionnaire Items Sorted by Scale Clusters

Cluster 2: Items Assessment

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Cluster 2: Items Assessing Organizational Capacity Building (OCB) (Cont'd)

Would you say more, fewer or about the same number of people under 30 attend your group's meetings?

Would you say more, fewer or about the same number of people between 25 and 50 years of age attend your group's meetings?

Would you say more, fewer or about the same number of people over 50 attend your group's meetings?

What are your group's primary goals?

Do you agree with those goals?

If not, what changes would you like to see?

How often does your organization hold special events or celebrations (such as holiday celebrations, block parties, etc)?

What do you feel are your block clubs major successes since you've been a member?

Have there been any activities or programs your group attempted that didn't work out so well? if yes, what were they?

Why do you think your group wasn't able to succeed in that effort?

Has your group ever had trouble getting things done because of a conflict between members?

How did your group address that situation?

What are the 3 most important skills or characteristics of a successful block club or community organization?

How well did the skill or characteristic you listed as #1 above describe your group prior to participating in the URI/MSU program?

How well does the skill or characteristic you listed as #1 above describe your group at this time?

How well did the skill or characteristic you listed as #2 above describe your group prior to participating in the URI/MSU program?

How well does the skill or characteristic you listed as #2 above describe your group at this time?

How well did the skill or characteristic you listed as #3 above describe your group prior to participating in the URI/MSU program?

How well does the skill or characteristic you listed as #3 above describe your group now?

What are your group's greatest strengths?

What skills or resources do you think your group would need to be more effective?

Table 5: Questionnaire Items Sorted by Scale Clusters (cont'd)

Cluster 3: Items Asses

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Cluster 3: Items Assessing Political Empowerment (PC)

Why did you join the group initially?

If there was a problem in receiving some service from the city, do you think people on the block could get the problem solved?

How strong is the sense of community in your neighborhood?

I don't think public officials in this city care much about what people like me think.

The way people vote decides how things are run in this city.

People like me don't have any say about what the local government does.

Money is the most important factor influencing public policies and decisions.

Political leaders can generally be trusted to serve the interests of the citizens.

It doesn't matter which party wins the election; the interests of the little person don't count

Political leaders usually represent the special interests of a few powerful groups and rarely serve the common needs of all citizens.

It isn't important to get involved in local issues when you know your side doesn't have a chance to win.

A good many local elections aren't important enough to bother with

So many other people are active in local issues and organizations that it doesn't matter much to me whether I participate or not.

If a person doesn't care how a local issue is decided, s/he shouldn't participate in the decision.

Participation in neighborhood organizations is important no matter how much or how little is accomplished.

Table 5: Questionnaire Items Sorted by Scale Clusters (cont'd)

## Data Analyses

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## **Data Analyses**

First, an analysis of the URI/MSU process was undertaken to determine whether the program reflects the principles of participatory development and can, therefore, validly be considered an application of such an approach for the purposes of testing the proposed conceptual model. Such an analysis is critical given the exploratory nature of applying participatory development in the urban U.S. and the unintended negative consequences observed in previous social forestry efforts in which the professionals failed to adhere to the principles of participatory development (Shiva, 1989).

Second, responses to both quantitative and qualitative measures were analyzed to determine whether they support or refute that model of the process of organizational empowerment, assessed both in terms of participants' "sense of organizational empowerment" (SOE) and reported "actual organizational empowerment" (AOE). SOE reflects participants' *belief* that the group could successfully address issues of concern and/or that they have increased access to and influence over decision makers as well as responses. To assess AOE, responses were analyzed to determine whether, through involvement with participatory development activities, participants were able to realize their collective visions for their communities.

## **Quantitative Analyses**

Because of the limited number of respondents, quantitative analyses were limited to t-tests and correlational analyses conducted to suggest themes for more in-depth exploration through qualitative analysis and future directions for study. Negatively worded items were reverse coded to provide consistency in the analysis. Statistical

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significance of the correlations were not computed as they would not have been valid tests given the limited N's. However, it is interesting to consider some of the trends revealed by those correlations. Thus, for each core conceptual theme included in the questionnaire, results of t-tests indicating significant differences between the groups or between the data collection points will be presented followed by discussions of correlations which indicate further trends within the data. Naturally, any conclusions based on quantitative analyses with such a small sample must be suspect. However, for the purposes of the current study, they are reported in order to provide an indication of the support of these data for the questions explored in more depth through the focus group discussions and open-ended questionnaire responses as well as to provide guidance for future research in this area.

### **Qualitative Analyses**

Given the limited utility of the quantitative data gathered as part of this study, the majority of the results reported are based on a synthesis of responses from the focus group discussions conducted using The Ethnograph v. 4.0 in combination with content analysis of the open-ended responses to the individually-completed mail questionnaire. Although Wandersman's framework of participation-in-community was used as a guide in coding the transcripts of the focus group discussions, the limitations of that model in discussing organizational characteristics necessitated the identification of additional themes. Consistent with the purpose of this study and the literature reviewed previously, those themes were defined based on consistencies among discussion participants in identifying important concerns and issues. To a large extent, the success of the URI/MSU

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program as an application of participatory development to the urban United States is assessed in terms of facilitating a closer approximation to the 'ideal' organization envisioned by members of the participant groups as generated by questionnaire and focus group responses.

Results are presented according to two stages of analyses. The first, a process evaluation, determines whether the URI/MSU program as experienced by program participants embodies the principles of participatory development. This assessment is necessary in order to determine the validity of defining the program as such for the purposes of testing ability of the conceptual framework to explain the role of participatory development in participation and empowerment at the organizational level and the utility of participatory development in addressing urban development concerns.

Second, the results pertaining specifically to the conceptual framework including changes in community cohesion and attachment, organizational capacity building and sense of political capacity and empowerment are presented in chapter 8. Results pertaining to organizational empowerment (OE) are presented in two sub-sections. The first explores participants' sense of organizational empowerment (SOE) as discussed in the focus group discussions. The second examines the evidence of actual organizational empowerment (AOE) based on the results of the assessments of achievement of community-specific objectives.

**CHAPTER 6**  
**RESULTS OF THE PROCESS EVALUATION**

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The central question of the process evaluation is whether or not URI/MSU sufficiently reflected the principles of participatory development in order to assess the validity of defining the program as such for the purposes of the current study. These principles include: relying on transformative participation, establishing community-driven partnerships and local identification of goals and objectives. A similar effort was made to reflect the principles of participatory research approaches, such as empowerment evaluation, in which the research process itself is designed to facilitate organizational development (Fetterman, Kaftarian, & Wandersman, 1996; Small, 1995). Thus the assessment of the effective utilization of participatory processes reflects responses to the research process itself and its implications for participant organizations as well. Presentation of the results of the process evaluation follows a brief description of the participants in the research process.

## **Participants**

### **Individual Respondents**

While most of the data were collected at the group level through focus groups and group interviews, individual members completed pre-focus group mail surveys. Approximately two thirds of those responding to the questionnaire were officers of their respective organizations. Of the remaining nine, two had previously held positions as officers with their organization. Thus, the majority of respondents were "core members" of participating organizations. This is reflected by the respondents' average of 23 hours contributed to the organizations per month. Participants had been members of the organization for an average of 5.74 years, indicating a fairly long-term commitment to

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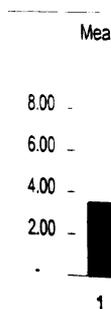


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the local organizations. Figures 3 and 4 illustrate differences among the groups in the level of involvement of assessment participants, including information only from those groups with members responding to the individual mail questionnaires as part of their participation in the bi-annual assessments. In those figures, group 1 is the Star Magnolia block club, group 2 is the Quince neighborhood association, group 3 is the Forsythia neighborhood association and Group 4 is the C.K. Maple neighborhood association.

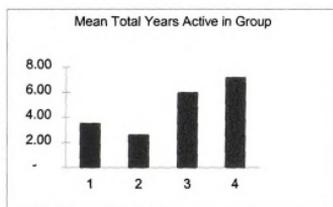


Figure 3: Mean Years of Membership by Group

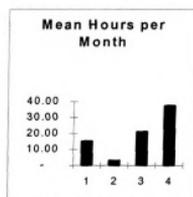


Figure 4: Mean Hours Contributed per Month by Group

From these data, it is apparent that the majority of participants were very active within their communities and core members of the local organizations. This raises some concerns regarding whether respondents represent the interests and concerns of "the average citizen." However, working in collaborative efforts with highly engaged and committed residents is consistent with Arnstein's (1969) suggestion that community interests be protected through partnership with existing citizen power bases which, as Pretty and Scoones (1995) observe, often have a well-integrated view of community issues. There is, therefore, a bit of a paradox between the concerns of protecting and fully representing community interests.

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## **Organizations**

Over the course of the program, introductory meetings were held with 5 block clubs, 5 neighborhood associations considering cooperative neighborhood-wide projects and 3 other agencies and organizations including the Wayne County Cooperative Extension Service (CES) 4-H program, the Boyssville school, and a Detroit homeless shelter. Four block clubs, 3 neighborhood associations and the CES 4-H group ultimately implemented community forestry projects. The remaining block club was unable to resolve leadership conflicts and ceased their involvement with the program to focus on these internal issues. A fire destroyed the church where one of the neighborhood associations regularly met and the group chose to focus its energies on raising money to rebuild the structure. The relationship with the remaining neighborhood association was terminated when, after several months of discussion and planning, the group leader continued to refuse to involve or even contact the residents of the block where she hoped to implement the project, to provide contact information for those residents or to consider changing the project site to an area with active members. It was determined that implementation of the project without the approval or participation of those who would have been most directly affected was contradictory to the basic values and purposes of the URI/MSU program. Of those implementing community forestry projects, two block clubs and all three neighborhood associations participated in the full research and evaluation process, while the two additional block clubs participated solely in the quarterly evaluation process. Because the CES project was primarily driven by agency personnel, albeit with the intention of establishing closer relationships with neighborhood

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residents and organizations, it was not included in the current assessment of community-identified objectives.

A change in the leadership in one group required the development of a new relationship between the project staff and the new block club president. Due to a well-founded suspicion of the political and social agenda of outside researchers (Baca Zinn, 1979; Anon., 1996), the new leader decided that the group would not participate, despite several long conversations about the underlying issues and the community-centered purposes of the current study. Having had a positive relationship with the two prior group leaders, the project manager did contact both to ensure the decision was supported by other group members. When they agreed the decision was the current block club president's to make, efforts to schedule a meeting with the group ceased, consistent with the principle that organizations involved in participatory development reserve the right *not* to participate in related research activities. Following the deaths of two core members and the prolonged illness of the block club president, another group was also forced to decide against participating in the final evaluation process. The remaining two block clubs did each participate in a final evaluation meeting, though in one case, only the president participated and, while she agreed to a videotaped interview, she did not complete a written questionnaire. For both of the participating block clubs this long-term outcome meeting took place approximately four years following implementation of their social forestry projects.

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### **Organizational Profiles**

Through the project planning phase, each organization identified core concerns and interests which they hoped to address through their participation in the URI/MSU program. A brief introduction to each group and its history with the program will provide an overview of the community-identified objectives for the participatory development efforts and the reasons they were chosen. In addition to introducing the organizations and their intentions for participation in the URI/MSU program, achievement of these objectives will serve as an assessment of the program's utility in facilitating group's ability to realize collective visions for the community or actual organizational empowerment (AOE). Cumulatively, the profiles provide a sense of the common themes explored in the current assessment.

Throughout the URI/MSU program, each group, or a core member of each group developed or expressed a special affinity for a particular tree or shrub species which "just had to be" included in the community forestry project. In order to observe the principles of confidentiality in the focus group reports and anonymity of the individual questionnaire responses, these species will serve as group labels in the ensuing discussion. Therefore, in addition to identifying the groups by a key species, the stories of how these labels came to be chosen will be included in each organization's profile.

#### ***Crab Apple Block Club***

The Crab Apple Block Club was the first organization to invite the URI/MSU program into their community following a presentation at their neighborhood association meeting. The block has quite a few vacant lots, many of which were being used as illegal

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dumpsites, reportedly by suburban waste haulers avoiding landfill tipping fees (Anon., 1992). Yet the group was having great difficulty getting the City to clean them up. Because the majority of members are senior citizens, they had been unable to carry out the physical labor necessary to participate in the City's bulk pick up program which requires all large items to be carried to the end of the abandoned alleys. The perceived physical limitations of a predominantly senior membership became a common theme for many of the URI/MSU participant organizations, which often catalyzed their participation in the program as part of an effort to recruit younger residents. A related concern for several of the organizations is the prevalence of grandparents taking on primary care giver roles for grandchildren after their own children have left home. It was the intersection of these two issues that brought the Crab Apple Block Club to URI.

Although there are several playgrounds and City parks nearby which serve the needs of teenagers, the members wanted to create a safe space for smaller children to play on the block and in which the community could hold special celebrations and block club meetings. They hoped that meeting in a central and public location would increase participation among those who had not yet been willing to attend meetings in the homes residents they did not yet know. Given the prevalence of vacant lots, there was no shortage of available spaces and, through the "cooperative maintenance agreements" offered to groups participating in the URI/MSU program, the City Department of Public Works (DPW) was able provide one thorough cleaning of the lot in exchange for the group taking responsibility for its maintenance thereafter.

In designing the project, the women of the block club had several main goals including: ecological (the creation of behavioral spaces), environmental, and educational

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goals. The ecological goals included providing a meeting/gathering space for neighborhood events and creating a play space for the children with pleasant sitting areas that would also draw adults who could supervise the children. The group's environmental goals included cleaning up the lots and preventing future dumping and providing gardening space which would also attract adults to the site. Finally the group included two goals which intersected environmental and educational purposes; to attract birds and butterflies to the neighborhood and to grow fruit because they felt that few children in the community had ever seen food growing.

The label, "Crab Apple" was generated by program activities around the last two goals. Many of the older residents migrated to industrial jobs in Detroit from agricultural backgrounds in the rural south and wanted to pass at least some of that knowledge along to the children. One of the members, who was an avid gardener, related a story about asking one of the children to uproot a carrot and the look of shock on the child's face when what looked like a weed turned out to be the familiar vegetable. This experience catalyzed the group's interest in ensuring that there would be fruit trees and gardening spaces in the project. Crab apples were selected, in addition to pear and cherry trees, because of their beautiful and fragrant flowers which might help to attract adults to the lot who could then supervise the children using the area as a play space.

The group chose to name the site after the URI/MSU project manager who facilitated their work on the site. Although this was a deeply moving tribute, there is some concern that the name reflects a lack of a "sense of ownership;" that despite efforts to be community-centered and community-driven, the perception of the project as an achievement of the researcher rather than of the community persists. This may have been

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facilitated in this case by the use of undergraduate assistants to carry out the labor of planting the trees and shrubs for the project. Thus, while block club members planned and designed the project and continue to provide for its upkeep, few were involved in its physical implementation. The group was quite successful in keeping the project maintained, though they did experience some minor incidents with graffiti and vandalism. However, the past couple of years have been quite difficult for the group as two core members recently passed away and the President of the block club has experienced several lengthy hospitalizations. Therefore, despite several attempts to schedule a meeting, the group withdrew from the current study before completing a final focus group interview.

### ***The Burning Bush Block Club***

The Burning Bush block club members are the neighbors of the Crab Apples and were introduced to the URI/MSU program through that relationship. Unlike most of the groups, which have vacant lots scattered throughout their areas, the Burning Bush block club has a large concentrated area of vacant land across the street from a wooden palette storage facility which caught on fire in the mid-1980s. The fire burned down seven residences before it was extinguished. The land had been left vacant ever since and, since much of the land was not yet city-owned, was only maintained when local residents took the initiative to cut the grass or pick up illegally dumped garbage. Several times the amount of garbage tipped into the lot exceeded the abilities of even the most dedicated neighbor to clean up. Neighbors reported that the area was frequently used for drug sales

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Though the President of the block club at the time the group became involved with the URI/MSU program was quite interested in providing youth activities, the lot's contiguous neighbor was concerned about turning the area into a playground because of potential damage to her home from stray baseballs and children running through her yard. As a compromise, the group decided to plant a "nature park" on the lot. After several months of planning and consultation with the Director of the Belle Isle Nature Center, however, it was determined that the group did not want to go quite "that natural" and the plan was restructured to include a tree-lined walking path around the perimeter as an exercise facility for the older residents who could then supervise any children who did use the area for a play lot. Several benches were installed by the City to provide gathering and sitting spaces. Finally, in order to discourage children from playing near the abandoned train tracks that run across the far end of the site, a rock garden was planned utilizing burning bush and other trees which have significance in several spiritual traditions. Given these plans, the rock garden became a pet project of several core members.

Once the project was implemented, however, maintenance was consistently a problem. Although one member who is a landscaper and the son of another member frequently did mow the area, neither were able to commit to doing so on a regular basis because the lot was so large and time consuming. Thus, at times the project has been an integral part of the community's life, hosting frequent community events and block club meetings. At other times it has fallen into disrepair and members have reported concern

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that the drug dealers were returning to the area and "now they have benches to hang out and be comfortable" (Anon, 1994)! Like the Crab Apples, the Burning Bush block club declined to participate in the long-term assessment of their participation in the URI program, this time as a result of shifting leadership and distrust of university-based researchers, as discussed in more detail below.

### ***The Georgia Peach Block Club***

Like the Crab Apples, the Georgia Peach block club invited the URI program into their community following a presentation to the neighborhood association to which they belong. The main concerns of the organization were beautification and gaining access to city services in addition to a range of social and economic goals the group believed could be resolved by achieving those objectives.

The block has several large vacant areas and was initially primarily interested in creating a safe play space for local children. However, as plans evolved, cleaning up additional sites and providing an opportunity for intergenerational cooperation took precedence. Through the URI/MSU program and the cooperative agreements of the program with the DPW district manager's office, three abandoned and dangerous homes, the first of which had burned down seven years previously, were cleared to make way for the block club's community orchard. As is the case with several of the groups, the majority of active block club members are seniors who migrated from the South, many of whom were nostalgic for fruit trees and homemade bakery and jams. The group came up with the innovative idea of planting a community orchard and using the produce to teach local children traditional baking and preserving methods. The products could then be

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sold at the Eastern Market or within the community and the proceeds used for other community objectives, including developing the play lot project.

Unfortunately, many of these plans have yet to be realized. While the trees have produced at various levels over the years, the group has not been able to maintain them for high levels of production. The group's level of activity has been inconsistent due to extenuating circumstances. Foremost was the death of two core members and the long-term illness of a third, who continues to be quite active in basic maintenance activities, but is no longer able to carry out more physically challenging labor such as heavy pruning. The President was also forced to relocate for several months while her home was being repaired following extensive fire damage. Shortly thereafter, the neighborhood was hit by a tornado. Though there was no major damage to either any homes or to the trees, the clean up effort took precedence over any other community activity for some time thereafter.

### ***The Star Magnolia Block Club***

The URI program was introduced to the Star Magnolia Block Club by the DPW district manager who had been working closely with the program on cooperative maintenance agreements and other arrangements for some time and who was acquainted with the group's President, who is also a city employee. When planning began, the group was at one of its high points, membership-wise, with as many as 10-15 core members attending meetings and participating in organizing events regularly. Additional residents would participate in special events such as a community flower planting to beautify the

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neighborhood. The success of that effort in particular generated widespread support for additional 'greening' opportunities.

The group originally had extensive plans for their URI/MSU community forestry project. They hoped to develop a community tree nursery as well as a community agroforestry garden and play lot for the children. Unlike many community organizations, a number of children, including the President's family, were active participants in group activities including the planning and implementation of the community nursery. They remained active throughout the evaluation process, though two were in college by the end of the last URI/MSU evaluation meeting. For that reason, this organization provides the broadest range of intergenerational perspectives over the longest evaluation term of any participant organization.

The group chose a large open space across the street from the President's house, which they believed would help to keep the space free from vandalism as well as ensuring someone was nearby who would water and look after the trees. The project went through several cycles paralleling those of the organization. After a lapse in project maintenance, the group reported at the final quarterly evaluation meeting that it was attempting to reorganize and considered renewing their commitment to the project; broadening its appeal through the inclusion of barbecue pits and benches to draw out adults to supervise the youth. It was hoped that creating a gathering space might also serve as a community-building tool to bolster the renewal efforts. Two older members passed away and several others moved out of the neighborhood. Most distressing, the daughter of a core member was murdered on the Belle Isle bridge in a case that received national attention. Over the next two years, the membership would fall and plans for the

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garden and play lot were dropped. Unfortunately, the remaining members were unable to carry out that work, in part because the City failed to provide all of the services agreed to early in the site preparation phase (leveling the area, clearing out several large dead trees and old fences, etc.). At last contact, the members' were making plans to salvage as many trees as possible for use in local landscaping.

