Planning a Sustainable Future for the Guadalupe Watershed Event

Albert Einstein University
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Introduction

On August 8th, 2014 an event on the future of the Guadalupe watershed was held at Albert Einstein University. During the two hour event, participants created projects that included timelines and actions for the sustainable future of the watershed.

GOAL
The event gathered various actors with an understanding of the state of the Guadalupe watershed. The goal of the event was 1. to get these actors working with other participants they had never worked with before in order to form new working relations and 2. to create actual working groups which would continue working on the projects they had created once the event had ended.

PARTICIPANTS
Comision Nacional del Agua (CONAGUA, National Water Commission), Comision de Cuenca Prensa Guadalupe (CCPG, Guadalupe Watershed Commission), Universidad Albert Einstein (UAE), University of Texas at Austin (UT), and other various local actors.
Event Plan

5 min: Alvaro Guerra, director of UAE, introduction
10 min: Cynthia Garfias, head of CCPG, introduction
10 min: Presentation of working tables and breaking out into groups
30 min: Work session 1
15 min: Check in with groups / brief presentation of working projects
30 min: Work session 2
15 min: Final presentation of projects

Working tables:
1. Overall Vision and Plan
2. Urbanization and Land Use
3. Education and Culture
4. Peri-urban and Urban Economies
5. Legal Framework and Public Policy
6. Infrastructure and Ecological Services
7. Reflection Table

Below: Planning Process
Rationale

The event was designed in order to accomplish the two primary stated goals.

Table Topics and Group Size:
The six topics were chosen in order to thoroughly address the main issues of the watershed. The number of tables created was based on the fact that we expected about thirty people to attend. This would create working groups of approximately five people. This seemed to be a good size, we thought it would ensure conversation and idea generation but still be small enough to give everyone the opportunity to participate.

Presentation of Working Tables and Formation of Working Groups:
After presenting the six topics, we made sure to ask the participants if there was an additional group that should be created in order to ensure we would be working on as many pertinent issues related to the watershed as possible. We also asked if any groups should be split up or combined to maximize productivity since we only had about one and a half hours to work. We did not give any guidelines as to how many people or who should be in each group. We wanted to the groups to form freely. We believed this would help in forming new working relationships and would also ensure that everyone would be happy and therefore more likely to continue working on the project in the future.
Rationale II

Working Sessions:
We wanted the working sessions to be as long as possible so that the groups would not only have time to create the overall idea of the project, but so that they would also have the time to plan concrete actions to get their projects in motion. During the first working session participants came up with the idea for the project, during the second session they planned actions and created a timeframe for these actions.

Check in with groups:
The purpose of checking in with all of the groups between the two working sessions was to give people the chance to move between the groups. If someone was interested in another projects, they could move over to this group. It also gave participants a short break and the opportunity to step away from their project and see what others were working on so they could start the second session refreshed and possibly with new ideas.

Final Presentation:
The presentation made each group’s project known to all participants so they can participate in the project if their desire.
How the event unfolded . . .

Introduction:
Alvaro first introduced the event. Enrique Juarez then gave a presentation on the Guadalupe watershed. The introduction was broken up by performances of regional Mexican dances and lasted about 30 minutes. Cynthia Garfias then introduced herself and also gave a very brief introduction.

Presentation of Working tables: The topics the UT faculty and students created were presented. None of the participants requested a new group be created or that the existing ones be changed. People divided into groups quickly. Group size ranged from 2 (excluding facilitators) to 7.

Working Session 1: Lasted more than thirty minutes, groups worked on forming the idea for the project. Alvaro kept tabs on how groups were doing to determine when to have the mid point check in. As expected, there we about thirty five participants, excluding UAE and UT students.

Check-in: Groups presented their projects. While there was some movement between groups, most participants returned to the same group for the second working session.

Working session 2: Groups worked on planning how to actually bring their project to life. Step by step actions with dates were determined.

Final Presentation: Groups presented their plan of action. Some groups did ask for help from other groups to realize their project.
Cynthia giving a brief introduction of the event.

Working tables, closest is the table working on urbanization and land use.

Public policy and legal framework working group.

Final presentation of projects.
Urbanization and Land Use

Working Table Plan:

This table’s project creates agricultural and artisanal co-ops to promote more productive land use.

This table also asked if members of the peri-urban and urban economies working group would like to help them work on the project. Several members of the group seemed highly interested.
All of the participants