Know our neighbors as we know ourselves

Develop hidden entrepreneurship based on assets in ward 3

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CONTENTS

Executive Summary

   In Spring of 2019, City of Urbana undertook pilot collaboration with Dr.Chan from University of Ilinois to work towards the design of a Survey for City of Urbana representatives and workers on data practices related to their work on developing quality of life programs, efficacy of such programs, and changes they have seen over time in the City of Urbana. In the class[1] students were assigned to the various contacts[2] and conducted research on current practices in participatory design, civic data research, and community data application.

   Yohta Shimizu, author of this paper assigned to the Community Development Department based on his interest and explored the city through the lens of community development, by interviews, analysis on public data of budget spent on buildings, and field research. Consequently, this paper seeks to propose an unexplored perspective and conversation based on the findings and discussions throughout the semester. Along with this proposal, the paper introduces several salient cases and methodology as a starting point of the next step. This paper intends to stimulate conversations such as:

- What kind of indicators should be used to measure the impact of community development?

-What kind of data should be collected?

-What methodology the city can take with limited resources?

-What is our community assets, and how we could incubate these assets for the future?

I hope this paper would be a good starting point to generate conversations, and consequently lead to a better quality of life of all the members in this community.

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[1] Overview of the class and syllabus can be retrieved from the following link http://scalar.usc.edu/works/ismdia-590-community-data---s2019/index

[2] Students chose from the contact lists of Police, Fire, Parks, Circle Academy/Cunningham Community Development, Public Works, Mayor's Office, and Human Relations Office.

Introduction

As companies pursue maximization of profits for their primary mission, improving quality of life is one of the most important roles the city government has to play within the public sector. This seemingly simple mission, however, comes with various dimensions and challenges.

When companies launch new projects or make new products, they usually have a specific type of potential customers in mind. The success of projects mostly depends on whether they can meet a customer's potential needs. That's why companies and marketing are inseparable. On the other hand, city governments can't choose their market. Although they may have a specific group of residents for a certain project, their long-term mission is to serve all the residents and stakeholders within the community.

No community is static, and our survey and interviews for various workers from city governments revealed challenges that the city government is facing to assess the dynamic needs of community members. Some of the challenges that they have are as follows[3]:

-What are the barriers that prevent people from providing information?
-What should be measured to assess the accurate needs of residents?

Along with these questions, the volatility of the community as a college town makes needs assessment more challenging. Students from the University of Illinois, a significant portion of Urbana's population, move in and out every few years. One of the interviewees from our survey, Maryalice Wu described this nature of the city as "town vs gown", which stands for General community vs University community.

None of these questions can be measured by a single indicator. We have to incorporate different sets of indicators and measurement to answer different questions. In the following, I'll try to address some of the potential approaches and insights to give us clues to work on these challenges.

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[3] Retrieved from the interviews conducted with Llorie Pearson, John Schneider from Community Development Department.

Literature Review

I will focus on four salient sources, which will be the foundations of my recommendation here.

1. Democracy Collaborative at the University of Maryland (2013) The Anchor Dashboard

"Anchor institution" stands for place-based institutions such as universities and hospitals that are tied to their surroundings by the mission. By nature, anchor institutions have more incentive to improve the long-term welfare of the communities in which they reside. This paper introduces a framework that can assist these institutions in understanding their impact on the community. In the paper they stress that the measurement tools should capture what is important to measure, not what is simply easy to measure, and propose two kinds of measurements :

1) Measures that assess conditions in the community.

2) Measures that assess institutional effort.

With these measurements, they use four categories (see appendix A for categories and indicators) with separate indicators. Although the dashboard is created primarily for anchor institutions, rich interview and cases from the other cities are worth reviewing. In particular, their sets of proposals for outcomes and indicators are a good toolbox for the small start.

2. Veenhoven, R. (2002). Why Social Policy Needs Subjective Indicators

…issues are typically intertwined and there is often a combination of material and phycological matters, and objective indicators tell only half the story. Measuring impacts of community development is inseparable from the dynamics of community members. In some countries, an objective indicator such as income was preferred to measure community development. However, This paper concisely summarizes the distinction between objective and subjective indicators and reminds us of the importance of utilizing both perspectives.