### ***The Forsythia Neighborhood Association***

The Forsythia Neighborhood Association is a small group on Detroit's near west side. Many of the members live in areas with active block clubs, but they believe that consolidating the power of many blocks will be necessary to bring about any real change. They, therefore, meet monthly and try to create projects which they hope will show other block club members and neighborhood residents what can be done when a broader group cooperates. They have had several big wins, most notably getting the permit for a group home revoked when the sponsoring agency was clearly mismanaging the site. While they have been targeted for an unusually high number of such facilities, the President is careful to note that they do not seek to eliminate the remaining group homes from the community, but that this particular home was 'not a very good neighbor.'

Natural resource-based projects are an important part of the group's strategic plan. There is a fairly high concentration of vacant lots in the community and the neighborhood association is working to turn them into opportunities instead of liabilities. In addition to keeping a volunteer position staffed to keep the lots cut, they have actively lobbied the city government for an official contract to maintain lots in their vicinity. Unfortunately, their current equipment is insufficient to maintain the number of lots typically included in

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By the time the group began working with the URI/MSU program, they had already converted a large open space into a community park with a play area and community gardening space. For their community forestry project, they wanted to add a natural fence along the back of the park to prevent illegal dumping and discourage foot traffic from the alley as well as planting a community nursery on another site. Trees from the nursery were to be used to reclaim additional lots throughout the neighborhood to establish their presence and to demonstrate the difference such efforts could make in the community.

Despite their own limited membership, the group has established ties with several suburban churches, a W.K. Kellogg Foundation-funded neighborhood development association in the area and the Wayne County Cooperative Extension Service (CES) office as well as other nearby community-based organizations. The current President is a Master Gardener who has worked extensively with the CES program. Drawing on all of those contacts, as well as the Wayne County Alternative Workforce (made up of misdemeanor violators doing 'community service' as part of their sentences,) the group was able to mobilize more than 50 people to participate in their initial URI tree planting. There was initially some conflict with a neighbor of the nursery site, who was concerned about the trees blocking the view through to the alley and leaves blowing over onto her property. Although it was not legally necessary as the group had the City's permission to use the city-owned land, the President was able to negotiate with her to continue the planting as long as the trees were transplanted within one year. This course of action

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provides further evidence of the group's interest in maintaining cooperative neighborhood relationships and bringing about positive change for the entire community.

The nursery project has been fairly successful, though the group had not identified enough volunteers to transplant all of the trees onto sites with neighbors committed to their maintenance within the year. As of the final evaluation meeting, they were working with the Quince neighborhood association, another URI/MSU participant organization, to sell some of the trees or transplant them to the Quince group's nursery.

### *The Quince Neighborhood Association*

Members of the Quince neighborhood association were introduced to the URI/MSU program through the same community development organization responsible for the introduction of the Forsythia group. The Quince association had a similar historical commitment to 'greening' programs and had organized several tree planting projects with another program. Because that organization required a commitment that the trees planted through their program be maintained, unmoved and unharmed, for a period of years, allowing for the development of extensive shading and beautification plans, the group was especially interested in the opportunity to utilize their URI/MSU community forestry project for 'working trees.'

The group's initial plan was to plant Christmas trees, possibly intercropped with holly to be used with trimmings from the conifers to make wreaths that could be sold during the holidays until the trees were old enough to be sold themselves. However, given some concerns about protecting the trees from theft during holiday seasons prior to their sale and the necessity of providing supervision to prevent children from coming into

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contact with the toxic holly berries, the group decided to develop a community tree and shrub nursery project instead. The nursery would allow them to expand on their current planting activities with their own stock or to utilize proceeds from the sale of their nursery stock toward their acquisition of more mature shade trees through the other program, which requires a 50% contribution from participating organizations.

There is the only URI/MSU project not planted on city-owned land. Instead, the group chose to utilize the property of the new President, recruited to participate in the organization through their involvement with the URI/MSU program because of her extensive nursery management and master gardener skills. She also has a great deal of interest and knowledge about medicinal uses of plants and specifically requested the inclusion of Quince, one of her daughter's favorites, for such applications.

Although the group acknowledges the generosity of the contribution of her land and labor, the use of her lot has led to some conflict in the organization. In short, the President feels she has been held responsible for the majority of the maintenance activities given that the trees are on her property and because she already had the necessary skills. In contrast, she had envisioned using the project as an educational opportunity to facilitate the development of such skills among her neighbors. Other members of the group have indicated feeling uncomfortable about going on her private property to trim the shrubs or carry out other maintenance tasks without her supervision because the project has been so meticulously maintained. Despite this conflict, the project has generated some economic benefits for the group which has held two tree sales. Several group members have utilized the resources to upgrade the landscaping around their homes, contributing to the beautification of the neighborhood.

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### ***The Crimson King Maple (C.K. Maple) Neighborhood Association***

The Crimson King Maple neighborhood association is one of Detroit's largest and most well known community organizations. The group was founded almost twenty years ago when the President began talking to her neighbors and initiating the establishment of block clubs throughout the area. Eventually, when enough block clubs were functioning, the leadership of those groups began meeting regularly to coordinate and consolidate their efforts where possible. The group has grown tremendously and now includes a number of committees such as a core members group, a men's group and a seniors group all working on specific issues within the community. They also run several programs such as an after school program for neighborhood children, a drug abuse prevention program, and a program for single mothers. They had participated in several tree-planting programs prior to their involvement with URI/MSU and had established a 'nature park' in the neighborhood.

Given their history and range of organizing experience, the group was quite deliberate in planning their community forestry project. Among their efforts, they requested a tour of already established projects. One core member was quite attracted to Crimson King maples and pointed them out at each site until everyone agreed it would be definitely included in the group's project. The members ended up taking inspiration from the Star Magnolia's original plans by developing an integrated agroforestry/community nursery project. Two of the association members have a catering business and expressed particular interest in incorporating an herb garden into the project, while another is an avid flower and vegetable gardener. Given their extensive programming in the community, there was discussion of whether the garden should serve a 'social service'

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The group chose a site central to the most involved members, with the commitment of a neighbor to water the site regularly. However, that neighbor moved away and, with no core members on the immediate block, it was not as closely supervised as it might have been otherwise. Perhaps as a result, this project unfortunately turned out to be the one URI/MSU site to experience significant vandalism. While quite a few of the trees and shrubs survive, some of the arborvitae planted along the back as a natural fence died almost immediately, apparently due to adverse environmental conditions. Many of the remaining arborvitae were uprooted and stolen or left scattered around the site. The group never got the vegetable/herb garden under way, partially due to the site's inconvenient location. At the last evaluation meeting the group was considering relocating the nursery to a site across from a core member, either by transplanting the trees or by selling them and using the proceeds toward new plant materials, and picking up where they left off.

### **Summary Of Organizational Participation**

Table 6 documents the number of individual participants from each of the seven participant organizations involved in program evaluation activities at each data collection point. Given the small size and pilot nature of the URI/MSU program to begin with, as well as the difficulties encountered in arranging assessment meetings with several of the

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Crab Apple	X	X	X	X	X	X	0
Burning Bush	X	X	X	X	X	X	0
Georgia Peaches	X	X	X	1	X	1	1
Magnolia	X	X	4	5	4	5	9
Forsythia	4	11	1	1	5	12	17
Quince	5	5	5	1	10	6	16
Crimson King	4	6	6	6	10	12	22
Column Sub-Total	13	22	16	14	30	35	
Total		T1 = 35		T2 = 30			65

Table 6: Number of Participants Responding to Quantitative Measure at Each Assessment by Organization

groups, discussed below, the number of individuals participating in the current study was quite small. When aggregated by group or data collection point, this small sample size may especially be problematic for statistical analyses. However, these quantitative data from anonymous individual respondents are presented in conjunction with the qualitative data generated through the in-depth focus group discussions carried out over a period of several years as well as quarterly group interviews to provide a multi-method, multi-level analysis of the programs' functioning within participant communities. Thus, while the quantitative data are insufficient to stand alone, in this case as anonymous responses to individual questionnaires they serve to corroborate the validity of comments made in public focus groups. They further suggest relationships within the data which may be fruitful to explore in future research in this area.

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## PROCESS EVALUATION

### Transformative Participation

The first factor assessed in determining whether or not participation in the program and its evaluation was experienced as transformative rather than functional, was the participants' perceptions of the role of the researcher and of the URI/MSU program within the community. A scale from the individual mail surveys, Perception of URI (URIP), explored participants' perceptions of the URI/MSU program including their initial impression of the program and their perception of the likelihood of achieving local objectives through community forestry activities. While there were no significant changes in this scale either over time or between groups, means revealed a generally positive impression. For example, the mean score on the 4-point scale across groups at T1 was 3.08 and at T2 was 2.99. The mean score for the members of the Star Magnolias was 2.95, for the members of the Quince association were 3.21, for the Forsythias was 3.01 and for the C.K. Maples was 2.98.

Issues discussed by focus groups pertaining to the program's utility of transformative participation included the sense of community ownership of the URI project and evaluative comments about the programs role in the community. As indicated in Table 7, these topics accounted for .42% of the 1443 coded statements from the focus group transcripts. The sense of community ownership accounts for about 2/3 of this discussion.

Discussion Topic	Item % of category	Category % of discussion
Sense of community ownership	66.67	0.42
Evaluation of URI/MSU	33.33	

Table 7: Focus Group Assessment of Transformative Participation

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One participant contrasted the URI/MSU program with others that, while hoping to help urban communities, constrain access to resources based on applicants' willingness to work within a pre-determined agenda in an approach that was clearly more consistent with functional definitions of participation.

what you need and what you should do, like rehabbing this year and last year, the year of the rehab, just like in China it's the year of the rabbit? Well, in America its the year of the rehab. All the foundations have decided that in the inner cities should be rehabbed and guess who's gonna do it for them? We will give you some money, well we won't actually give it to you, we'll loan it to you, if you will do this work for us so we can tell ourselves that we have done this great thing and my attitude toward that is B.S.... And from my point of view, what use is a foundation to me if it will not consider what I need?... And, uh, this is something I do and I really appreciate about your program is that it seems geared toward solving the kinds of problems that we have that nobody else will.

In contrast, the same speaker appreciated the partnership aspects of the URI approach. While the program was perceived as having specific objectives, the speaker reported believing that it demonstrated equal concern for community interests and constraints; meeting local effort with parallel contribution of material and informational resources where the program has greater access.

I liked the idea that the trees were free... I view your program as in the same vein as uh, the oh, the old land, uh, land acts, when they set it- like the Oklahoma territory, when people could go in and claim land. Basically, the government was giving away land for free... and, they had a choice, they could either do that or they could ask folk to pay for this and the question was, whether they wanted the land filled or not. The question for groups that are trying to work with inner city neighborhood groups is what's more important? Selling the trees to recoup some of the cost, which is a valid thing. Or does it make more sense to have a group that has the financial ability to contribute that part, the cost of the actual trees and bushes, in order to keep the

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Thus, this speaker's comments reflect the formation of equitable partnerships and the reliance on participation in the transformative sense.

One gap in the program's efforts to fully reflect principles transformative participation, however, was the professional control of funding resources as noted by one participant who suggested,

...if the funds were divided up by phases, so some could have gone to paying someone to cut the lot. If we had a budget that had to be spent by a certain time, we could have implemented it in phases- the upkeep... which would have produced more participation... even if it was just getting some little boys to go cut it each Saturday- some kind of grant structure...

Demonstrating a strong sense of ownership over the program, this participant brought important insights regarding the importance of finding procedures for funding allocation that would ensure greater community control and better address organizational resource needs within the constraints on funds provided through grants to university personnel.

### **Power And Resources**

Perhaps the most practical criteria for assessment of whether the program succeeded in shifting the balance of power in favor of local organizations comes from their assessment of whether they were able access to the information and resources the groups needed to be successful in achieving their objectives, both for their community forestry project and beyond, either through the program or through their own expanded political empowerment and organizational capacity. While a general discussion of these issues as *outcomes* of participation in the program will be discussed in ensuing sections,

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assessments of them as characteristics of the partnership between the community organizations and the URI/MSU program are appropriate to the current discussion.

As illustrated in Table 8, discussion of these issues comprised 17.19 % of focus group discussions. By far the discussions of resources needed for successful organizing and whether or not the program facilitated access to those resources dominated this discussion. In fact, with 236 coded statements referring to this topic, it was the most frequently discussed issue throughout the focus group discussions.

Discussion Topic	Item % of category	Category % of discussion
Discussion/description of other NGOs	2.02	17.19
Availability of necessary resources	95.16	
Attitude toward conventional power holders	2.82	

Table 8: Focus Group Assessment of Power and Resources

Again, the partnership aspects of the URI program was recognized as empowering within this context. As recognized by one speaker, program personnel were involved enough to ensure access to necessary resources and assistance to meet local needs without dominating the process.

when we first started with the program, there was always information as to who to call, we had numbers as to if we had problems with the trees or whatever, we had numbers to call. It wasn't like we were just "hey, here's a project, you go for it" there were numbers, there were other outlets for us to reach out to

One reported benefit of the program was development of the skills and information necessary to allow for entrepreneurial use of the plant resources while meeting important local needs.

[the program] has increased our knowledge about trees and shrubs, about different types of plants and a greater sensitivity toward our environment. An awareness of what

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Such information was seen as critical for community organizations facing the concerns and issues the participant groups focus on.

You need to have knowledge and control over vacant properties and buildings... knowledge of land use, what's around you, use of land in and around the neighborhood and of other information that affects the area....

The following speaker's comment indicates that URI fulfilled an appropriate role for a professional/university-based program working in partnership for community empowerment as defined by Fawcett et al (1995) by helping to reduce barriers and facilitate access to governmental structures and decision-makers. While indicating appreciation of this role, the comment also reveals a continued perception that the group would not be able to access these offices and support without the program's continued involvement raising questions about whether participation in the program did facilitate organizational empowerment in this case.

I don't know if we could have done better communicating directly- It seemed politically best to have you as a contact- URI had some kind of sanction with the city government, forestry department...

Still, this speaker indicates an expectation that their successful URI project will better position the organization for future efforts.

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## Community-Driven Partnership

Participants' responses to the program's community-driven approach were gathered primarily through the focus group discussions and represented almost 10% of comments made during those discussions. Comments specifically evaluating this aspect of the program accounted for about 5.5% of this conversation. Other comments reveal the extent to which the effort was successful through community-definition of the project agendas. They reveal a much broader range of intentions and expected outcomes than might be typical of professional-driven developments. For example, issues such as expanding the representation of different age groups in community organizations, meeting subsistence goals and improving networking with other organizations and agencies are not typical objectives for urban forestry.

Discussion Topic	Item % of category	Category % of discussion
Evaluation of URIs community-driven approach	5.56	9.98
Age distribution of community residents	0.69	
Comments about trees- role in community, etc	25.69	
Evaluation of community	0.69	
Social concerns and goals at community level	0.69	
Demographic goals or concerns at community level	2.78	
Ecological concerns and goals for vacant lots	2.08	
Goals to clean up neighborhood/community	2.78	
Environmentally-related concerns and goals for lots	8.33	
Misc. Goals for "improving lots" through URI/MSU	2.08	
Subsistence goals for URI project	4.86	
Organizing goals for URI/MSU project	6.94	
Environmental goals for URI project	13.19	
Networking and affiliational goals for URI project	22.92	
Organizational goals for URI/MSU participation	0.69	

Table 9: Focus Group Discussion of Community-Driven Partnership

Appreciation for the community driven approach came from one participant who, after expressing frustration at the loss of several trees, realized that addressing community building objectives is central to the program in contrast with other community tree

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planting programs which prioritize more typical professional concerns such as tree survival.

One thing I like about your program is that you heard me be critical about the loss of some of your trees. It's not that they're expendable, it's just that you take the attitude that, well, this happens. The pay off will be if a group such as ours learns from those mistakes and loses less trees in the future and less bushes in the future because we've learned. That would seem to me to mean that eventually there will be an attrition in regards to losses and a better use of resources.

In some areas, however, the program may have erred in overly limiting itself to a responsive role more typical of the 'community initiated' end of McDonough et. al.'s (1995) continuum.

...the contact. There should have been more contact. That wasn't your fault, like I say, it's ours because we didn't keep in contact, or keep ourselves open enough to you to come in and discuss, well, "Kerry, this and what do you think about that? Could you give us feedback or get some people to come out and look at it?" each time, you know, like that. Now that's our fault, but that would have helped more.

In some cases constraints imposed on the program led to constraints on community-driven processes. For example, some groups were unable to utilize their established organizing processes to expand involvement in the project planning due to time limits at the end of funding cycles.

[we] had to prepare quickly, didn't have time to evaluate other potential sites... [there was] not enough planning time ahead to develop total picture and different aspects of a total plan. There was not enough time, there was not enough in-depth planning. If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.

As a result, participation in the planning phase for this group was limited to core members rather than serving as a tool to recruit new or peripheral members to more

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The bottom line is that there should have been more people involved in the total process, in the planning prior to the project.

### SUMMARY

Generally, participants' responses reflected positively on the program's adherence to the principles of participatory development including; reliance on transformative participation, community-driven partnerships and local identification of goals and objectives. There is, for example, evidence of a strong sense of ownership over the program in addition to the projects completed by participant organizations, reflected in suggestions for ways to improve on its approaches and the sense of shared responsibility for shortfalls in achievement of project objectives. Respondents also evidenced a strong sense of community control over the projects including the identification of objectives and participation in design and other related activities. One area where this principle was not achieved was in control of financial resources, which one participant offered important constructive suggestions for future efforts to implement participatory development programs. Similarly, there were constraints on the time available for planning activities imposed by grant cycles which impeded some groups' outreach efforts and ability to recruit greater participation in planning activities. Still, participants generally reported a sense of equity in the partnership. In fact, in some cases efforts to avoid dominating community partners paradoxically resulted in the failure to ensure the

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groups were able to access information and resources effectively. For example, while it was often cited as a valuable resource, provision of contact names and telephone numbers through the Community Resources Manual (Vachta & Buncic, 1994) was insufficient to ensure that those resources were accessible to URI/MSU participants. While there is room for improvement and important lessons for future efforts to implement participatory development programs, it appears that the URI/MSU program sufficiently reflected the principles of participatory development to serve the purposes of the current study.

**CHAPTER 7**  
**RESULTS OF THE CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS**

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Having determined that the Urban Resources Initiative did sufficiently reflect the principles of participatory development, the purpose of the conceptual evaluation is to explore whether participatory development can contribute to organizational empowerment and to test the conceptual model of the mechanisms through which that process takes place. As illustrated by that model, the initial presumptions were that the sense of shared identification, neighborliness, mutual concern and interest which constitute community cohesion contributes to organizational capacity through increased membership and the attendant increases in available skills and resources. By successfully applying those skills and resources to collectively identified community concerns, it was hypothesized that increasing organizational capacity would contribute to both a sense of organizational empowerment as well as actual organizational empowerment; the achievement of objectives contributing to the realization of the collective community vision. Engagement in participatory development activities, it was proposed, would provide context for and contribute to each of these components in the model of the process of organizational empowerment. It would create opportunities to identify shared concerns and interests, context and opportunities to build skills and strategic planning and greater awareness of and experience with social and political forces generating the current conditions within the communities. Finally, the participatory development process would provide experience with and opportunities to bring these resources, relationships and understandings to bear on an effort to collectively improve local conditions in a manner consistent with that shared vision..

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### Attachment, Cohesion And Neighborliness

As discussed previously, a sense of mutual responsibility and cooperation among neighbors, discussed in terms of 'neighborliness' or 'community cohesion,' is often considered an important aspect of community-building and a precursor to effective local organizing. Through the quarterly group interviews, the groups were asked to compare the levels of cooperation among neighbors prior to and following their participation in the URI/MSU program. They reported improved cooperation among neighbors at each data collection point relative to before planting the projects, yet also report higher levels of cooperation prior to planting almost consistently throughout the evaluation process (Figure 5). The exception is a drop in the assessments of pre-participation cooperation in the 9th month of the evaluation.

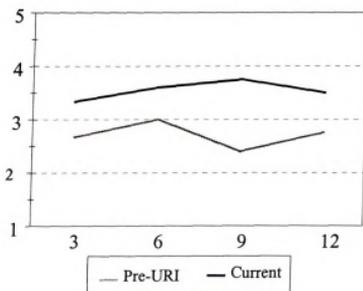


Figure 5: Assessment of Cooperation Among Neighbors Before and After URI

Discussion of issues relating to neighborhood stability and community cohesion comprised 4.57% of focus group discussions with cooperation among neighbors and resident turn over constituting the most common topics of this discussion.

