INDIVIDUAL SPEAKER

Intervention Research in Education, Planning, and Social Movements: Towards Sustainable Urban Communities
John Harlow - Arizona State University

This intervention research created an information rich decision environment where participants could express and explain their opinions. In 2014, the City of Phoenix established the Citizens Committee on the Future of Phoenix Transportation, and tasked them with creating a new transportation plan for the city. During the committee meeting process, members requested a supplementary weekend workshop at which they would prioritize the transportation options presented to them by the Public Transit and Streets Departments. Based on existing relationships and involvement with the committee process, Arizona State University researchers had the opportunity to intervene in the workshop design. Rather than an unstructured gathering of all the committee members, the ASU team designed a step-by-step process in which city staff would lead five groups of 4–6 committee members through a game-like process. The cost of each potential transportation investment was projected by city staff and proportionally represented by a square game piece. Each piece was discussed in turn, representing individual transportation options that had been presented to the committee. The options in the plan remained on a game board of the same proportion, giving committee members a sense for the running total of their plan. This intervention workshop produced the first draft of the $31.5 billion transportation plan recently passed by the City of Phoenix, with survey results and interview anecdotes indicating high process satisfaction. Further, grounded theory analysis of the audio recordings from the workshop groups showed that committee had ample opportunity to express and explain their opinions about each potential transportation option.

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY

John Harlow is a postdoctoral scholar funded through MacArthur Foundation Research Network on Opening Governance at the Arizona State University (ASU) Center for Policy Informatics. His most recent work was the design of the prioritization workshop that produced the first draft of Phoenix's new transportation plan. John was previously a researcher for Reinvent Phoenix, which relied on public outreach to inform rezoning for increased housing and employment density around Phoenix's light rail. His other work includes co-development and instruction of the Sustainability Science for Teachers hybrid course in the ASU Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College, which received the 2015 ASU President's Award for Sustainability. John was also the Conference Director for the 2012 International Conference on Sustainability Science.