3. **Allison Powell. (2018). The data walkshop and radical bottom-up data knowledge. In Ethnography for a data-saturated world**

Subjective data become more insightful within the context of the community. Even if we were seeing the same sets of survey answers, insights we can observe from the data vary greatly

> *…data walk allows us to understand who is asking the questions about big data, and, further, lets us think about how data gets to be 'big' in the first place…*

depending on understanding of contexts of the community. Data walk proposed in this book chapter is a great methodology to understand how people were thinking about some of the same issues so that we can have deep insights and understanding of the community. According to Powell, who asks the questions that make it big (in size as well as importance) and how one might ask different kinds of questions. This approach allows us to collect more nuanced data with rich insights, and I will further elaborate on this methodology in the coming section and recommendation as well.

4. **Green, G. P. (2010). Building the Capacity for Development. In Mobilizing Communities**

Assessing 'needs' of the community has been unending challenges for the city. In this book, however, Green points out negative aspects of needs driven community development and proposes asset-based development as an alternative. In need-based development, there is a premise that a community has a problem and the professional has the answer. Often these professionals are outsiders of the community with fewer understandings of the context, and follow-up supports are limited. These factors have risks of making community dependent on external resources. On the other hand, asset-based development starts by mapping the strengths in the community. These include not only formal organizations such as schools and hospitals but also informal institutions like neighborhood watches. This book gives both the theoretical background and practical case studies to provide insights into how this asset-based development can work more effectively.

Methodology

In this section, I will briefly detail our methodologies and type of data we analyzed to clarify where my findings and recommendations came from.

Neighborhood data walk

In January and February, we conducted neighborhood data walk in Ward 3 as a pilot study. In this field research proposed by Powell (2018), we explore and define data from the perspectives of groups of citizens, who walk, observe, and record the relationship between data. Through the walk, we situated ourselves within the community, observed neighbors, and collected salient data points based on the observations. This is not a binary approach as opposed to top-down data analysis, that assuming we know what kind of data we analyze, but an alternative data collection methodology.
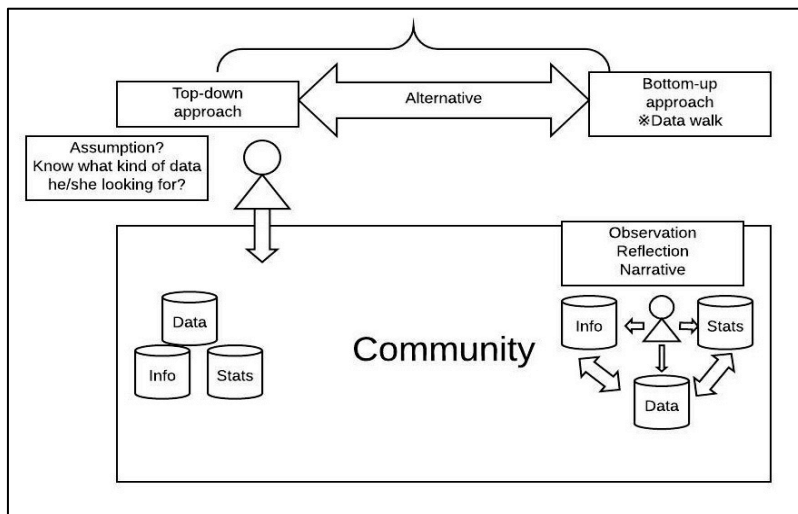
Image of data walk methodology, as opposed to conventional data analysis

News coverage analysis

At the middle of the semester, we were assigned to several city departments for further research and analyzed various news sources for relevant coverage in the past five years. News sources we covered were news media such as Daily Illini, The News-Gazette, and facebook group page run by the city government or Smile Politely. Since most of us were not local Champaign Urbana residents, this research gave us a historical view of the city by

analyzing the latest posting from city governments, and relationship among each news media. Some students noted that one news media referred to posts from the city governments and reusing them on their news.

Interview & Bibliography search

Based on assigned contacts from city departments, each student conducted two interviews with stakeholders from the city of Urbana. In each interview, students asked challenges and change the interviewee observed in Urbana over the years, and the type of dataset they work with. At the end of each interview, we asked interviewee search terms that represent concerns/challenges city face and conducted bibliography search based on these search terms. These interviews not only revealed a clearer picture of challenges they face, but also gave us insights on what kind of actions city governments done so far, and issues with the past approaches.