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Discussion Topic	Item % of category	Category % of discussion
Community level of participation	3.03	4.57
Community functioning	3.03	
Impact of home owners/ownership on community climate	9.09	
Impact of renters on community climate	9.09	
Stability of residence	33.33	
Cooperation among community residents	42.42	

Table 10: Focus Group Discussion of Community Cohesion

While recognizing the challenges posed by the depopulation of the city, one participant demonstrated the ability to see this commonly cited problem as a resource.

Half of the people in the city of Detroit have moved out- it's lost half of the population. You're going to have vacant buildings. It doesn't have to do with what people do to destroy the City or anything, it's just simply a case of if you don't have folk in a house, if they die, the older folks die off their kids have moved, the kids aren't interested in the house, at that point, or five ten years later the City finally tears it down, and then you've got a vacant lot. We can treat that as a disaster or we can landscape and fill in and give the City a park effect...

While this group's efforts typically center around use of this resource, even they were surprised by the extent to which the process is continuing to affect their neighborhood.

I mean and like in this neighborhood, we did a survey of vacant lots and empty homes last year I think it was and we were surprised that we were still losing people, we didn't realize that.

The fact that neighborhood association members, typically very informed about local conditions and issues, were surprised by the extent to which the neighborhood continues to be affected by the depopulation of the City reflects the groups identified need to build stronger cohesion and attachment in that community.

As a participant from another group noted, this rate of resident turn over has important implications for local organizing efforts creating a perpetual need for community-building efforts.

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it's just like family, but then people move and people come in and everybody's skeptical and they have to get to know you and you have to know them... and you have to start the whole block over again... If you look at changing neighborhoods, the neighborhood organizations that exist fall apart when the population changes and it takes a good number of years for the new neighborhood to establish its organizations.

In light of these challenges, most groups saw the URI program as an opportunity to bring residents together to begin identifying common concerns.

if we got together that would be a start- at least we should be able to work on a few problems- at least people would be able to talk to each other... It would be an opportunity for members to get to know each other better.

The collective effort of participating in community forestry activities to address shared concerns helped at least one group maintain cohesion in the face of other challenges.

My honest opinion is that this program has helped keep our organization together, we have undergone a transition in leadership and leadership styles... but the focus on the lot and the nursery has created an issue around which we can focus or really to stay focused on our objectives and goals.

While the project sites became community gathering spaces to varying degrees, the groups report significantly different changes over time in the number of special events or celebrations organized following, in comparison with prior to, participation in the URI/MSU program. The C.K. Maple neighborhood association ( $0 = 2.67$ ) members were significantly more likely to report holding more such events than either the Star Magnolia block club ( $0 = 2.00, p < .05$ ) or the Forsythia neighborhood association ( $0 = 1.80, p < .05$ ) in the time since their introduction to URI/MSU. The members of the Star Magnolia block club were also less likely to report holding events more frequently than were the members of the Quince neighborhood association ( $0 = 3.00, p < .05$ ). Overall,

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the groups reported holding special events or celebrations between "two to three times per year" and "more than 4 times per year" ( $M = 2.54$ ), but few reported any history of unsuccessful activities or programs. This observation is important because the history of local organizing and community-building efforts can be important in establishing a climate for cooperative relationships among local residents.

### **Community Attachment**

The sense of collective identity built through local organizing, community events and improving community cohesion, may all contribute to the sense of attachment to community as place so critical to the debates around community and *neogemeinschaft*. In the current study, community attachment was assessed through a community attachment scale composed of two sub-scales on the individual surveys completed as part of the bi-annual assessments as well as through focus group discussions. The sub-scales explored how much respondents felt they would miss certain features of their neighborhood and of the City respectively, were they to move away from the area. These issues were further explored in correlation with individual items assessing participants' responses to how strong the 'sense of community' was in their neighborhood and how satisfied they were with their community overall. Means for the scales and items assessing sense of community and community attachment across groups and data collection points are reported in Table 11. It is important to note that, while the majority of questionnaire items relied on a 4-point Likert scale, responses to the community attachment scale fell on a 3-point scale. T-tests were conducted to determine whether there were significant differences between groups or over the two data collection points on these questions.

	Total (across groups and times)	Star Magnolia (across times)	Forsythia (across times)	Quince (across times)	C.K. Maple (across times)	T1 (across groups)	T2 (across groups)
	2.90	3.25	2.40	3.63	2.39	3.00	2.83

	Total (across groups and times)	Star Magnolia (across times)	Forsythia (across times)	Quince (across times)	C.K. Maple (across times)	T1 (across groups)	T2 (across groups)
Satisfaction with community as a place to live	2.90	3.25	2.40	3.63	2.39	3.00	2.83
How much they would miss neighborhood schools if they left the area	1.52	1.00	1.75	1.43	1.75	1.89	1.29
How much they would miss neighbors if they left the area	2.32	3.00	2.33	2.00	2.30	2.20	2.40
How much they would miss neighborhood association if they left the area	2.32	2.50	2.40	2.50	2.75	2.55	2.57
How much they would miss their neighborhood church if they left the area	2.56	2.33	2.25	2.29	1.63	2.30	1.83
How much they would miss their block club if they left the area	2.13	2.00	1.50	2.17	2.44	1.90	2.31
How much they would miss special neighborhood events if they left the area	2.15	2.25	1.50	2.00	2.38	2.29	2.08
How much they would miss arts and cultural events if they left the city	2.46	2.75	2.60	2.71	2.10	2.45	2.47
How much they would miss citywide celebrations if they left the city	2.15	2.50	2.00	2.25	2.00	2.25	2.07
How much they would miss the history of local organizing if they left the city	1.93	1.75	2.00	2.13	1.80	1.92	1.93
How much they would miss the tradition of African American leadership if they left the city	2.60	3.00	2.25	2.57	2.60	2.60	2.60
How much they would miss city sports teams and sporting events if they left the city	1.76	1.50	2.20	1.63	1.75	2.09	1.50
How much they would miss cultural festivals if they left the city	2.52	2.25	2.40	2.63	2.60	2.58	2.47
How much they would miss the City's "special places" if they left the city	2.67	2.25	2.80	2.75	2.80	2.67	2.67
Assessment of the sense of community in their neighborhood	3.10	3.00	2.40	3.25	3.39	2.91	3.23
Scale of items specific to neighborhood (items above ending in "the area")	1.90	2.18	2.01	1.98	2.27	2.27	2.09
Scale of items general to city (items above ending in "the city")	2.36	2.29	2.34	2.36	2.24	2.36	2.24
Composite of neighborhood and city scales	2.08	2.23	2.20	2.10	2.21	2.27	2.10

Table 11: Means for Items Assessing Sense of Community and Community Attachment Among Members of Local Organizations

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They were frequently followed by assessments of the correlations between items and scales to further explore statistically non-significant trends within the data.

The C.K. Maple neighborhood association differed from the other groups most frequently. Members of that organization were significantly more likely to report that they would miss their neighborhood schools than were the members of the Star Magnolia block club ( $01 = 1.00$ ,  $02 = 1.75$ ,  $p < .05$ ). In light of these results pertaining to neighborhood schools, it is interesting to note that the Star Magnolia block club was the only organization to include responses from their youth members in both the quantitative and qualitative procedures. The same two groups showed significant differences both in how much members thought they would miss their neighbors and how much they would miss the history of African American leadership in the City. While the members of the Star Magnolia block club unanimously reported that they would miss their neighbors 'a lot,' ( $01 = 3.00$ ), the mean on a 3-point scale for the C.K. Maple neighborhood organization was 2.20, ( $p < .05$ ). The members of the Quince neighborhood association were most likely to report that they would only miss their neighbors 'slightly' ( $02 = 2.00$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Both the Star Magnolia and C.K. Maple organizations reported that they would, on average, miss the tradition of African American leadership. However, the mean for the former organization, reflecting a unanimous sense that they would miss this tradition 'a lot', was statistically significantly higher than that of the latter ( $01 = 3.00$ ,  $02 = 2.60$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

The items relating to neighborhood and community attachment were also compared to those asking directly "[a]ll things considered, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with this block or neighborhood as a place to live?" and "[h]ow strong is the

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sense of community in your neighborhood?" T-tests exploring the differences between groups and among groups over time were conducted for these items as well. The members of the Quince neighborhood association ( $M = 3.63$ ) were statistically more likely to report greater satisfaction with their community than were the members of either the Forsythia neighborhood association ( $M = 2.40, p < .05$ ), or the C.K. Maple neighborhood association ( $M = 2.39, p < .05$ ). Meanwhile, the C.K. Maple members reported a significantly stronger sense of community in their neighborhood than did the members of the Forsythia neighborhood association ( $F(1, 3.39, 02 = 2.40, p < .05)$ ).

Overall, respondents were moderately positive in their satisfaction with their neighborhoods as a place to live ( $M = 2.90$  on a 4-point scale). They were, on average, most likely to report that they would miss their neighborhood associations ( $M = 2.56$ ), the history of African American Leadership ( $M = 2.60$ ), the City's cultural festivals ( $M = 2.52$ ) and "special places" such as Greek Town, Mexican Village and Belle Isle ( $M = 2.67$ ) "a lot." The responses to other aspects of their neighborhood and city such as schools, neighbors, church, block clubs, local events, city celebrations, tradition of local organizing, and sporting events were more neutral ( $1.5 < M < 2.5$ ). Figure 6 illustrates the percentage of respondents who said they would miss each element of their neighborhood included in the scale. Figure 7 similarly illustrates responses to the items on the community attachment scale. Each of these items were correlated with the question regarding the respondents' satisfaction with the community as a place to live. There was no noticeable relationship between this measure of community attachment and how much respondents would miss their neighbors, their neighborhood association, their church, city celebrations, the history of African American Leadership and special places

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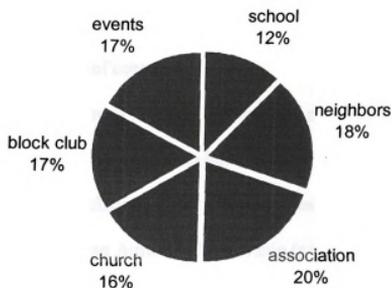


Figure 6: Attachment to Neighborhood Features

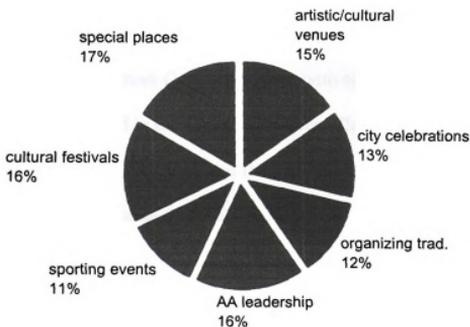


Figure 7: Attachment to City Features

in the City ( $r < .20$ ). There was a slight negative correlation between community satisfaction and how much local schools would be missed ( $r = .24$ ). However, there were appreciable correlations between community satisfaction and how much respondents would miss their block clubs, local events, artistic and cultural venues and the history of local organizing ( $r > .30$ ). Interestingly, the likelihood of missing local sporting events such as the Detroit Tigers and Red Wings games was negatively correlated with

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community satisfaction ( $r = -.27$ )! Despite the positive correlation between community satisfaction and reported sense of community ( $r = .31$ ), the latter has an equally strong positive correlation with how much the respondent would miss sporting events ( $r = .25$ ). The other important difference between correlations with community satisfaction and sense of community is the correlation between the latter and whether the respondent would miss the history of African American Leadership ( $r = .28$ ). Otherwise, the same variables were correlated with approximately the same strength with community satisfaction and sense of community.

The questionnaire items asking how much the respondent "would miss each of the following if they moved out of your neighborhood," or "...out of Detroit" were combined to form the Community Attachment Composite Scale with subscales assessing attachment to neighborhood and to the City respectively. There were fairly strong correlations between sense of community and the City sub-scale ( $r = .31$ ) and sense of community and the composite scale ( $r = .40$ ). The other correlations were not strong enough to warrant further exploration ( $r < .20$ ), though it was interesting to note a slight negative correlation between community satisfaction and the neighborhood scale ( $r = -.17$ ).

### **Organizing Capacity**

Among the defining characteristics of participatory development is its focus on increasing local capacity to address local needs and shifting the locus of power in decision-making in the favor of local residents. One tool urban residents in the U.S. frequently rely on to consolidate such local power is the establishment of community-

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based organizations such as block clubs and neighborhood associations. Thus, increasing the organizing capacity of these groups in accordance with their own organizational development goals is critical to the assessment of the URI/MSU program as an example of participatory urban development. Table 13 provides an overview of the means for questionnaire items relating to organizing capacity.

### **Organizational History, Mission, And Collective Vision**

Discussion of organizing climate including the history and tradition of organizing and related issues comprised 4.30% of the focus group discussions. The tradition of organizing, generating a common expectation and acceptance of local organizing, and the importance of commitment and follow through were the most frequent topics within this discussion.

Discussion Topic	Item % of category	Category % of discussion
Tradition of community organizing	20.97	4.30
History of local organization/organizing	12.90	
Commitment to organization/ follow through on organizational commitments	33.87	
Communication among residents/members	12.90	
Spirituality of the organization	19.35	

Table 12: Focus Group Discussion of Local Organizing Climate

One participant discussed the role of such a history of local organizing in establishing a conducive climate for ongoing community organizing efforts.

I remember block clubs from when I was small, so this is something that has been around a long time you know... they don't do as much as they did when we were younger, but its been around a long time so these folks have always had it and they were used to it...



	Total (across groups and times)	Star Magnolia (across times)	Forsythia (across times)	Quince (across times)	C.K. Maple (across times)	Short Term (across groups)	Long Term (across groups)
changes in number of people	2.10	2.50	1.60	2.20	2.10	2.00	2.18
" " of women	1.79	1.00	1.80	2.10	1.80	2.00	1.65
" " of men	2.28	2.50	2.20	2.50	2.00	2.25	2.29
attribution of changes in gender balance to URI/MSU	3.64	4.00	3.80	3.78	3.30	3.67	3.36
changes in number of people under 30	2.48	3.00	2.40	2.56	2.22	2.58	2.40
" " 30 - 50	1.85	1.50	1.60	2.11	1.89	1.92	1.80
" " over 50	1.96	2.25	2.00	1.89	1.89	1.92	2.00
attribution of changes in age distribution to URI/MSU	2.12	2.00	2.20	1.75	2.44	2.18	2.07
agreement with group goals or mission statement	1.86	1.50	2.00	1.78	2.00	1.92	1.81
frequency of events	2.54	2.00	1.80	3.00	2.67	2.33	2.69
history of unsuccessful events	1.29	1.75	1.40	1.10	1.22	1.18	1.35
history of conflict among members	1.31	1.50	1.25	1.11	1.44	1.22	1.35
embodiment of first characteristic of an "ideal" organization before URI	3.41	3.50	2.80	3.56	3.56	3.50	3.33
embodiment of first characteristic of an "ideal" organization after URI	3.18	2.25	3.00	3.20	3.67	3.42	3.00
embodiment of second characteristic of an "ideal" organization before URI	3.00	2.50	2.80	2.90	3.44	3.17	2.88
embodiment of second characteristic of an "ideal" organization after URI	3.07	2.25	3.20	3.11	3.33	3.33	2.87
embodiment of third characteristic of an "ideal" organization before URI	3.04	2.75	3.33	2.67	3.44	3.18	2.93
embodiment of third characteristic of an "ideal" organization after URI	3.20	2.50	3.67	3.00	3.56	3.36	3.07
attribution of changes in group skills to participation in URI	3.22	3.75	3.40	3.38	3.10	3.09	3.31
presumed likelihood of achieving objectives for URI project	3.48	3.25	3.60	3.00	4.00	3.45	3.50
extent to which objectives have been met to-date	2.80	2.00	3.50	2.22	3.30	2.75	2.84
group problems resulting from participation in URI	1.76	1.75	1.60	1.88	1.75	1.70	1.80

Table 13: Means for Items Assessing Organizing Capacity

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Having successfully identified common concerns and shared visions for the community, an important organization-generated factor in establishing a climate conducive to local organizing is establishing a mission statement or vision for the community. In addition to providing focus and unity among members, a mission statement can also demonstrate to potential members the commitment to issues of shared concern. Only about 1.79% of the focus group discussion was devoted explicitly to this topic, but it included important discussions of shared vision and consensus building. There was also a great deal of related discussion during planning activities and reported under other sub-topics such as establishment of a community-driven agenda.

Discussion Topic	Item % of category	Category % of discussion
Existence of mission statement, shared goals, vision	28.00	1.73
Agreement of members with mission and goals	36.00	
Descriptions of ideal community organization	36.00	

Table 14: Focus Group Discussion of Collective Vision

The mission statement of the C.K. Maple association, for example, illustrates their effort to identify universal concerns in a very inclusive and positive community vision and their commitment to finding a place for everyone interested in contributing to the effort.

to revitalize the community spiritually, economically, physically and socially so that everyone would have a safe and clean environment in which to live and grow. To encourage residents to contribute their time, talents and resources to the betterment of their community so that all residents and visitors can feel welcome and comfortable in [the C.K. Maple neighborhood].

Even without formal mission statements, most of the groups recognized the importance of a shared vision in building participation and organizational commitment.

There may be differences among us, but we share a common desire to improve our neighborhood. Many people like and work well together... camaraderie... we

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have some die-hards that have seen a community organization that works well and how valuable that is, so we keep stumbling along trying to recreate this entity that we have experienced at some point in our lives.

### Membership

Clearly, the missions and vision of the URI/MSU participant organizations reflect a commitment to improving conditions for all community residents and an understanding that such objectives can only be achieved with the broadest possible participation of community residents in defining those objectives and the efforts to carry them out. Thus, it is not surprising that more than half of the groups identify increasing participation among their principle objectives for participating in the program or that most of the groups spent a great deal of time discussing related issues in their focus groups.

Through the quarterly group interviews those seeking improvements in participation reported decreasing achievement of that goal between their 3 and 6 month evaluations (Figure 8). However, by their 9 and 12 month evaluations, they reported

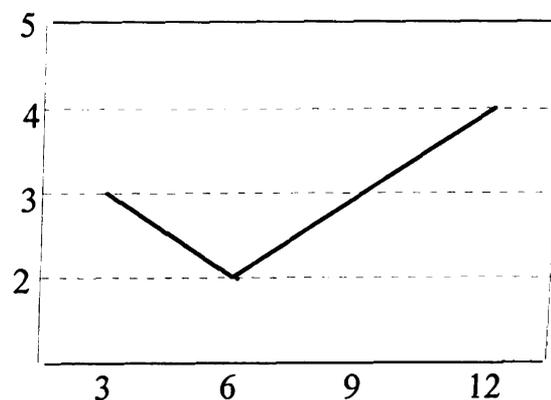


Figure 8: Achievement of Participation Objectives

almost full satisfaction with the increases they observed in participation in their organizations. On average, however, respondents to the individual mail surveys circulated as part of the bi-annual assessment noted no differences in the number of

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people participating in their organizations before and following participation in the URI/MSU program than before doing so. However, some groups reported changes in the demographic characteristics of participants, as will be discussed in an ensuing section.

Although they were no longer meeting formally, the members of the Star Magnolia block club were more likely to report having more people active in the community at the time of their long-term evaluation than any of the other groups. The difference was statistically significant between the Star Magnolia group ( $M = 2.50$ ) and the Forsythia neighborhood association ( $M = 1.60, p < .05$ ).

The need to build membership goes beyond mere numbers to include the skills and efforts those new members bring with them and the opportunity to delegate tasks of core members across a broader pool of active participants. This was apparently an especially common concern, accounting for 14.41% of coded statements from the focus group discussions.

Discussion Topic	Item % of category	Category % of discussion
Presence and contributions of committed core membership	12.50	14.41
Number of members	21.15	
Availability of members with key/necessary skills	21.15	
Necessity/availability of labor	20.19	
Necessity/availability of time	12.50	
Organizational level of participation	5.77	
Organizational growth	5.29	
No functioning community organization at the present time	1.44	

Table 15: Focus Group Discussion of Membership Building

The relationship between innovative efforts, such as participation in the URI/MSU program, member recruitment and neighborhood relations was illustrated by a participant who noted,

[we need to] incorporate more people, and strategies to keep them interested and not only strategies but programs for the neighborhood, because we do need something

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The program was cited as important in both building and maintaining involvement among previously peripheral members.

some of them were coming, you know, here and there, but to see this type of program coming in, cause this was a program that came into our community and uh, I think this encouraged a lot of them that probably would have stopped long ago to hang in here, cause we do have the original ones that were with us when we started.

