

Visualizing Sustainable Solutions

Summary of the Silicon Valley SIMCenter Demo: Aug. 2017

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Where do we go to grapple with the critical issues of our time? Today's problems are more complex, interconnected, and nearly impossible to solve within our standard silos of expertise.

Fifty years ago Buckminster Fuller proposed the World Resources Simulation Center within the Montreal Dome for the 1967 World's Fair. He wanted to invite global experts to help solve hunger and poverty. In the ensuing decades our challenges have multiplied and business-as-usual strategies have proved to lead to dire consequences.

"Visualizing Sustainable Solutions" was organized by the Global Energy Network Institute and Silicon Valley Associates with sponsorship from the City of Palo Alto Office of Sustainability. Over four days, participant focus moved from global to regional to local perspectives on the questions of energy, water and transportation sustainability. The demo event used the Mitchell Park Community Center and set up international flags, ten working tables and projection screens around the room with a large DymaxionSM map and a San Francisco Bay regional map on the floor.

As founder and President of the Global Energy Network Institute, Peter Meisen welcomed guests each day with the SIMCenter mission, which aligns with the core question from Bucky's life: "How do we make the world work for 100% of humanity in the shortest possible time through spontaneous cooperation without ecological damage or disadvantage to anyone?" Using Fuller's design science method, the **SIMCenter is a tool that offers a better way to visualize and understand past trends, see future projections, explore options and ultimately makes smarter decisions more quickly.**

Initially participants were asked to clarify the status of global threats where we can have an impact - especially those identified by the UN Sustainable Development Goals. By day's end, we were visualizing the Top-10 carbon dioxide reduction solutions from Paul Hawken's book, Project Drawdown.

Day Three focused on the local problem that comes with too much success: transportation congestion around Palo Alto as thousands come and go into Stanford University and the Research Park. Gil Friend, Palo Alto's Sustainability Director, who has seen multiple presentations on the world's most livable cities, reported on lessons learned, resulting in his sharing the SIMCenter commitment: "*The World Resources Simulation Center is the next generation of the 'council fire.' It's an opportunity for people to sit around the fire, and in this case the fire is on these screens. We can gaze into it together and have a different kind of conversation that we haven't had before.*"

Author and organizational consultant Kimberly Wiefeling calls the SIMCenter a "**Mission Control for Planet Earth,**" noting that "**We have control rooms for space, war and business, why not one for global sustainability?**" Conference attendees agreed on the need for a SIMCenter in every major city, where the SIMCenter vision can be realized: "*To visualize sustainable solutions to global and local problems so society makes informed choices more quickly.*" It's an accelerator for best practices.

The Silicon Valley SIMCenter team invites your help to develop the full-scale model. They are seeking corporate sponsors, technology, funding, and a facility.



To get involved contact:

Peter Meisen
peter@wrsc.org
619-234-1088