### **Increasing Diversity**

An important reason for this interest in "expanding the base" is a perception among many groups that their activities are limited by the lack of participation, especially among men, younger adults and youth, in group activities. For these groups in particular, with their interest in planting and beautification efforts, the perceived limited abilities of a primarily senior and frequently majority-female membership poses important barriers to fulfilling their objectives.

Data from the quantitative component of the bi-annual assessment process indicate that the members of the Star Magnolia ( $0 = 1.00$ ) group were significantly less likely to report having more women involved than were the members of either the Quince ( $0 = 2.10, p < .05$ ) or C.K. Maple ( $0 = 1.80, p < .05$ ) neighborhood associations. The latter two of these groups differed significantly in the reported effects on participation of men in the associations ( $01 = 2.5, 02 = 2.00, p < .05$ ). In general, participants were likely to report slightly fewer women ( $0 = 1.79$ ) and slightly more men ( $0 = 2.28$ ) were

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attending meetings. They attributed these changes to their participation in the program "somewhat" (0 = 3.64).

While the respondents reported higher participation among residents under 30 (0 = 2.48), they reported few changes in participation among groups up to (0 = 1.85), or older than (0 = 1.96), age 50. These changes were reported to be "somewhat" attributable to participation in the program (0 = 2.12). There were few significant differences between groups in terms of changes in the age distributions of participants. The Star Magnolia group (0 = 3.00,  $p < .05$ ) reported significantly more new participants under the age of 30 than did either the Quince neighborhood association (0 = 2.56,  $p < .05$ ) or the C.K. Maple neighborhood association (0 = 2.22,  $p < .05$ ).

While increasing both gender and age diversity were commonly cited in planning discussions, building youth participation dominated the 4.92% of focus group discussions devoted to improving representation and diversity among active members.

Discussion Topic	Item % of category	Category % of discussion
Gender diversity among members	5.63	4.92
Youth participation	56.34	
Age diversity among members	38.03	

Table 16: Focus Group Discussion of Member Diversity

One participant observed that the challenge of recruiting younger participants arises,

because they don't think they're going to be here for very long. It's not until they get to be my age that they decide maybe they should get involved in the community and then they can't do anything!

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## Leadership: Expanding The Core

While delegation and development of new leaders were frequent topics of discussion within the 2.49% of focus group comments devoted to the subject, attention to these issues typically focused on those already in leadership roles.

Discussion Topic	Item % of category	Category % of discussion
Delegation of leadership tasks	16.67	2.49
Leadership development	30.56	
Organizational leadership	52.78	

Table 17: Focus Group Discussion of Leadership Issues

Many of the factors discussed previously in this section are strongly influenced by organizational leadership. On some occasions, previously strong leaders become so entrenched that their presence precludes involvement of new members as in the case of the Forsythia neighborhood association who had to start organizing from scratch because,

[laughs] the little old lady who used to live across the street, she's dead now, but she was President of this block club and she had her little deal with the City or something, I forget what it was, something that she was able to get service or something, so she wouldn't give up that job, but in the mean time, she'd look at anything... anyone who organized in the area as a threat.

In well-established organizations, leadership tasks are often shared across a core group of members. On some occasions, over-dependence on these highly reliable members can result in resentment and reluctance to take on new activities. Discussing this concern in relation to the decision to participate in the URI program, one speaker noted,

It's always a certain group of people, it's always that group, look right now, it's a certain group of people, you've got half the block that really does all the work while the other half just sit back...

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However, some members seem to have no limits on the time and commitment they are willing to devote to the organization and its efforts, including maintaining their community forestry project as evidenced by a member of the Georgia Peaches, described by the group's president.

Mr. B., who was just... he was just a go getter, but he had a heart attack... The doctor has limited his activities, which you can understand, especially the things that he was doing, you know he'd trim and he'd cut and he still goes down there... and I see him often with his weed whacker and doing as much as he can do to keep it trimmed down, as far as the entire area...

The activities of such committed members often becomes critical to the ability of the groups to continue their activities. In addition to the amount of work they carry out, they can inspire a sense of duty to participate among other neighbors. Expanding the group becomes critical in order to avoid burn-out or over dependence on these core members as well as to ensure new issues can be successfully addressed. Several groups did report that involvement in the program did contribute to the size of their pool of core members.

There were 4 members who were previously not involved or only superficially involved who became highly active through the project.

### **Power, Empowerment and Internal Democracy**

One important factor in community participation, cited by Wandersman (1981) among others, is the sense that individuals will be able to address issues of concern to them through the organization. As Speer & Hughey (1995) note, without this element of internal democracy, participation itself can be a disempowering experience regardless of how successful the organization is. Furthermore, inequities among group members can

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strongly influence the experience of participation for many members. The extent to which those in leadership or core roles work to bring members into the decision-making process and to build skills among other members may influence the sense of whether the organization is amenable to new interests or the sense that members are being recruited to effectively work for someone else. As one participant noted,

Some groups have leaders that are dominant and don't realize that no one is really following them.

Several groups addressed this concern both in their URI planing processes and their organizational structure, such as the Star Magnolia group who made overt efforts to equalize power throughout the organization.

The thing about participation... Well, you know, you don't have to agree with everything. You're not ever going to agree on everything, and you realize that... And our block club, it was pretty united and the reason being that we agreed to disagree on things and if there was a question about an idea... We explored it, everybody was free to do, but... we just made it majority rule so there would be no dissension... If you have an idea, you could work on it. We didn't have a hierarchy or anything, of the President, Vice-President, and uh... Secretary or Treasurer. We had officers, but nobody ruled anything, you know what I mean?

### **Organizing Skills**

The majority of respondents did report a belief that participation in the URI/MSU program contributed to positive changes in their groups' skills "somewhat" or "very much" ( $M = 3.22$ ). However, there are also very high correlations between respondents' perceptions of how well their organization embodies the "3 most important skills or characteristics of a successful block club or community organization" before and after

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participation in the program with r's ranging from .65 to .78 respectively. Thus, while members report that their groups already have these characteristics "somewhat" on average (01 = 3.41 before URI/MSU and 01 = 3.18 after, 02 = 3.00 before and 3.07 after, 03 = 3.04 before and 3.20 after), neither growth or degradation of those skills and characteristics is seen as changing as a function of participation in the program (0 = 3.22,  $r_1 = -.14$ ,  $r_2 = .20$ ,  $r_3 = .17$ ). In fact, the item assessing attribution of improved skills to participation in the program is slightly negatively correlated with the perception of whether the group possesses the first "important skill or characteristic" listed by the participants. Thus, while the program is seen as contributing positively to skill development, those impacts are not necessarily in the areas identified as most critical to organizational success.

One important component of organizing skills is the adaptability of the organization to changing community conditions. While over-burdening of core members may be an important constraining factor, the ability to take on new issues, establish new structures and resolve problems including conflict among members are important skills for successful community organizations, though discussed in only about 1% of the focus group statements.

Discussion Topic	Item % of category	Category % of discussion
Taking on new issues as necessary	18.75	1.11
Problem solving among membership	6.25	
Creation of new structures, committees, etc	12.50	
Conflict resolution among group members	25.00	
Responsiveness to changing environment	37.50	

Table 18: Focus Group Discussion of Organization Adaptability

In building organizing skills, the leader of the Forsythia association cites the evaluation process and demonstration of strategic planning as one of the most valuable

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This discussion and the last one has helped us to think through- it's almost like that, in the long term, may be of more help than the trees themselves. I don't know of any other organization that goes to local groups and, over the course of a year or two, helps them to think through their growth and difficulties- I appreciate that.

### **Sense Of Empowerment (SOE) And Capacity**

For many groups, education and skill building activities are seen as critical to the effectiveness of their efforts to bring about intended changes. The resulting perception that the group is ready and able to make such changes is the Sense of Organizational Empowerment (SOE). Table 19 provides a summary of means for items assessing SOE across groups and data collection points. While the collective empowerment scale showed no significant changes over time, participants did report significantly higher individual empowerment at the long term assessment point ( $M = 2.40$ ) than at the short term data collection point ( $M = 2.07, p < .05$ ). This may affirm Saegert and Winkel's (1996) findings that individual SOE changes as a function of involvement with successful collective efforts.

The two questionnaire items that showed significant change over time were both part of the organizational empowerment cluster. These items assessed the belief that political leaders tend to represent the special interests of the powerful, rather than the common needs of all citizens ( $M_1 = 2.42, M_2 = 2.85, p < .05$ ) and the perceived likelihood of the community organization being able to get the problem solved if the City was not

	Total (across groups and times)	Star Magnolia (across times)	Forsythia (across times)	Quince (across times)	C.K. Maple (across times)	Short Term (across groups)	Long Term (across groups)
I don't think public officials in this city care much about what people like me think.	2.16	2.33	2.20	2.25	2.00	2.09	2.21

	Total (across groups and times)	Star Magnolia (across times)	Forsythia (across times)	Quince (across times)	C.K. Maple (across times)	Short Term (across groups)	Long Term (across groups)
I don't think public officials in this city care much about what people like me think.	2.16	2.33	2.20	2.25	2.00	2.09	2.21
The way people vote decides how things are run in this city.	2.58	2.67	2.40	2.50	2.70	2.50	2.64
People like me don't have any say about what the local government does.	2.19	2.00	2.20	2.25	2.20	2.25	2.14
Money is the most important factor influencing public policies and decisions.	2.81	2.33	2.80	3.25	2.60	3.08	2.57
Political leaders can generally be trusted to serve the interests of the citizens.	2.54	2.67	2.60	2.63	2.40	2.58	2.50
It doesn't matter which party wins the election; the interests of the little person don't count	2.23	2.33	2.00	2.13	2.40	2.17	2.29
Political leaders usually represent the special interests of a few powerful groups and rarely serve the common needs of all citizens.	2.64	3.00	2.25	2.63	2.70	2.42	2.85
It isn't important to get involved in local issues when you know your side doesn't have a chance to win.	1.88	2.00	1.80	1.63	2.10	1.75	2.00
A good many local elections aren't important enough to bother with	1.88	2.00	2.00	1.63	2.00	1.75	2.00
So many other people are active in local issues and organizations that it doesn't matter much to me whether I participate or not.	1.81	1.67	2.20	1.50	1.90	1.67	1.93
If a person doesn't care how a local issue is decided, s/he shouldn't participate in the decision.	2.15	1.67	2.20	2.38	2.10	2.08	2.21
Participation in neighborhood organizations is important no matter how much or how little is accomplished.	1.73	1.67	2.10	1.88	1.45	1.88	1.61

Table 19: Means for Items Assessing Sense of Empowerment

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providing a necessary service ( $01 = 2.60, 02 = 3.63, p < .05$ ). Thus, while respondents were more likely to believe that government representatives were preferentially serving the powerful, over time they were also significantly more likely to believe that their group could mobilize city services on their own behalf.

Contrary to expectations, there were quite a few significant differences between the groups. It is instructive to explore the patterns in which those differences occurred. For example, the Forsythia neighborhood association consistently stood apart from the other respondents on the items assessing political empowerment. Members of that group were statistically less likely to believe that they could acquire a necessary city service than members of both the Quince ( $01 = 2.40, 02 = 3.38, p < .05$ ) and C.K. Maple ( $01 = 3.33, p < .05$ ) neighborhood associations. The Forsythia members were also more likely to report feeling that "the interests of little person don't count" no matter which party wins an election than were the members of the C.K. Maple neighborhood association ( $01 = 2.00, 02 = 2.40, p < .05$ ). Perhaps consistent with that sentiment, they were more likely to also believe that "[s]o many other people are active in local issues and organizations, it doesn't matter much to me whether I participate or not" than the members of the Quince neighborhood association ( $01 = 2.20, 02 = 1.90, p < .05$ ). However, the members of the Forsythia neighborhood association were also the most likely to report that "participation is important no matter how much or how little is accomplished" than any other organization. The difference between that group and the C.K. Maple association was significant ( $01 = 2.10, 02 = 1.45, p < .05$ ).

Across all of the groups, the respondents indicated believing that there was slightly more than a "50/50 chance" of being able to access a city service in the face of

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problems in doing so. With few exceptions, the remaining items, all using 4-point Likert scales ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," assessing political empowerment reflect a similarly median trend. Respondents were slightly less likely to agree with the statement "I don't think public officials in this city care much about what people like me think" than to disagree. On the other hand, they were more likely to agree with the statements "[m]oney is the most important factor influencing public policies and decisions," and "People like me don't have any say about what the local government does." These items were all part of the scale measuring respondents' sense of group political empowerment.

Four of the five items measuring individual political empowerment were among those the respondents were least likely to agree with, reflecting a higher sense of individual empowerment, on average, than sense of group empowerment. Among these were the statements; "It isn't important to get involved in local issues when you know your side doesn't have a chance to win," "A good many local elections aren't important enough to bother with," "So many other people are active in local issues and organizations that it doesn't matter much to me whether I participate or not," and "Participation in neighborhood organizations is important no matter how much or how little is accomplished." Responses to the last two of these are consistent with the prevalence of core members in the respondent groups.

The strongest correlation among items assessing empowerment revealed that those respondents who felt they had "no say in what the government does" were also more likely to feel their organization could not gain access to a necessary city service ( $r = .42$ ). Moderate negative correlations were noted between perceived ability to access city

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services and the belief that "[m]oney is the most important factor in influencing public policies and decision," and that the interests of the "little people" don't count ( $r > .20$ ). Interestingly, there was also a negative correlation between perceived ability to access city services and belief that "[p]olitical leaders can generally be trusted to serve the interests of the citizens" ( $r = -.26$ ). Conversely, the belief that "[t]he way people vote decides how things are run..." was positively correlated with perceived access to city services ( $r = .20$ ).

While focus group discussions centered around group issues, individual attitudes and beliefs influencing participation related to the sense of empowerment took up 13.03% of focus group conversations, typically in relation to why other residents were or were not attracted to participation in the organization.

Discussion Topic	Item % of category	Category % of discussion
Expect group efforts to be successful	6.91	13.03
Shared concerns and vision of group	15.96	
Sense of duty to participate in group efforts	22.87	
Believe strategies the group uses to be appropriate and effective	46.28	
Satisfaction with organization	3.72	
Attitude toward participation	4.26	

Table 20: Focus Group Discussion of Individual Attitudes Influencing Participation

Lack of empowerment and a related sense of hopelessness presents an important barrier to participation as recognized by one participant who felt that the URI project and other activities were beginning to change those perceptions.

for a long time in this particular setting, everybody had the idea that, well, nothing's gonna change nothing's gonna you know... and it's hard to sell someone on the idea that you make the change. I think we've started to do that....

Successes in environmental and natural resource-based, aesthetically oriented efforts, including his group's URI community forestry project, were reported by one participant

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as important in shifting perceptions of neighbors by creating visible changes in the community.

We have basically... we maintained our park, we put together the nursery, and the other main thing that we've done is eliminated one problem lot a year, we didn't think of it in those terms previously, but basically that's what we have done, each year we have ended up cleaning up one major problem lot

### **Resources**

Discussion of the need for, access to, and efforts to mobilize of resources dominated focus group discussions. While discussion of specific material resources needed or mobilized through participation in the URI program took up only 12.68% of focus group conversations, were the more general comments about resources considered under the 'Power and Resources' subsection above included, the topic would account for 29.04% of those discussions. Furthermore, conversations about increasing membership and building community networking could also be considered here in the context of human resources, as illustrated in Figure 9. Thus, the majority of the focus was on highly practical concerns about the specific resources participants felt their groups needed in order to fully realize their community vision and the effects of participation in the URI program in facilitating access to those resources.

Contrary to common expectations limited financial resources were seldom cited as a primary resource concern. While groups did consider recruitment of

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to be critical to achieving their goals within their means, the majority focused on educational opportunities and the need for informational resources. In relation to their URI/MSU projects, constrained access to and the need to recruit donations or financial

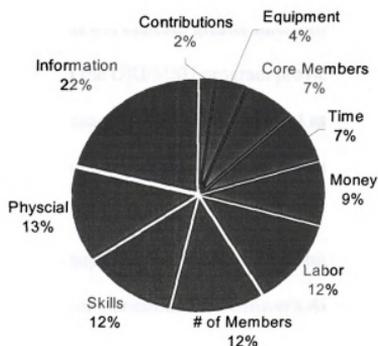


Figure 9: Percentage of discussion of resources devoted to each form

resources to ensure sufficient access to water to maintain the plants was the most commonly cited resource-related concern.

we were able to use the neighbors water across the street, we had hoses together and we brought them across the street to the lot and tried to irrigate, as much as we could that way, but again, you're talking about using a person's water and that didn't last, so they were willing, but you know that stuff can happen. We were able to do that for a while and we were able to get the City, because it had a plug right across from it and they helped us out a couple of times by opening it up and flooding the area.

This statement illustrates the role of successful inter-organizational networking and positive relationships with non-member neighbors and city agencies in meeting resource needs.

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### **Interorganizational Networking**

An important characteristic of “empowered organizations” (Speer & Hughey, 1997; Gaventa, 1980) is a high level of connectivity with other organizations and agencies. Data from both the quarterly group interviews as well as commentary from the focus group discussions did indicate greater interaction with several of the agencies and organizations to which the URI/MSU program provided contact information, as well as introductions in some cases, as part of its technical assistance activities. Several groups also reported expanding networking with other community-based groups, including other URI/MSU participant organizations.

None of the groups reported developing relationships with the Michigan Nurserymen's, Timber or Christmas Tree Grower's Associations in their responses to inquiries during the quarterly group interviews. Four groups did report developing some contact with “other” professional organizations, although ensuing conversation indicated that there might have been some confusion between this term and the remaining agencies about which the researcher inquired. Of these, three groups reported developing contacts with the Wayne County Cooperative Extension Service, three reported having had contact with the Detroit Department of Public Works, four reported contact with the Detroit Department of Forestry and three reported contact with other Detroit agencies.

The importance of positive relationships with other agencies and organizations in the City was a common discussion topic, accounting for 7.21% of coded focus group discussion comments. Relationships with government agencies, typically at the municipal level, and with other community organizations were most frequently discussed.

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Discussion Topic	Item % of category	Category % of discussion
Networking or affiliation with retail establishments	2.88	7.21
Networking or affiliation with or through CES	8.65	
Networks or affiliations with non-governmental agencies	13.46	
Networks and affiliations with governmental agencies	35.58	
Networks and affiliations with community groups	39.42	

Table 21: Focus Group Discussion of Interorganizational Networking

Some groups hoped that their URI/MSU efforts would transcend impacts on their immediate community through such relationships; that neighboring communities might be enticed to take on similar efforts at community improvement, contributing to building relationships between these groups as well as meeting the immediate concerns of each.

Plus we thought like it would encourage others, you know, coming through seeing what we've done with vacant lots, because we have so many vacant lots in our neighborhood, that that would impress them or entice them to do the same and even enticing them, that it would encourage the program itself to continue. So, it was developing in something positive.

Groups able to rely on support from a broad network of such inter-organizational relationships were frequently able to take on large tasks despite relatively small official memberships.

...we're trying to set up a tree moving day and we're planning on calling on the Wayne county alternative workforce, our own membership of course, and uh, we're planning on requesting help from some of the neighborhood churches and, uh, I am planning on also, I think, requesting help from the [Quince] group, one of their officers suggested that we send them a letter asking, and that's especially good from our point of view because they have experience and... oh yes, Mr. Bricault [Wayne county CES Consumer Horticulturist] told me to send in a letter requesting help from the master gardeners so if we can get that diverse a group out there it may work.  
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Relationships with other community-based organizations, such as those established with urban gardeners in Chicago through URIs relationship with the USDA Forest Service, created greater understanding of shared challenges and opportunities to share ideas.

I got a boost of energy from the group that came from Chicago- the opportunity to interact with other groups working on similar projects... It gave us insight... because some of the things that we were going through they were going through too...

Although access to city-owned land provided through inter-organizational relationships between the groups, the Department of Public Works and the URI/MSU program was a critical resource for participant groups, on some occasions, the City failed to fulfill their obligations to prepare the lots prior to the groups' taking over responsibility for the sites, illustrating the potential dangers of relying on other organizations in some cases.

I think the biggest problem is that the City didn't do their part, cause if the City hadda did their part clearing the lots better and giving everybody a helping hand here, it would probably have went further... Sometimes it takes a good running start.

Similarly, the failure of DPW district managers to inform contract mowers that they were no longer responsible for maintenance of the sites after the projects were planted, in accordance with the cooperative maintenance agreements, proved to raise important challenges for several groups.

...the City's mowing. Uh, there is no control over the people who mow for the City, they're contractors and the contractors themselves of course hire people to do the work and the ones that are doing the work are playing urban cowboy with lawnmowers, very large lawnmowers...

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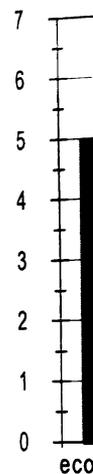
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## **Actual Organizational Empowerment (AOE)**

Beyond assessing changes in participants' sense of empowerment, the quarterly group interviews and focus group comments provide an opportunity to assess actual organizational empowerment; whether groups were able to actually effect change within their communities through involvement in community forestry activities consistent with the organizational vision. This assessment was based on the objectives determined during the Collaborative Planning phase of the URI/MSU process, through which participant organizations established outcome criteria according to which the success of their project could be determined. For the purposes of the current study, those objectives are collapsed into several general categories typically shared by several participant organizations. The participants' assessments of the projects and their outcomes will be discussed in terms of these major categories.

### **Summary of Organizational Objectives**

As illustrated by the organizational profiles, the groups shared a number of common concerns which they hoped to address through their community forestry projects. Figure 10 illustrates the number of groups citing each major goal area or their community forestry project; subsistence, safety, participation, economic, social, aesthetic and "other". Three of the participant organizations chose subsistence goals among their purposes for participating in the URI/MSU program. Three groups wished to improve the safety of the vacant lots and of their neighborhoods through their project while four sought to increase participation. Five groups reported an interest in economic,



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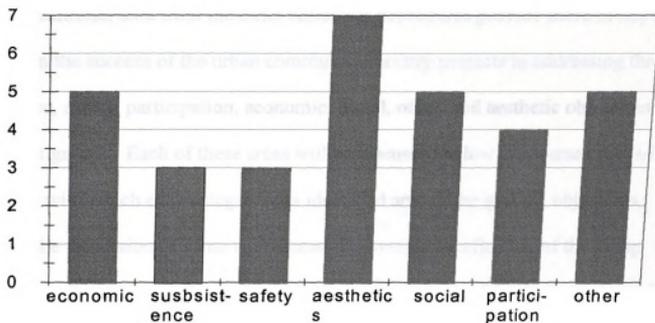


Figure 10: Group Goals for URI/MSU Community Forestry Projects

social and "other" benefits. Finally, all seven hoped to improve the appearance of the lots they were working to reclaim.

Data from all three collection procedures offer insight on how well participants felt their group's objectives were met. The quantitative data from the individual mail surveys provide an overview of participants' responses. The t-tests on data from the bi-annual survey indicated that there were significant differences between the Forsythia ( $0 = 3.60$ ) and C.K. Maple ( $0 = 4.00$ ) associations members' assessments of the likelihood of achieving their groups' community forestry objectives ( $p < .05$ ), although both indicated very high confidence in this area. There was a similarly significant difference between the same groups' assessments of how well the objectives had been "met so far" ( $01 = 3.50$ ,  $02 = 3.30$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Perhaps the lower sense of success among the C.K. Maple members stems in part from their higher initial expectations. Again, however, both groups had very positive assessments. There were also significant differences between the Quince ( $0 = 2.22$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and C.K. Maple associations.

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Additional data from the other collection procedures provide more in-depth insights on the success of the urban community forestry projects in addressing the subsistence, safety, participation, economic, social, other, and aesthetic objectives of participant groups. Each of these areas will be discussed below in reverse order of the frequency with which each category was identified among the groups' objectives, although the discussion of some will necessarily overlap in reflection of the group discussions. For example, discussions of safety and aesthetic objectives overlapped in consideration of preventing illegal dumping. Similarly, the achievement of social objectives, such as increasing meeting and gathering spaces and improving intergenerational cooperation, and 'other' concerns, which included factors such as creating play spaces for children and adult exercise or sitting areas, also overlapped in the group discussions. Thus, for some topics, reports will be limited to data from only one collection procedure, such as the quarterly assessments, while related comments from the focus group discussions are presented under another heading where such overlap occurs. As indicated in Table 22, discussions of the environmental, economic and social ecological outcomes represented about 4% of the focus group discussion.

Discussion Topic	Item % of category	Category % of discussion
Social-ecological effects at community level	19.30	3.95
Environmental effects at community level	35.09	
Economic effects at community level	45.61	

Table 22: Focus Group Discussion of Project Outcomes

### **Subsistence**

The three groups identifying subsistence goals for their community forestry projects saw no difference between the three and sixth month evaluations and only minor achievement of their objectives between the sixth and ninth month. At the twelfth month

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there was some decline in their assessments, although participants reported slight achievements in addressing subsistence objectives at that time (Figure 11).

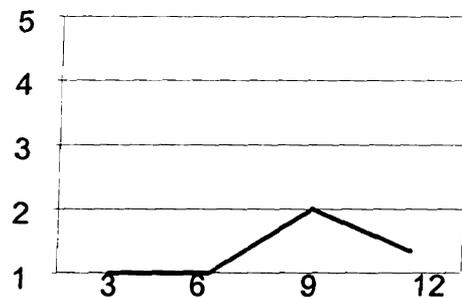


Figure 11: Achievement of Subsistence Goals over Time

However, groups working to address subsistence goals had strong positive reactions to the production they had seen and seemed strongly inspired by these successes however limited as illustrated by a participant who said,

the tree that I have, I'll tell you girl, I had such beautiful fruit last year... and plenty of fruit coming this year coming, but I don't know if you know that we had a tornado this year... tornado just came and just wiped the peaches... I think I have two... two left. But it didn't destroy the tree. So I'm hopeful that next year, I can prune it and dig around and it will be, but it was just, and I'm thinking that the same thing could apply down the street. The peaches down there...there were peaches, it was really... oh, they were good.

### Safety

There was a fairly consistent difference between the groups' assessments of the safety of the vacant lots prior to and following the planting of their community forestry projects (Figure 12). Similarly, the groups consistently report that the lots were less dangerous afterwards than they had been prior to planting (Figure 13). It is interesting to note, however, that the groups' reports of the conditions prior to planting drop in parallel

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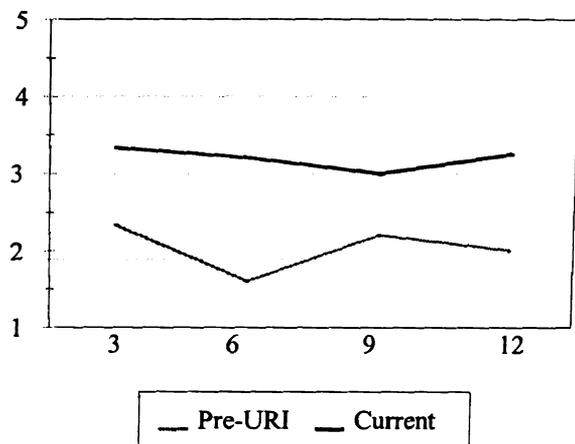


Figure 12: Assessments of Lot Safety Before and After URI

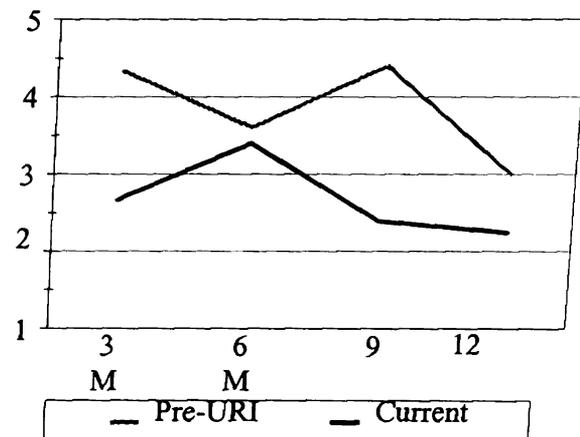


Figure 13: Changing Assessments of Dangerousness of Vacant Lots

project was planted, but report conditions at both times as being worse than they had at the previous data collection point with the exception of a strong improvement at 9 months.

Despite these apparently declining perceived returns, most groups continued to see the projects and their maintenance as important in their efforts to prevent illegal dumping and related hazards on the sites.

we'll get into that in September, because we have three, one, two, three vacant lots now that have been cleared that we are going to work with, that we're going to try to get some plants for those lots because leaving them vacant you're just asking for dumpsites, you see, and that's what we were afraid of, thank god, it really didn't happen that way.

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## Participation

Because changes in general organizational participation (such as changes in the number of members and level of involvement in group activities) along with the majority of quantitative data pertaining to the issue were considered in the organizational capacity building section, the current discussion is limited to consideration of the focus group comments about participation specifically as a function of the community forestry projects. The report of one block club President makes it clear that participation in the actual implementation of their community forestry project was quite satisfactory.

Well, the way you helped us become more like that is that you had everybody participating, like I say, you had like 90% participation rate, when we did this, it brought everybody out... I was real proud of them.

Another reports that efforts at maintaining the project have continued to have positive effects for their membership.

People have cooperated more in our park since doing this program- I've been really pleased with the results. Even though it was a small group that was involved it united them and gave them pride in their accomplishment.

As expected, the projects gave several groups a common focus and an opportunity to attract members with new skills to contribute.

provided a common goal, it increased interest and participation... got more people involved and found out what their skills were

However, another group reports that while the project did increase the numbers of people involved in planting and maintenance activities, it does not seem to have contributed to the sense of unity among participants.

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Maintaining the level of participation necessary for ongoing maintenance activities proved to be a challenge for a number of organizations.

if we'da had just about five people to cut those lots, just five, it would be a breeze, there wouldn't be nothing to it, but we didn't have five people that would help out... But that's no excuse because I know that if we had had full participation with everybody, it really doesn't take that much energy to maintain that kind of thing, it really doesn't.

### Economic

Economic benefits were commonly identified among the groups' objectives.

Although several of the groups experienced dramatically changing financial conditions over the evaluation period, participation in the project was not perceived as contributing to increased economic resources (Figure 14). While many projects had not yet reached economic maturity by the time of the final evaluation or the groups had not harvested the trees or their products for economic benefits, one group noted the role of the project in indirect, but quite positive economic improvements in the community.

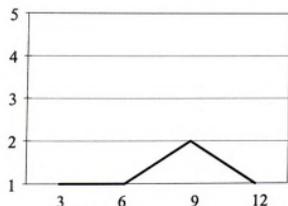


Figure 14: Assessment of Achievement Objectives Over Time

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...With the trees, with the painting of the trees and the curbs and even with our fruit trees, in this neighborhood, the property values have just about doubled, I found that out today, the house next door here, two years ago it was on the market for \$10,000. It's for \$32,000 now...

## Social

Though none of the groups who cited an interest in increasing social interaction and other social goals continued to see them as important goals for their project by the final evaluation, they did report improved conditions in those areas between their 3 and 6 month meetings (Figure 15). This achievement was maintained through nine months following the planting of those community forestry projects with a slight drop at one year.

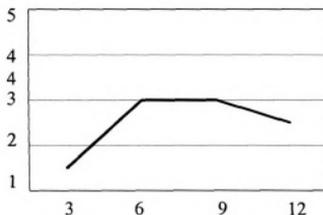


Figure 15: Assessments of achievement of Social Objectives Over Time

In addition to providing gathering spaces and other intended social objectives, one participant noted an unexpected social benefit of the project and the group's other lot reclamation efforts.

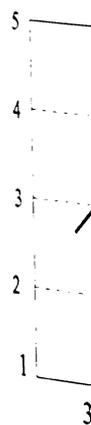
I think we're getting that with regards to people mowing and we're doing a lot of mowing, the vacant lots, uh, once a lot looks mowed rather than six foot high grass then people feel better about it and that's my intent... I think that once people see that a lot really looks better with something on

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### Other

Figure 16 portrays the pattern in the achievement of "other" goals such as creating play spaces for children and adult exercise or gathering areas. As illustrated in that graph, a slight drop between the 3 and 6 month evaluations is followed by an increasing sense of achievement of these goals, such as creating play spaces for local children, over 9 and 12 months. The availability of children's activities is consistently perceived as improved following the planning of community forestry projects in comparison with before. Though there is some increase in the perceived availability of children's activities through 9 months, there is a decrease in the group's assessments of this area at 1 year following planting (Figure 17).

Meanwhile, the evaluation of this aspect prior to planting improves at 6 months followed by a dramatic decrease. This may reflect an inconsistent use of the projects for children's activities as several of the groups use the projects for educational and outdoor

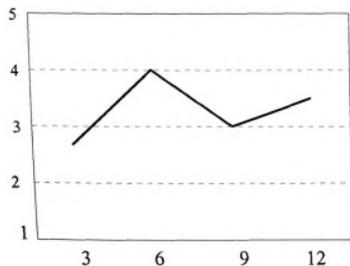


Figure 16: Assessment of Achievement of 'Other' Objectives

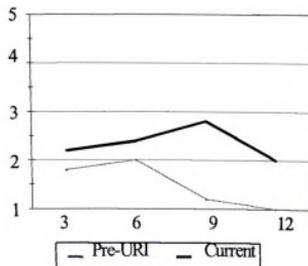


Figure 17: Availability of Children's Activities Before and After URI

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activities during some seasons, but not consistently throughout the year. Still, some groups believed that the projects provided an opportunity for environmental education which would build a sense of responsibility and awareness among neighborhood children.

Education, just those kids that we do come across, educate them on what the real usefulness of trees are. If they learn this, they'll never break another branch in their life.

It also provided an opportunity for community elders to share the skills learned as youth in the rural south with those neighbors committed to rebuilding the City.

he's from the south, but he has done, you know, a lot of that type of thing we've all been up in this house since almost as long as I can remember and besides from a small garden, I don't know much about forestry, planning, land or any of that stuff

### **Aesthetic**

All of the organizations cited aesthetic goals as critical in their decision to participate in the URI/MSU program. Fortunately, this was also the area in which the projects were almost universally judged to be successful, at least to some extent. For example, participants indicated a great perceived improvement in the lots' appearances three months following planting (Figure 18). Though there was a slight drop on average at the six month evaluation, by nine and twelve months following planting, the improvements were regained and surpassed. Conversely, although the groups report a dramatic improvement in whether the lots are an "eyesore" at three months following planting their project, these gains erode consistently over time. The groups' reports of the conditions of the lots prior to planting improve again at the 12th month (Figure 19).

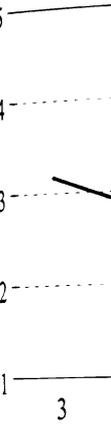


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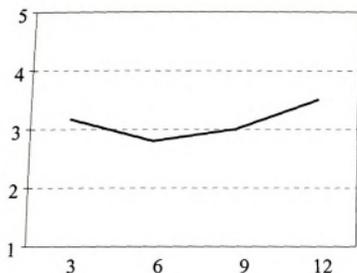


Figure 18: Assessments of Achievement of Aesthetic Objectives

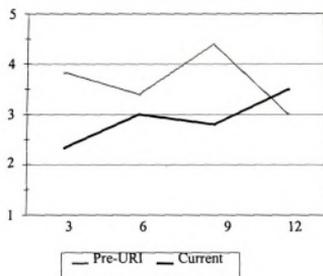


Figure 19: Pre- and Post-URI Assessments of Lots as an Eyesore

For some groups, the visible change in the community immediately after planting was disappointing given the amount of effort that went in to the projects.

I expected a bigger impact- at the end it didn't seem like as much of a change as planting so many trees should have done

While recognizing the amount of work that was necessary, however, other groups felt that the projects made an enormous difference in the appearance of their communities in light of the condition of the sites prior to planting.

There was a hell of a lot of work, there were about 4 lots together that were vacant. No six, I'm sorry, six together that were vacant over there and when we did that and uh there was a transformation from being overgrown full of junk and everything to clean, we got it cleaned, we got it cut, and it looked nice, it really did, and we planted the trees and that looked nice.

One of the most dramatic descriptions of the aesthetic impacts of the community forestry projects came from the President of the Georgia peaches describing her groups' community orchard.

It was beautiful... It looked just like a lawn with fruit trees on it. It was really beautiful, it really was and this was

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what we were working at... I'm so glad that it happened we saw the value of it and we saw it produce so we know it wasn't a complete failure because all those trees were blooming and it was a beautiful sight so um, even though it wasn't completed the way we really wanted it to, I think that in the near future, it might...

## **SUMMARY OF RESULTS ASSESSING THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL**

Table 23 provides an overview of the results pertaining to the conceptual analysis presented above in light of the hypothesis originally presented at the end of chapter 4. As illustrated in that table, implications of the data for the conceptual model are mixed.

### **Community Cohesion**

Community cohesion was commonly identified as a concern among program participants, influenced by political, economic and social factors as the municipal level. There were signs of consistent improvement throughout the program, illustrated through the increased sense of cooperation among neighbors and evidence of increasing frequency of community events among some participant organizations who frequently used their URI/MSU project site as a collective gathering area. Additionally, the identification of shared concerns through the community forestry activities and improved local land use provided an opportunity to create and demonstrate cohesion among neighbors.

The sense of attachment to the community, measured through attachment to neighborhood and city features, was also fairly positive. The factors which contributed most strongly to the sense of community attachment were; neighborhood associations, the history of African American leadership in the city, cultural festivals and "special places" such as Greek Town and Belle Isle. Responses regarding the importance of schools,

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Table 23: C

### Research Question

Q1) Does involvement in participatory development activities contribute to increased community cohesion and attachment?

<u>Hypothesis</u>	<u>Outcome*</u>
1a. Participants will report an increasing attachment to neighborhood among local residents.	0
1b. Participants will report an increasing attachment to the City among local residents.	0
1c. Participants will report greater attachment to the neighborhood than to the City among local residents.	0

Q2) Does involvement in participatory development activities contribute to improved organizational capacity?

2a. Organizations will report an increased number of participants over time.	+ (in planting and short term)  0 (long term)
2b. Organizations will report increased level of diversity (age and gender) among participants.	+
2c. Participants will report an increased average length of membership.	0
2d. Participants will report an increased average number of hours contributed.	0
2e. Participants will report greater development of leadership skills among a wider percentage of members.	0
2ei. Participants will report holding a greater number of leadership positions.	0
2eii. More participants will report having held such positions.	0

\* + = positive results, - = negative results, 0 = mixed or neutral results

Table 23: Overview of Results of Conceptual Analysis

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Table 23:

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2f. Is there evidence of improvements in strategic planning and consensus building skills?

<u>Hypothesis</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
2fi. There will be evidence of increased consensus around the group mission statement or shared vision.	+
2fii. Participants will report increased consensus with the group's choice of activities.	+
2fiii. Participants will report increased success of activities and campaigns.	+

Q3) Can the sense of organizational empowerment be enhanced through involvement in participatory development?

3a. Organizations will report increased networking with other similar situated organizations.	+
3b. There will be evidence of increased individual and organizational sense of empowerment.	+ (individual)  0 (organizational)
3c. There will be evidence of increased actual empowerment through changes in local conditions consistent with collective objectives.	0
Outcomes for specific organizationally-identified objective categories	+ (Aesthetic and Safety)  0 (Participation and Social/Other)  - (Subsistence and Economic)

Table 23: Overview of Results of Conceptual Analysis (cont'd)

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neighbors, local and city events, local organizing and sporting events were more mixed and varied greatly across groups. However, none varied significantly over time as a function of participation in the URI/MSU program.

Respondents were generally satisfied with their neighborhood as a place to live and with the sense of community there. While these factors did not change significantly over time, there were differences between the groups. There were also positive correlations between participants' satisfaction with the community as a place to live and their attachment to block clubs, local events, artistic and cultural venues and history of local organizing. This finding may support Wandersman's (1981) hypothesis that local organizations mediate the relationship between individuals and the broader community as those who are most engaged in local activities and organizations appear to be most satisfied with the local community. Furthermore, those who reported a stronger sense of community among their neighbors also reported a greater appreciation for the history of African American leadership, stronger attachment to the city and greater satisfaction with their neighborhood as a place to live.

These results are promising in terms of their implications for the participant organizations. Most evidence a general and growing sense of cohesion among participants. However, because few of these indicators changed over time as a function of participation in the URI/MSU program as expected, their implication for the utility of participatory development in contributing to improved community cohesion is less promising. The opportunity to explore explanations for this discrepancy between expected and observed results is, unfortunately, limited by the small sample size. It may be that participatory development does not influence that particular component of the

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model. However, given the range of correlations between participant's sense of community or community satisfaction and the indicators of attachment, it is also possible that there are differences in perceived cohesion among participants based on their level of attachment or cohesion and level of engagement in the community. A larger study could explore whether participatory development is perceived as having differential impacts on cohesion by members at varying stages of involvement with local organizations (e.g. non-members, peripheral members, core members and leaders). For example, perhaps leaders and core members think more strategically in terms of organization building and see opportunities to identify collective concerns as positive opportunities to build cohesion whereas others become more aware of dissatisfactions and problems through that process and perceive less cohesion as a result. However, while the evidence provided by the current study gives rise to these questions, it is beyond the statistical utility of the current sample to respond to them.

### **Organizational Capacity**

Changes in organizational capacity were measured by several characteristics such as the existence of and consensus around an organizational mission, changes in membership and in leadership, strategic planning and organizing skills. Discussion of an organizational mission was not collectively well represented in the focus group discussions. However, there is general recognition of the importance of a shared vision and the opportunity to establish one through participation in the URI/MSU planning process.

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There was much greater discussion of the influence of the program on membership. Participation objectives, most notably in terms of increased age and gender diversity, were reportedly achieved over time and generally attributed to participation in the URI/MSU program. While few groups reported great increases in their overall membership numbers, some reported that their participation rates remained constant in the face of external events or internal conflicts which they felt would have threatened their membership were the program not providing a sense of continuity and collective purpose at that time.

Concerns about overburdening core members were substantiated for several groups, although others reported success in moving some peripheral members to core member status, offsetting such inequities for those organizations. There was also a fairly strong sense that the program contributed to improved organizational and strategic development skills.

## **Organizational Empowerment**

### **Sense of Empowerment**

The sense of internal democracy among some members, related to the potential conflict between individual and organizational empowerment raised by Speer and Hughey (1995), was reflected in discussions regarding the sense of shared agenda setting and the chilling effect of overly dominant leadership. While participants differed in terms of how democratic they felt their organizations were generally, there was some evidence that the URI/MSU process ensured an opportunity for all participants to influence the development and design of the community forestry projects equally.

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However, some groups reported that time and funding constraints impeded their ability to use the projects to expand on this positive effect. Thus, while the program may have contributed to greater parity between individual and organizational empowerment, this effect might have been better generalized to non-members and peripheral participants if the groups had greater opportunity to use the program as a community building tool.

The results indicate that there was a significant change in individual's sense of empowerment but no change in their sense of organizational empowerment based on Zimmerman and Zahniser's (1991) quantitative scales assessing political empowerment (PE) and political capacity (PC). These results are consistent with Saegert and Winkel's (1996) hypothesis that involvement with collective community change efforts will positively impact individual sense of empowerment. However, they are troubling in terms of the organizational impacts of the URI/MSU program.

Individual scale items and responses during focus group and group interview discussions were more promising. For example, group discussions indicated that there was a general sense of disempowerment among local residents who felt that 'nothing would ever change' in their communities which was positively influenced by the visible improvements created through community forestry and other neighborhood beautification efforts. Similarly, while individuals were more likely over time to agree with the statement that political leaders reflected the interests of the wealthy and powerful, they were also more likely to believe that their could successfully mobilize necessary city services.

The great majority of the discussions centered around access to resources. The results indicated a generally positive impact on the availability of human resources,

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evidenced by the improved diversity and increased core memberships as well as improved organizational and leadership skills reported by some groups. Results related to material resources were more mixed. One group reported a significant improvement in land values in the neighborhood as a result of their community forestry project coupled with other efforts to improve the appearance and safety of the community. However, most groups reported difficulties in getting sufficient access to water to maintain their projects, though some used that shortfall as an organizing tool to mobilize the support of the City and of non-member neighbors building their network of contributors. There were no significant changes in inter-organizational networking with sources of technical assistance with the exception of the Wayne County Cooperative Extension Service which offered project maintenance and composting workshops for participant organizations. Ironically, this was the only outcome criteria established by the program staff. There was, however, positive inter-community networking both among URI/MSU participant organizations and between those groups and other supportive community-based organizations.

### **Actual Organizational Empowerment**

Results of the assessment of actual organizational empowerment were fairly positive, although there were strong differences between the groups in terms of how successful the projects were in meeting community-identified objectives. For example, participants consistently reported that the lots were safer and less dangerous after planting the URI community forestry project than they had been before. However, there were

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Short-term participation goals were met, as were efforts to increase the diversity of membership. However, the number of active members did not increase as desired and core members continued to feel overburdened as a result. These results may be especially important because some core members reported a reluctance to take on additional activities because they already felt over committed. Thus, distributing tasks equitably across the membership and mobilizing new core membership from the broader community will be critical for these groups to continue their work. Several groups did report that the URI/MSU program did facilitate the process through which peripheral members became active participants.

Subsistence and economic objectives were not achieved through the community forestry projects within the evaluation period. However, two groups did hold plant sales and were able to recoup their maintenance-related expenses while others chose to redistribute the plants to beautify additional vacant lots. Furthermore, while the project most directly focused at subsistence objectives, the Georgia Peaches' community orchard, was not producing sufficiently to meet commercial objectives, community response fruit growing in the local community was enthusiastic. In addition to the indirect economic benefits of improved land values, reports included that local children were beginning to take ownership in preventing vandalism of the site.

The groups universally reported improvements in the appearance of their project sites, especially immediately following the planting. Some reported that the positive impacts on the aesthetic quality of the neighborhood improved the sense of efficacy and

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### **Implication**

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potential for ongoing and future community improvement among residents. There was also evidence that the projects did contribute to the development of safe shared community space which provided the opportunity for increased contact with and participation of non-member residents in community events.

### **Implications for the Conceptual Model**

The reconfigured conceptual model, presented in Figure 20, illustrates the implications of the results for the conceptual model's propositions regarding the role of participatory development in facilitating the process of organizational empowerment. Although the direct relationships among community cohesion, organizational capacity and organizational empowerment can be derived from the literature, testing those relationships would require structural equation modeling or path analysis, both of which are beyond the capabilities of the current data to support.

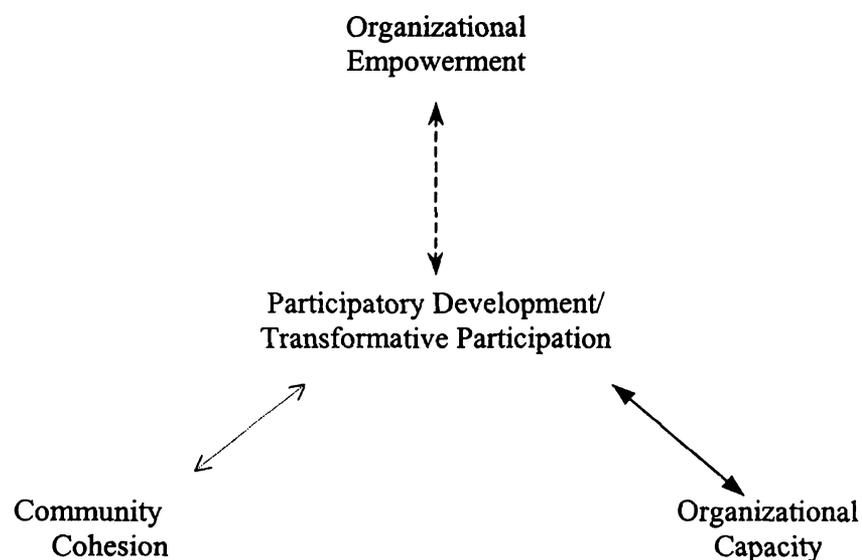


Figure 20: Evidence of conceptual relationships

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In the reconfigured model, darker or more solid arrows indicates stronger relationships. For example, there was weak but positive evidence of a relationship between participatory development and community cohesion, indicated by the light dotted line and hollow arrowheads designating that relationship. Had the Crabapple and Burning Bush block clubs participated in the evaluation process, it might have been possible to draw a comparison between groups seeking specifically to create community gathering spaces as a cohesion-building and recruitment tool and others to determine whether cohesion could be intentionally engendered through participatory development. However, the organizations participating in the full evaluation process seldom included non-organizational cohesion among their primary objectives and reported little change beyond the increased sense of cooperation among residents and more frequent neighborhood events in some cases. Conversely, as indicated by the solid line and bold arrows, there is strong evidence of the utility of participatory development activities in contributing to organizational capacity including factors such as strategic planning, participation in certain kinds of events and activities and increasing age and gender diversity.

There were generally positive results for organizational empowerment, indicated by the dashed line and semi-bold arrowheads. For example, while SOE was not significantly changed over time, participants reported a greater sense of individual empowerment and of the ability of their groups to organize on the community's behalf in the face of inadequate provision of city services. There were also quite positive effects in facilitating actual organizational empowerment reflected through the ability to directly influence community/living conditions. The strongest evidence for this outcome was

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reflected by reports of improved neighborhood and project site aesthetic quality and safety. There were, however, more mixed results for outcomes relating to forest products such as subsistence and direct economic benefits.

**CHAPTER 8**  
**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

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Among the critical concerns for participatory community forestry partnerships identified within the literature were whether they upheld the values of transformative participation (Nelson and Wright, 1995; Gaventa, 1980), community-driven partnerships (Lane, 1997; Arnstein, 1969; Wandersman, 1987; Peiris, 1997) and local control (Lineberry, 1989; Cernea, 1985; Rebugio, 1985). Throughout the current study, these themes have underlain all aspects of the evaluation, exploring the extent to which the Urban Resources Initiative program and its partnerships with community-based organizations in Detroit were able to embody these principles while using local vacant land resources to address the concerns of local organizations. The content analysis of focus group responses generally indicates that the URI/MSU program did reflect the principles of participatory development. For example, comments from participants indicated a general sense of the researcher as accessible and accountable to the community. These characteristics address the concerns of Arnstein (1969), Peiris (1997) and Chambers (1995) based on their observations of community participation in development efforts based on a more conventionally technocratic approach.

In fact, the level of confidence a number of participants expressed in the program and the related influence of the University's presence on participation raises a concern that the program and the researcher's presence may have carried undue weight in the partnership, challenging the ideal of developing community-driven solutions to locally-identified problems. However, there were no indications from that commentary that participants felt the imposition of external control by the researcher or the program. One notable exception was the sense of members of the C.K. Maple association that they were unable to utilize their customary organizing strategies or to bring all of their members

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into the planning process because of grant-related time constraints. These limitations also affected the opportunity for the group to build widespread support for the project in contrast to many of the other organizations, potentially reinforcing power distinctions between core members and less active members or non-member residents.

Similarly, while most participants felt their groups were able exercise an appropriate level of control over their participation in the program and decisions about their community forestry project, a member of the C.K. Maple association identified some constraints arising from the allocation of financial resources. His suggestion that funds either be distributed as mini-grants or disbursed over time so groups could control the allocation of the funds to cover plant materials as well as maintenance and related costs should be considered by future efforts in this area. Following this suggestion could improve on the sense of control and self-determination, both central to the concept of participatory democracy (Roelofs, 1998,) participants derive from participation in future community forestry efforts, whereas maintaining professional control over economic resources raises important concerns regarding the dimensions of power within the partnership.

Characteristic of a true partnership (Arnstein, 1969; Fawcett, Paine-Andrews, Francisco and Schultz, 1995; Small, 1995,) most leaders did indicate a sense of shared responsibility for the program and its related activities, including both positive and negative aspects of the planning and implementation. For example, the President of the Star Magnolia block club clearly felt responsible for the waning participation among their membership, whereas the President of the Forsythia neighborhood association credited the balance between the group's commitment and labor and the program's provision of

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materials and assistance for their project's successes. Throughout the discussion, participants evidenced a sense of control over the decision-making regarding their community forestry projects and their participation in program-related activities.

One aspect of the program the President of the Forsythia association found to be most supportive was the provision of plant materials at no cost to the participant organizations. By so doing, the program avoided reinforcing the inequities between community-based organizations reflected in differential access to resources (Nelson & Wright, 1995; Pretty and Scoones, 1995; Minkler and Pies, 1997) in contrast with those programs requiring financial contributions of participant groups which he cited as reinforcing those differences. Through his comments about the barriers cost sharing approaches pose for smaller organizations, the Forsythia President indicated appreciation for the efforts to ensure equal opportunity for groups to participate regardless of their size or financial resources as well as to ensure access to necessary resources for the groups that did participate. Several of the other groups also indicated a sense that the program provided access to the necessary resources. Many cited the Community Resources Manual and other technical assistance efforts as skill-building benefits of participation in the program. Others, including a student member of the Star Magnolia block club and a member of the C.K. Maple association, felt that the addition of a more formal educational component focusing on urban environmental education might be beneficial both to the likelihood of achieving project objectives and in recruiting additional participants. These proposals are consistent with the responsibility of researchers and development professionals to utilize their privileged position and resulting access to resources and information to the benefit of community participants (Fawcett, Paine-Andrews, Francisco

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and Schultz, 1995; Pretty & Scoones, 1995; Fischer, 1997). The URI/MSU program sought to fulfill this responsibility through its technical assistance and other provisions, resisting common assumptions that urban residents lack environmental awareness in light of Taylor's (1990) work. However, these participants have suggested that offering environmental education programs specifically geared to urban settings may well be an area where community forestry has a valid contribution to make for those groups who identify an interest in further developing that expertise or recruiting youth participation.

Overall, the levels of achievement of project-specific objectives were more mixed than were the assessments of the program's adherence to participatory methodologies. For example, while group membership numbers were generally reported to be unchanged over the long term, there were demographic shifts consistent with group objectives. Increasing participation among men and younger residents in order to expand on the range of activities they could undertake and the perspectives represented among their membership were widely identified objectives for the community forestry projects. These participation-related objectives were reportedly met during the implementation phase. It is possible that, just as the program participants intended, younger residents and men who participated in implementation activities perceived the contribution they could make by helping the groups meet the need for physical labor in the new community forestry projects. These presumptions would be consistent with both Haeberle's (1987) and Florin and Wandersman's (1987) theoretical assumptions that residents will participate when they feel their contributions and skills are necessary for the success of an organization's activities. Once involved, some apparently perceived additional areas where they could further contribute to the organizations and were drawn into regular

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meeting attendance. Consistent with the presumptions of the members of several groups and the statements of the student participants in the Star Magnolia block club, youth participants were particularly drawn in by the opportunity to participate in the environmentally-related projects which may have altered their perceptions of the community groups willingness to take on issues of importance to them. The groups also report increasing child and youth oriented activities, which may also have provided new channels through which younger residents could become involved.

Unfortunately, other project objectives geared at increasing intergenerational cooperation, such as the community bakery plan initially proposed by the Georgia Peach block club, have yet to be achieved. This and the other subsistence-oriented projects were only partially implemented due, at least in part, to the higher levels of ongoing involvement required by gardening and other subsistence-oriented activities. This may be a critical area where urban and rural community forestry efforts differ. In contrast with conventional technocratic approaches or those seeking to contractually mandate tree upkeep, the participatory development approach strives to address local objectives within the cultural, social and economic reality of the communities involved and the settings within which they live. Unlike rural areas where subsistence-based activities are often central to community life, they are perceived as peripheral for these groups. When major events such as the Detroit tornado or the death of core members intervene, as they did for several groups over the course of their involvement in the program, the organizations necessarily take hiatus from project maintenance. Accepting this reality and attempting to utilize species and design projects that can withstand such periods of neglect may be

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critical to the utility of forestry-based participatory development approaches to address these objectives in urban settings.

In contrast to subsistence goals, which sometimes took a back seat to other community priorities, economic objectives which may meet similar concerns in the urban setting where most subsistence needs are met through market exchanges, remained important outcome criteria for many groups initially hoping to address such objectives. Unfortunately, few groups met this objective to the extent they were hoping. The President of the Georgia Peach block club did report a surprisingly significant increase in property values following the implementation of their community orchard. While certainly the URI/MSU program cannot take primary credit for this dramatic improvement, the President does attribute it to their focus on beautification and land reclamation projects, including, but not limited to, their community orchard and the related removal of several abandoned homes. Some groups, most notably the Quince association, were able to hold plant sales and raise enough money to offset most of their maintenance costs. For the remaining groups, however, the economic requirements of project maintenance necessitated personal contributions or diversion of resources from existing organizational budgets given the failure of the projects to generate economic benefits.

Given the failure to derive sufficient economic benefits from the projects to offset maintenance costs, the C.K. Maple association and the Star Magnolias shifted their objectives to maximizing the aesthetic impacts of the projects by transplanting the trees to vacant lots throughout their communities, as the Forsythia association initially intended. While these plans were being developed at the time of the final interviews, so

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no report on the success of those efforts is available, evaluations up to that point indicated that the projects were almost universally successful in meeting the aesthetic objectives of the organizations. While these may seem like superficial benefits at first, especially given the range of issues faced by participant groups, they were identified as primary objectives by all seven participant organizations, in part because of the prevalence and dangers posed by illegal dumping which has decreased on all of the project sites and been eliminated altogether on many. Aesthetic improvements are also central to the improving economic conditions reported by the Georgia Peach block club as well as to social benefits such as the increased availability of community gathering spaces and children's activities. As a result, many of the groups consider these improvements to be critical successes in their ongoing neighborhood-improvement and community building efforts.

Most participants credited this success to the efforts of their core members and their families. In the case of the Forsythia association where the family of one core member took on the majority of responsibility for watering and maintaining the community nursery site until it was well established. The availability of such a reliable core group of members is vital to the success of most community groups and contributes to an organization's ability to recruit new members (Speer & Hughey, 1995; Bobo, Max & Kendall, 1991; Haeberle, 1987). Many groups hoped to expand this core through their participation in community forestry activities. Several, including the Quince and Forsythia associations and Star Magnolia block club, reported that this objective was met through their group's participation in the program. However, some reported an over reliance on their core members, both in planning activities and to take up the slack when recruitment efforts failed to keep pace with the maintenance requirements of the projects.

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Some members of the C.K. Maple association, for instance, expressed concern that their already over-burdened core would end up having to take responsibility for the project. They later reported that their concern was born out.

For the Quince association, these difficulties were exacerbated by an unusual combination of factors. The project was planted on land belonging to the new President who, as a core member and the participant with the most formal training in gardening and natural resource management, reportedly ended up with almost sole responsibility for the majority of maintenance activities. While the group, including the President, made this decision because it would ensure access to water and other necessary resources and afford increased security for the project, the program could have taken steps to prevent the negative outcomes. For example, provision of formal environmental education and technical assistance workshops earlier in the process may have helped to disseminate maintenance skills and reduced the dependence of the group on this leader to carry out those tasks.

These concerns are directly related to the organizational development goals cited by a number of the participant groups. For example, the President of the Quince association noted the necessity of defining more formal leadership positions and establishing committees responsible for each of the group's principle programs to provide the necessary structure to ensure critical tasks were accomplished. While finding members to fulfill each of these roles might pose a challenge, this proposal might also be one way to ensure that each participant is able to become deeply involved with those efforts of greatest interest. Furthermore, this structure might help to ensure that the group directs its energy and resources toward the efforts with the greatest support among

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members. As the President of the Georgia Peaches recognizes, those efforts which the members truly support are likely to be the most successful. These presumptions are consistent both with the tenets of participatory democracy (Roelofs, 1998; Barber, 1984) and with Wandersman's (1987) ecological model of participation in community which, among other factors, presumes members will make the strongest contributions to those efforts consistent with their own values and visions.

Identification of the activities and programs that meet these criteria can be a challenge for some leaders, however. As noted by a member of the C.K. Maple association, there is always a danger that strong leadership can become a form of dominance, eventually leading to an erosion of community support. In some cases, the presence of entrenched leadership invested in maintaining their position within the community can be a powerful barrier to building participation. Conversely, members of the Star Magnolia block club and the C.K. Maple and Forsythia associations all identify reliance on democratic process and an opportunity to influence the organizational agenda as critical to building such investment among the broader membership, in accordance with Barber's (1984) description of the democratic community. Furthermore, according to mobilization of support theory (Blake, 1998; Finkel, 1984), such approaches may help to build a shared vision or mission among organization members because each participant has had a role in determining the group's objectives and goals. The resulting widely shared vision may further contribute to additional membership recruitment, consistent with the reciprocal effects of a number of the organizational development factors as illustrated in Wandersman's (1987) model.

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As acknowledged by a number of participants, particularly those in leadership positions, building consensus around organizational objectives is frequently perceived as an important objective for any group activity. The resulting sense of unity and cohesion contributes not only to increased membership, but to the sense of commitment and ongoing support of existing members who build a sense of mutual respect based largely on a shared commitment to the community, regardless of individual differences. These sentiments were reported by the leaders of the Georgia Peach and Star Magnolia block clubs as well as the Forsythia and C.K. Maple neighborhood associations. However, the same groups evidence concern that ongoing demographic changes in Detroit, leading to increased representation of seniors who are often dedicated members, but with sometimes limited physical abilities, and the high rate of resident turnover will interfere with this process. For example, a member of the Star Magnolia block club discussed the need to reestablish trust with new residents in order to build their commitment to the neighborhood and then to the block club.

Establishing a sense of mutual dependability and shared vision may, however, be one important mechanism through which such community-based organizations become mediating institutions which foster a sense of empowerment through the benefits of collective effort (Green, 1997; Speer & Hughey, 1995; Florin & Wandersman, 1984; Wandersman, 1981). Indeed, members of the same organizations frequently reported the strongest sense of mutual responsibility and duty to participate in regardless of the contributions of other residents or likelihood of success. As these trends indicate, the results regarding political empowerment were, in general, quite encouraging. For example, while respondents were more likely to believe that government representatives

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were preferentially serving the powerful, over time they were also significantly more likely to believe that their group could mobilize city services on their own behalf. These responses were especially prevalent among members of the Quince and C.K. Maple associations.

Such access to city services proved to be a critical issue for the URI/MSU participant organizations. The limitations faced by the Star Magnolia block club, for instance, originated with the failure of the Department of Public Works to fulfill its cooperative maintenance agreement. As a result, the problematic initial conditions were never alleviated which made working in that site a much greater challenge than many of the other groups had to face. Groups that were able to draw on more extensive community, governmental and external networks reported that they were better able to mobilize city services as well as to find alternatives where necessary. For example, the Quince and Forsythia associations were able to turn to one another as well as to draw on close relationships with Wayne County CES. Similarly, the C.K. Maple Association has an extensive network of external supporters. Thus, as proposed by Speer and Hughey (1995), the so-called 'empowered organization,' with extensive community and organizational networks, may well be better situated to achieve the shared vision of its participants. It is evident throughout the group commentary, for instance, that varying levels of city support has important implications for programmatic outcomes.

Furthermore, the responsiveness of some city departments to appeals from the researcher versus their resistance to requests for services from community residents may reveal the City's entrenchment in conventional technocratic priorities. For example, while the Georgia Peach block club had tried for seven years to have the vacant and

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dangerous houses removed from their community, it was not until the sites were chosen for their community orchard through the URI/MSU program that the work was completed. Thus, while this may be an instance where, consistent with Haerberle's (1987) and Fawcett, Paine-Andrews, Francisco and Schultz (1995) admonitions, the program fulfilled its obligations to the communities to use its privileged position with the City on their behalf, it is critical that the municipal authorities refocus their efforts in support of local initiatives. Creating a sense that residents can count on the support of their own government officials to act in support of their efforts would facilitate an increased willingness among such highly committed community organizations to take on responsibility for improving local conditions, in contrast with the current situation in which many report the City as one of the most consistent barriers to their efforts.

These results are especially intriguing in light of the results of the assessment of community building aspects of the URI/MSU program, such as community attachment. For example, the participants consistently report stronger attachment to the city than to their own neighborhoods, although attachment to neighborhood is consistently positive as well. This trend that holds true both across groups and across time. This finding would seem to conflict with the assumptions of Hummon's (1978) work as well as that of Rivera and Erlich (1995) that 'community' for urban residents is represented by the neighborhood which mediates their relationship with the city at-large. However, the results do reflect strong attachment to neighborhood associations, the history of African American leadership, to the City's arts and cultural festivals and to 'special places' such as Greek Town and Belle Isle (all of which are widely recognized as important factors in the collective identity of Detroiters) as opposed to the municipal agencies with whom the

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participants frequently expressed some frustration. In comparison, neighborhood-based features such as block clubs, schools, churches and neighbors were associated with more moderate levels of reported attachment. Interestingly, the item assessing participants' perception of the sense of community in their neighborhood was more strongly correlated with both the composite and citywide attachment scales than with the scale measuring attachment to the neighborhoods. In fact, there was a negative relationship between perceived sense of community and respondents' general satisfaction with the community as a place to live!

This relationship makes more sense if one considers that members of these active neighborhood improvement organizations might be quite apt to have a strong sense of community while being well aware of the challenges they face in their effort to realize their shared vision for their community. Similarly, given their awareness of those challenges and of the number of residents choosing not to participate in efforts to improve local conditions, participants might perceive an especially low sense of community among non-member residents in their neighborhoods. In any event, there were no significant changes in attachment to community at either level as a function of involvement in the URI/MSU program, though participants did report consistently improving levels of cooperation among local residents, another potentially important measure of community-building.

The overall success in addressing important aesthetic, short term participation and demographic diversity-oriented objectives seem to have generated conditions favorable for related longer-term social, organizational development and community building benefits. Most groups only attribute these changes to the program 'somewhat,' however,

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with the exception of the Forsythia association which did credit many of these positive organizational outcomes to their participation in the program.

### **Research Limitations**

The most immediate concern for the validity of this study is the small sample size. As discussed above, this resulted from the pilot nature of the URI/MSU program itself as well as from the necessity for some of the groups to drop out of the longer term research processes because of extenuating concerns that arose locally. While the small number of groups allowed for the establishment of close partnerships and the collection of in-depth qualitative data, the implications of the outcomes for the understanding of organizational empowerment must, as a result, be considered exploratory.

Furthermore, some groups reported difficulties arising from the time commitment required to complete the entire research process. It is, therefore, possible that participatory development without the participatory research component is more appropriate to this type of program in this setting. Conversely, this response could be the result of gaps in the participatory process, despite the generally positive assessment of this aspect of the research effort. For example, while the groups were involved in all aspects of project design, implementation and assessment including those which determined the outcome criteria for the current research, they were not directly involved in decisions regarding research design or in identifying research products that could be directly beneficial for their objectives. As a result, they had no cause to be invested in the research process.

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## CONCLUSIONS: LESSONS OF THE CURRENT STUDY

### ...in Theory

The results of the assessment as they pertain to the conceptual model were mixed at best. The initial presumption, that participants in community-organizations would indicate a strong sense of attachment to their neighborhoods and that such cohesion would become stronger, both within the groups and across the broader community, through their involvement in participatory development activities was not born out by participants in the URI/MSU program. In fact, while groups did report involvement among new members, respondents consistently reported a stronger sense of attachment to the City than to their immediate neighborhoods. While the preceding discussion attempts to explain that unexpected result, it is difficult to presume the validity of the model given that these residents, most of whom are core members in the local organizations, exhibit a certain level of disillusionment with the sense of community within their neighborhoods. On the other hand, their assessments of the sense of community and of their attachment to the local organizations are consistently quite high, perhaps validating Wandersman's (1981) presumption that community organizations mediate the relationship between urban residents and the larger community. In this case, it is possible that these residents find the cohesion they feel is missing in their neighborhoods through their collective efforts as members of the community groups. Given the lack of assessment of community cohesion among residents outside of the organizations, it is difficult to ascertain whether cohesion within the group increased as a function of participation. Such an analysis might be an important contribution for future studies in the mechanisms of organizational empowerment.

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Despite that limitation, the results indicate more support for the other elements of the conceptual model. While there were some mixed results in the assessment of the URI/MSU program's influence on organizational capacity, the majority of factors indicated some improvement as a function of participation. Groups reported increases in the numbers and diversity of participants, greater consensus around the group mission and choice of activities and improved networking with other organizations as a result of their involvement in participatory development activities. Furthermore, through responses to the focus group discussions, there is evidence that the evaluation process contributed to strategic planning and leadership development. Finally, while there were mixed results in assessments of actual organizational empowerment (AOE), largely as a function of biological limitations of the projects (e.g. not yet achieving economic maturity) and challenges posed by external forces (e.g. the failure of city agencies to protect the communities' land tenure) there were positive outcomes on several critical elements of AOE which may serve as the foundation for increasing positive outcomes over time (for example, improvements in aesthetic and social conditions may contribute to improved economic conditions and organizational participation.) There were also statistically significant improvements in individual sense of empowerment and on key items assessing respondents' sense of organizational empowerment (SOE) over time. Thus, while the model requires further corroboration in both larger samples and across a broader range of settings, it does seem to contribute to a growing understanding of the processes of organizational empowerment and the positive role of involvement in participatory development activities in that process.

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### **...in Practice**

The lessons of the current study should contribute to an improved understanding of the forms of support that are most necessary from community and governmental partners and those areas best served by professional community-forestry development practitioners. In these areas, future professional partners should be more proactive in firmly establishing relationships for technical assistance. Furthermore, several participants suggested that some components, such as the education and training opportunities and funding allocation processes, could have been more tailored to the individual communities in accordance with their organizing strategies and areas of expertise. Future efforts might be more successful if such options were made available for community participants to choose among as needed. This suggestion thus contributes to a better sense of the balance between concerns about technocratic domination of community partners and fulfillment of the professionals' obligations to community participants.

Similarly, consistent with discussions of the need for professionals to be willing to support the political agendas of participant community organizations (Fischer, 1997; Minkler and Pies, 1997; Rivera and Erlich, 1995), it is critical for development practitioners to ensure that municipal authorities and other power holders provide the technical assistance appropriate to their positions and establish accountability to community participants. Were local government supportive of a more participatory approach, municipal government 'teams' could be utilized through which communities could define their own goals and work with the appropriate personnel to realize that vision rather than being constrained to activity within a particular department. For

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example, within Detroit, teams could consist of personnel from several city agencies (such as Parks and Recreation, Forestry and Public Works) available to work with groups interested in vacant land reclamation using a range of options and strategies. City foresters in particular could facilitate more participatory management by participating in partnership with community groups on the development and implementation of community nurseries; perhaps donating trees and training to community groups in exchange for return of a percentage of the trees at maturity for transplant to parks and as street trees. Such an approach would eliminate cost of management of city nursery in favor of community empowerment and, furthermore, could provide opportunities for local youth and/or master gardeners among others to develop skills within the nursery to ensure a cadre of skilled nursery managers across the city available to disseminate those skills neighborhood-to-neighborhood. This would represent an approach more similar to PRA and other local-to-local participatory development strategies used in Southern nations. It would provide communities a cost-free opportunity to develop such a program and the necessary skills and technical assistance to realize their visions. Such an approach to environmental and natural resource management may be a more viable alternative for community empowerment than, say, the American Community Renewal Act in that it does not support the efforts of already polluting and exploitive external corporations. Nor does it run the risk of funding people to improve their skills just to leave the community, as was the concern with the Model Cities program, because the opportunity for the application of those skills is within that community. Instead, this support for local initiative toward self-reliance and local development will become increasingly important as globalization persists and resources to address highly localized

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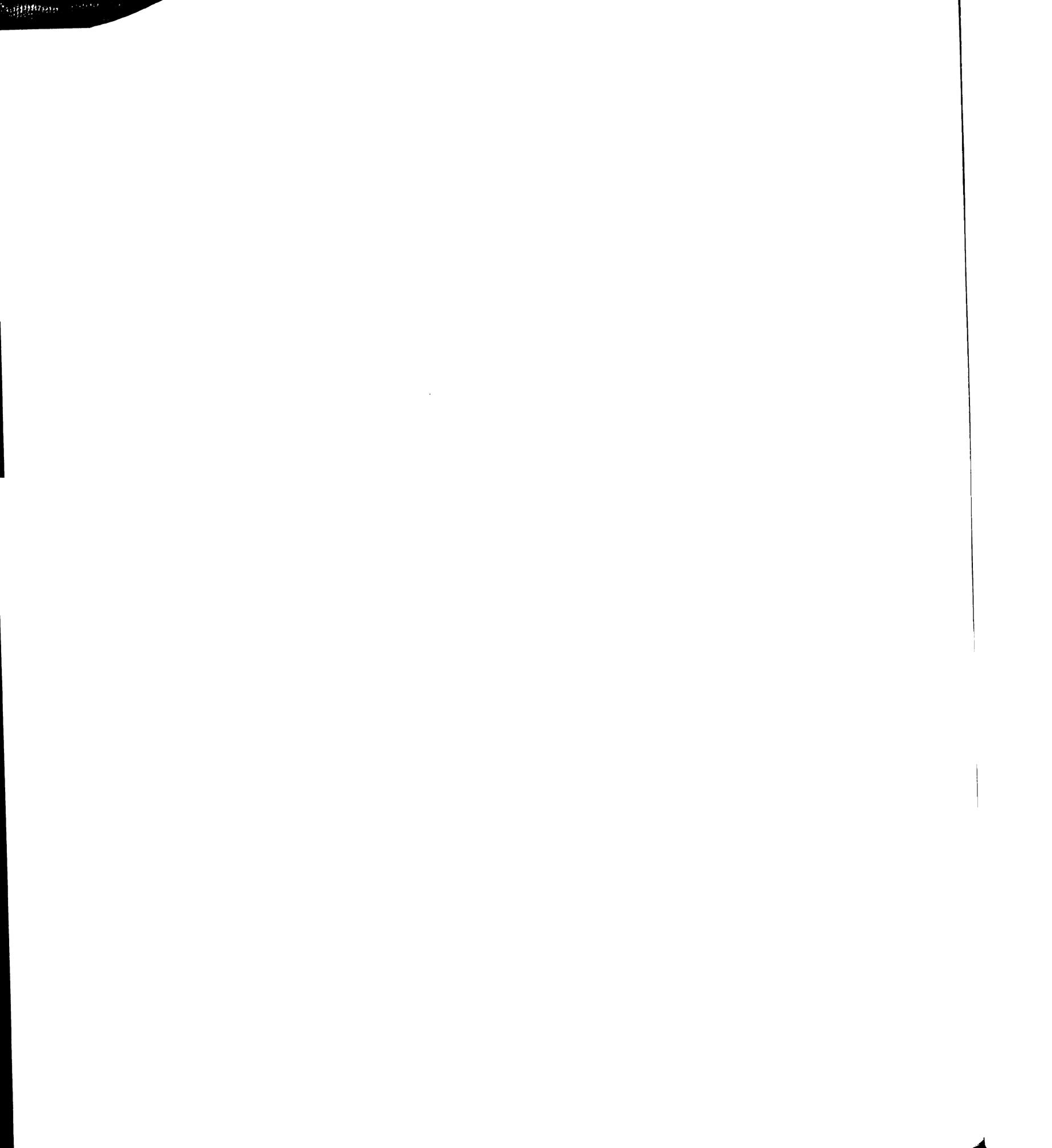
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conditions become ever more scarce (Roeloffs, 1998; Sandstrom, 1994; Salop, 1992; Boggs, 1987, cited in Boggs, 1998).

Overall, a review of the results indicates that, while there were certainly important areas where the URI/MSU program failed to fulfill the hopes of participant organizations, most experienced moderately positive changes in their project-specific and organizational development objectives. Ultimately, none of the difficulties identified by participants would be impossible to overcome and the projects do show promise of addressing a number of major concerns shared among community members.



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**APPENDIX A: MEASURES**

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**BLOCK CLUB/NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION  
URI NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

- 1) What are some of the needs you see in this neighborhood? (\$, better cohesion, food, etc).
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2) What are some of the problems you see in your neighborhood? (lack of participation/interest- among particular groups (i.e. youth, parents, etc), gangs, drugs, renters, etc).
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3) What are some of the special interests of your neighbors? (gardening, recreational, historical, etc).
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 4) What projects has your block club engaged in before URI? (curb painting, neighborhood clean-ups, economic-fundraisers, youth programs).
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 5) What resources does your block club/neighborhood have? (number of active block club members, folks with specific skills and interests- i.e. resident gardener, etc, church available for meetings or willing to donate photocopies, etc, diversity among residents, etc).
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 6) What types of projects would your group be interested in? (Subsistence-AF, Economic- nurseries, x-mas trees, etc).

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## QUARTERLY GROUP INTERVIEWS

How did your group first hear about the Urban Resources Initiative?  
(don't read options)

- another URI group
- URI presentation in neighborhood association
- through participation in the McIntire-Stennis survey
- DPW (i.e. George Lowe, Vanessa Hines)
- Project Pride (i.e. Sebastian Wade)
- Community Development (i.e. Barbara Washington)
- other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Why was your group initially interested in participating in URI? (don't read options, check all that apply) (prompt: What types of interests in your block/community were you hoping to meet?)

economic      0      1      2      3      4

- to raise money for the block club
- to raise money for residents.

subsistence   0      1      2      3      4

- (to grow our own vegetables, etc)

safety            0      1      2      3      4

- wanted a safe place for children to play.

aesthetics      0      1      2      3      4

- wanted to improve aesthetics of the lot(s)
- wanted to improve block/community appearance
- by improving eyesore lots
- by growing plants for transplanting throughout community.

social            0      1      2      3      4

- wanted a place for community activities.

participation 0      1      2      3      4

- wanted to increase participation in community organization.

other            0      1      2      3      4

- Please Specify: \_\_\_\_\_

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how well has each of your initial goals been met through your participation in the URI program? 0=not at all, 4=as well as possible

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Since planting your URI project, have you observed other benefits to having the project in your neighborhood?      yes    no

If so, what other benefits?

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Have you had any problems in your community because of your URI project?    yes    no

If so, what problems?

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How many of you had ever planted a tree or shrub before URI?

How many of you would like to plant more trees or shrubs in your neighborhood now?

Why or why not? (record any responses given while asking questions above)

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Since planting your URI project have you had people participate in your community organization who had never participated before?    yes    no

told other community organizations about URI?    Yes    no

been in contact with any professional organizations other than MSU for help with your URI project?    yes    no

If yes, what organization(s)

Michigan Nurserymen's association

Michigan Timber Association

Michigan Christmas Tree Grower's Association

Other (specify): \_\_\_\_\_

been in contact with the Detroit Department of public works?    yes    no

been in contact with the Detroit City Foresters?    yes    no

been in contact with Wayne County Cooperative Extension Services?    yes    no

been in contact with any other Detroit City agencies?    yes    no

If so, which one(s): \_\_\_\_\_

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Before planting your URI project, how safe did you feel your neighborhood was?  
Since planting your URI project? (1 = very unsafe, 5 = very safe)

Before URI					Since URI				
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

Before planting your URI project, did you feel there were enough activities for children in your neighborhood? Since URI?

Before URI					Since URI				
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

Before planting your URI project, did you feel the vacant lots in your community were an eyesore? Since URI?

Before URI					Since URI				
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

Before planting your URI project, did you feel the vacant lots in your community were dangerous? Since URI?

Before URI					Since URI				
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

Before planting your URI project, did you feel that the neighbors here worked closely together to improve conditions in your neighborhood? Since URI?

Before URI					Since URI				
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

Before planting your URI project, did your community organization have to limit its activities because of lack of money? Since URI?

Before URI					Since URI				
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

Dear ,

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## SAMPLE PARTICIPANT COVER LETTER

July 31, 1996.

Dear ,

Thank you for volunteering to participate in the evaluation of the Urban Resources Initiative community forestry program of the Department of Forestry at Michigan State University (URI/MSU). The evaluation procedure includes completion of a written questionnaire by individual volunteer participants followed by a group discussion of how participating in the program has affected your organization.

Please take a moment to fill out and return the enclosed questionnaire in the pre-addressed, stamped envelope provided at your earliest convenience. Most people take approximately 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire. For most items, you will simply circle the correct response, although a few do require written answers. If you need more space to respond to any questionnaire item(s), please use the reverse side of the page. If you do so, please be sure to indicate the question number with your response.

Also enclosed is a self-addressed, stamped postcard. In order to ensure that you understand your rights as a participant in this study and that you have consented to participate voluntarily while continuing to protect the confidentiality of your responses, I would like to you sign and mail the postcard separately, but at the same time, that you mail your questionnaire. Please mail both the postcard and your completed questionnaire by **[date]**. Once I have received postcards from each participant, I will compile the responses to form the agenda for our group discussion.

We have tentatively scheduled the group discussion for [meeting time] at [meeting place]. Please call me at [office phone number] if this meeting time is inconvenient for you or if you have any questions, comments or concerns about the questionnaire or the evaluation procedures you are being asked to complete.

Thank you once again for your participation,

Kerry E. Vachta, Project Manager  
Urban Resources Initiative

CON

I consent to participate in the study  
(URUMSU) conducted by  
Kerry Vachani, MD, PhD,  
of the study research team at  
University. My participation is voluntary and I understand that I may be asked to provide any item or information that may be kept entirely confidential.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\*Sent to

### CONSENT FORM FOR INDIVIDUAL MAIL QUESTIONNAIRE\*

I consent to participate in the evaluation of the Urban Resources Initiative program (URI/MSU) Information collected will be included in reports on URI/MSU including Kerry Vachta's doctoral dissertation. I know that I or my organization can request a copy of the study results by contacting the Department of Forestry at Michigan State University. My participation in this study is voluntary and I may choose not to respond to any item or to stop participating at any point in the evaluation process. My responses will be kept entirely confidential.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\*Sent to participants on self-addressed stamped postcard

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## INDIVIDUAL POST-PLANTING QUESTIONNAIRE

- 1) Are you currently an officer (i.e. President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, etc) of your block club or neighborhood organization? (check one)    yes            no

1a) If yes, what position(s) do you currently hold?

---

- 2) Have you ever held any other positions in the block club or neighborhood organization?            yes            no

2a) If yes, what positions have you held and during what years did you serve in them? (use back of sheet if additional space is needed)

<u>Position</u>	<u>Year(s) held</u>	
(for example <u>Vice President</u> )	<u>1987</u>	<u>-1989</u>
	<u>19</u>	<u>-19</u>
	<u>19</u>	<u>-19</u>

- 3) For how long have you been a member of your block club or neighborhood organization?

\_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months

- 4) Why did you join the group initially?
- 
- 

- 5) About how many hours per month do you spend on block club or neighborhood organization work per month?            \_\_\_\_\_ hours per month

- 6) In comparison with before your group participated in the URI/MSU community forestry program, would you say more people, about the same number of people or fewer people attend your group's meetings?

More                            About the same                            Fewer

- 7) Would you say more women, fewer women or about the same number of women attend your group's meetings?

More                            About the same                            Fewer

- 8) Would you say more men, fewer men or about the same number of men attend your group's meetings?

More                            About the same                            Fewer

- 9) To what extent do you feel that any change in the participation of men or women in your group is because of your participation in the URI/MSU program?

Entirely    Very much            Somewhat            Very little    not at all

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17) Have there been any activities or programs your group tried that didn't work out so well?

yes no

17a) if yes, what were they?

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17b) Why do you think your group wasn't able to succeed in that (those) effort(s)?

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18) Has your group ever had trouble getting things done because of a conflict between members?

yes no

18a) How did your group address that situation?

---

---

19) What do you believe are the 3 most important skills or characteristics of a successful block club or community organization?

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

20) How well did the skill or characteristic you listed as #1 above describe your group before participating in the URI/MSU program?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all	Very little	Somewhat	Pretty well	Perfectly

21) How well does the skill or characteristic you listed as #1 above describe your group now?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all	Very little	Somewhat	Pretty well	Perfectly

22) How well did the skill or characteristic you listed as #2 above describe your group before participating in the URI/MSU program?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all	Very little	Somewhat	Pretty well	Perfectly

23) How well does the skill or characteristic you listed as #2 above describe your group now?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all	Very little	Somewhat	Pretty well	Perfectly

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24) How well did the skill or characteristic you listed as #3 above describe your group before participating in the URI/MSU program?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all	Very little	Somewhat	Pretty well	Perfectly

25) How well does the skill or characteristic you listed as #3 above describe your group now?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all	Very little	Somewhat	Pretty well	Perfectly

26) To what extent did your participation in the URI/MSU program contribute to any change in your group's skills?

1	2	3	4	5
Entirely	Very much	Somewhat	Very little	Not at all

26a) How did participating in the URI/MSU program affect the skills of people in your group?

---

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27) What are your group's greatest strengths?

---

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28) What skills or resources do you think your group would need to be more effective?

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29) If there was a problem in receiving some service from the city, do you think people on the block could get the problem solved?

1	2	3	4	5
Absolutely not	Unlikely	About a 50/50 chance	Probably	Absolutely

30) All things considered, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with this block (or neighborhood) as a place to live?

1	2	3	4	5
Very Unsatisfied				Very Satisfied

31) In the blank next to each item, please indicate how much you would miss each of the following if you moved out of your neighborhood according to the following scale:

1= Would miss a lot    2= Would miss slightly    3= Would not miss at all

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> neighborhood schools        | <input type="checkbox"/> my church   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> my neighbors                | <input type="checkbox"/> my block club   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> my neighborhood association | <input type="checkbox"/> neighborhood events (block parties, picnics, garage sales, cabarets, etc) |

other: Please list below:

---

32) In the blank next to each item, please indicate how much you would miss each of the following if you moved out of Detroit according to the following scale:

1= Would miss a lot    2= Would miss slightly    3= Would not miss at all

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> museums, theaters and other artistic venues (DIA, the Fox Theater, etc)   | <input type="checkbox"/> African American leadership   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> city wide holiday celebrations and annual events (i.e. Thanksgiving parade, 4th of July, children's day, the auto show) | <input type="checkbox"/> sporting events (i.e. Tigers and Red Wings games)                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> tradition of organizing (labor unions, community organizing, etc)   | <input type="checkbox"/> cultural festivals  |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> special places/areas of the city (Greek Town, Mexican Village, Belle Isle, etc) |

Other: Please list below:

---

33) How strong is the sense of community in your neighborhood?

1	2	3	4	5
non-existent	Very weak	Neutral	Somewhat strong	Very Strong

34) What was your initial impression of the URI/MSU program?

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35) What impacts did you feel it would have on your group and your community?

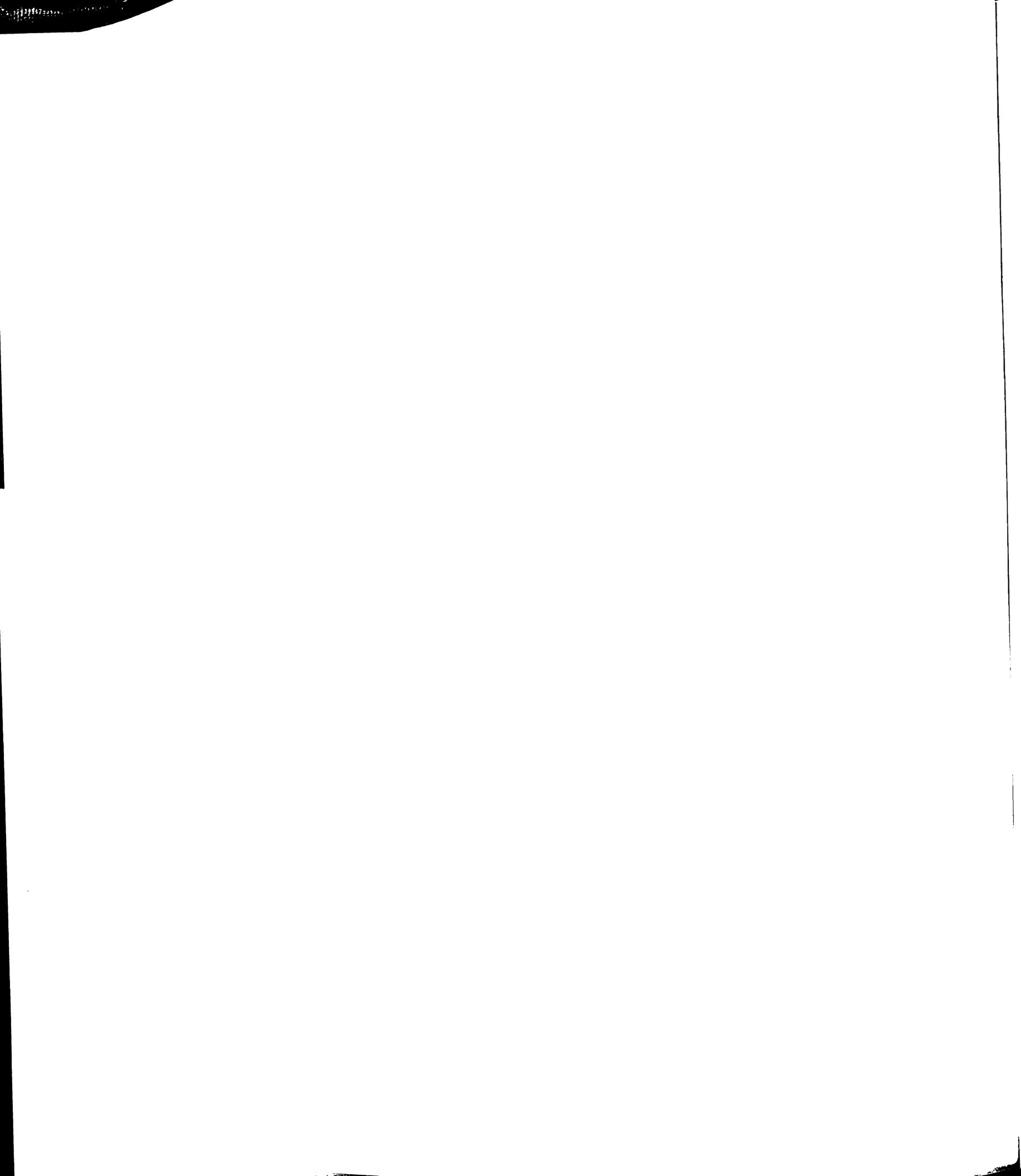
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36) What were your group's initial goals for the project?

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37) How likely did you feel it was that the group would achieve those goals?  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
Impossible    Very Unlikely    Unsure    Very Likely    Certain

38) How well do you feel those goals have been met so far?  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
not at all    not very well    Somewhat    Pretty well    Completely

39) What concerns did you have about participating in the program?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

40) Has your group encountered any problems due to your participation in the URI/MSU program?  
yes                      no  
40a) if yes, please describe:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

For each of the following please circle the appropriate response:

1 is "strongly disagree," 2 is disagree, 3 is agree and 4 is "strongly agree"

41) I don't think public officials in this city care much about what people like me think.  
1                      2                      3                      4  
Strongly disagree    Disagree    Agree    Strongly Agree

42) The way people vote decides how things are run in this city.  
1                      2                      3                      4  
Strongly disagree    Disagree    Agree    Strongly Agree

43) People like me don't have any say about what the local government does.  
1                      2                      3                      4  
Strongly disagree    Disagree    Agree    Strongly Agree

44) Money is the most important factor influencing public policies and decisions.  
1                      2                      3                      4  
Strongly disagree    Disagree    Agree    Strongly Agree

45) Political leaders can generally be trusted to serve the interests of the citizens.  
1                      2                      3                      4  
Strongly disagree    Disagree    Agree    Strongly Agree

46) It doesn't matter which party wins the election; the interests of the little person don't count  
1                      2                      3                      4  
Strongly disagree    Disagree    Agree    Strongly Agree

47) Political leaders usually represent the special interests of a few powerful groups and rarely serve the common needs of all citizens

1	2	3	4
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

48) It isn't important to get involved in local issues when you know your side doesn't have a chance to win.

1	2	3	4
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

49) A good many local elections aren't important enough to bother with.

1	2	3	4
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

50) So many other people are active in local issues and organizations that it doesn't matter much to me whether I participate or not.

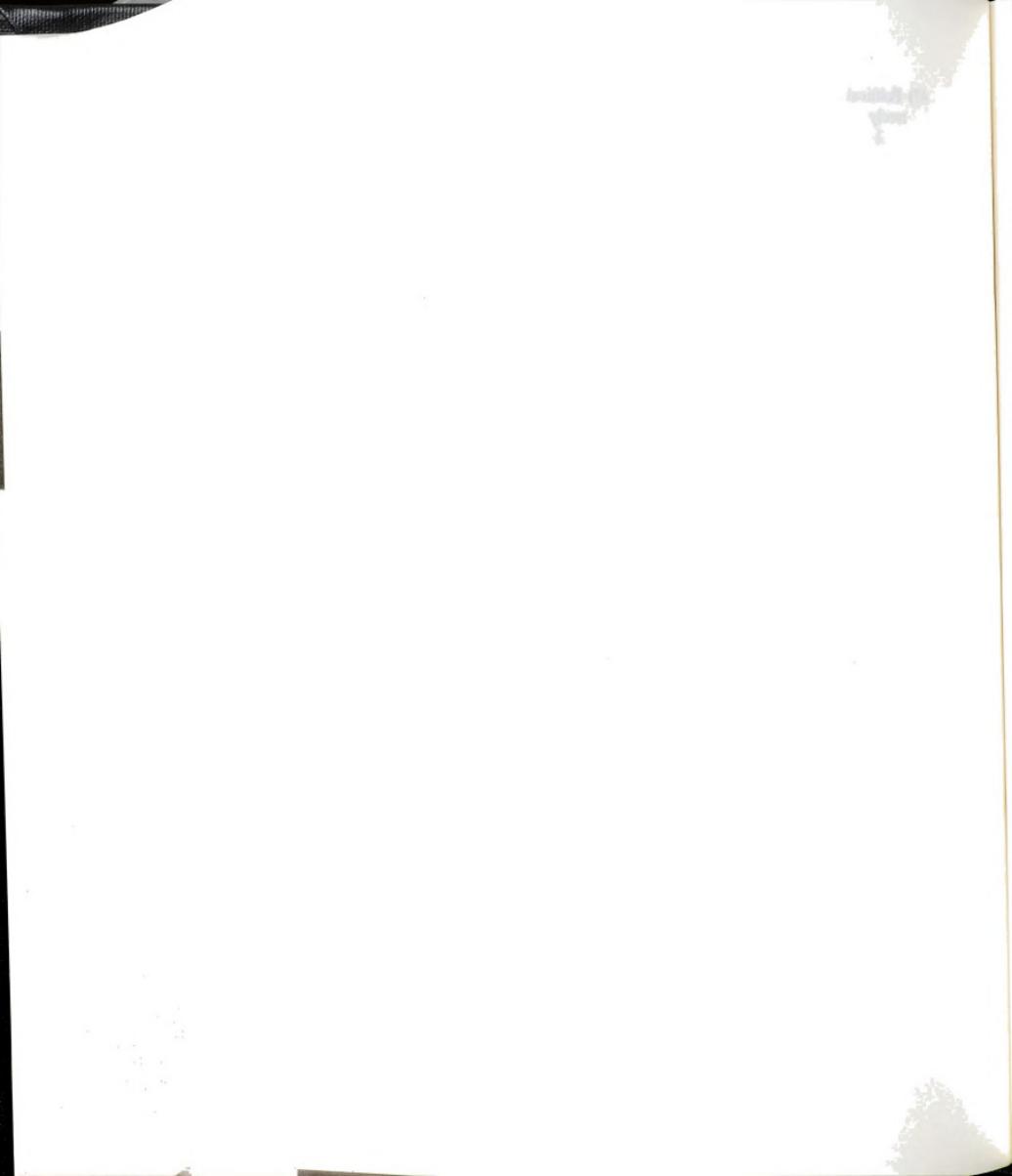
1	2	3	4
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

51) If a person doesn't care how a local issue is decided, s/he shouldn't participate in the decision.

1	2	3	4
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

52) Participation in neighborhood organizations is important no matter how much or how little is accomplished.

1	2	3	4
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree



## FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDELINES

Prior to intro-

I will assume that, by attending this meeting, each of you agrees to participate in the evaluation of the URI/MSU program and is aware of your rights and responsibilities as a participant as described on the consent card you received with your questionnaire last month. If anyone needs a reminder of those rights and responsibilities, I have brought a copy of the statement which we can pass around.

- ensure all participants are present and seated,
- ensure those who do not consent to be filmed are seated with their backs to the camera.

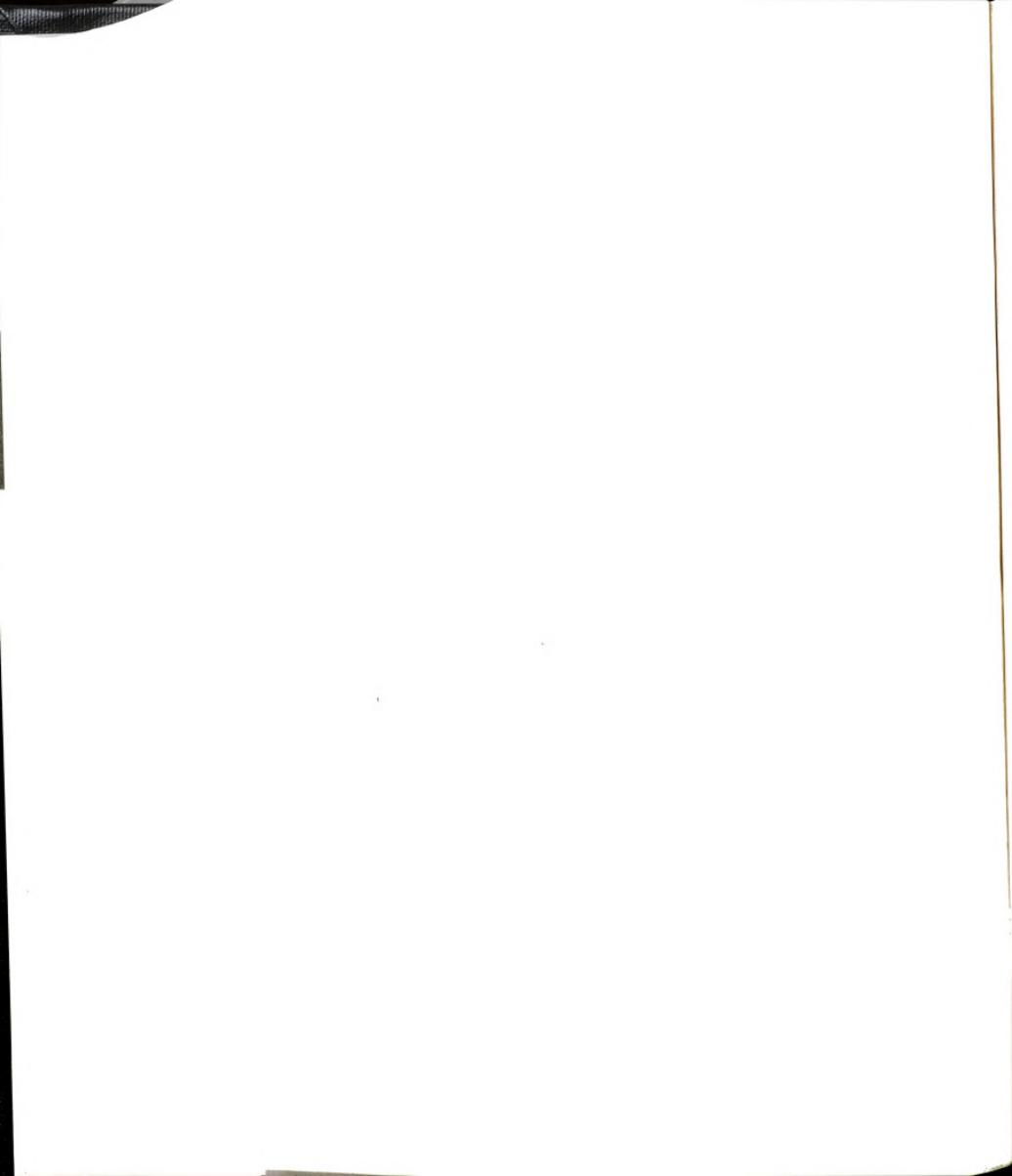
Intro

In traditional urban forestry programs design and management decisions are made by forestry and natural resource professionals (i.e. what tree species will be planted on which blocks and in which parks, etc) Some professionals are beginning to recognize the importance of incorporating local participation. However, in most of these cases the professionals retain decision-making power and control.

The purpose of the Urban Resources Initiative program is to demonstrate the potential for small scale community-driven, community-owned forestry projects which are developed in partnership between local residents and university personnel for the purpose of directly meeting the interests and needs defined by community members. While we believe that community-driven approaches have a much greater potential for directly addressing the concerns of local citizens, no one yet knows what impact participating in such an effort might have on the community partner organizations because URI is the first program in the United States to use such a community-driven partnership approach in the United States. Based on our quarterly evaluations, we believe the program has been successful in terms of creating projects based on community interests and the program has received a great deal of attention- for example, we have been asked to develop the Urban and Community Forestry volunteer coordination program for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. However, if we are going to move in the direction of being more community-driven, it is important to understand any consequences (both positive and negative) the program might have for community participants and to modify the approach as necessary to ensure the best possible outcomes for the communities involved. That is the purpose of this study.

During the next two hours we will discuss:

- Your community's original vision for your URI/MSU community forestry project and evaluation of the project at this point
- Your vision of the ideal community organization and what role, if any, the URI/MSU program has played in your organization become more or less like that vision.
- What the URI/MSU program could have done better/ how the approach can be improved in the future.
- Finally, there will be a period for any additional feedback, comments or questions.





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