Public data analysis and visualization

After collecting qualitative data, we analyzed public data from Urbana's Open Data and visualized salient dataset for each project. Types of data we analyzed were Police Incidents, Nuisance Complaints, and Community Development Permits Issued. Not all the data is comprehensive with some errors, but I will present data visualization from Community Development Permits Issued in the following for the starting point for conversations.

Survey

In April, the survey was conducted for the workers in the city government of Urbana, coordinated by Dr.Chan from iSchool and Melissa Haynes at the Urbana Police Department. 51 respondents answered the survey of 28 questions. The survey question asked similar questions with the interview, such as challenges and changes respondents saw through their duties. But the survey collected data from various departments/offices of more than 5 departments, as opposed to a limited number of people interviewed. From the data, we can observe common challenges workers face in city government and more nuanced difference over various departments.

Findings

Correlation between economic development and revitalization of the city can sometimes be chicken or the egg dilemma. Economic developments can potentially attract incoming residents and vice versa. According to the City of Urbana 2005 Comprehensive Plan and dataset retrieved from Urbana Open Data website[4], the city has promoted commercial development of South-East part of Chrystal Lake Park area since early 2000 (see appendix B for detail) in the case of ward 3.

For the sake of visibility, I excluded seemingly unrelated and small-sized building types such as "Hospital" "Garage" or "Other".

City Government only record permit associated with a project

However, predominant perception of the area remains negative or poorly represented based on the survey conducted for city workers. For example, city workers gave us impressions of ward 3 such as:

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[4] Urbana Open Data website

https://data.urbanaillinois.us/Buildings/Community-Development-Permits-Issued/9rzq-mqbh

"I lived on Berkley for 15 years. It's a lovely area that I feel has always been poorly represented"

"Not somewhere I would go after dark"

Thus, seen from the city's perspective it appears that the economic development alongside Cunningham Avenue doesn't necessarily lead to a rejuvenation of the area.

On the other hand, however, we did also observe some voices that the area making certain improvements over the years and some see business potential in the area. Their living might not be observed from our daily lives and one

Our perceptions of the area are often come from what we see and feel, but not all the community members are visible.

interviewee[5] pointed out a certain group of a community such as Hispanics are underground. The other interviewee mentioned the social barrier that prevents new residents from engaging in local activities and employment. Not all incoming residents are students.

Mexican grocery store in Ward 3

There is a Congolese community in the area, and one student conducted an interview with owners of African grocery store[6]. They also help newcomers come to the States and told us that the community has limited resources to have an orientation or teaching the people how to do stay safe in the United States.

Depending on the perspectives of residents, the city has multiple dimensions of needs. Although experiments have made to measure the expectation and the needs of the community members, no single survey is enough to capture the dynamics of the community. In 2011, the city hired

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[5] Maryalice Wu from the representative of Ward 1 from City Council

[6] Memoir and Lisette, owners of The Best of Africa's Food Store

consulting company and published more than 139 pages of market study to guide the City as it seeks to enhance the vitality of Urbana's downtown. Nonetheless, two interviewees from the Community Development Department also mentioned that they rely on the census as a primary data source for their duty. They were also aware of the infrequency and impreciseness of the data, but they also think of census as at least better source than the other misleading data.

As made clear in The Anchor Dashboard (2013), "No indicator is perfect" (p.15), and we can focus more on data as a starting point and using them to find new perspectives and conversations, instead of ending point to measure needs.

Future Works & Recommendation

One step we can start small is to map out community assets. As Kretzman McKnight pointed out (1993), we tend to focus on negative aspects of the community by a conventional needs assessment. When we ask residents what they need, it is obvious that they will answer without any consideration for external factors. When the city conducted a survey for residents about their expectation for the places to spend more money on, movies and entertainment were ranked top, followed by books (see Appendix C for more detail). Although these are very attractive places in the town, these industries usually require a good amount of initial investment to start a business and are not always the realistic places the city can incubate in the short term.

However, if we map out the asset that we already have as a strong point, and asked ourselves what we can do based on these assets, we might see a different picture of needs. In mapping out assets, it will be preferable to include diverse participants including youth, seniors, people with disabilities. Green argued including (2010) various activities in this phase such as volunteer, hobbies, and caregiving in addition to standard labor market skills. The potential challenge in this phase is to encourage underrepresented residents to engage, as they sometimes do not think of them as an asset that can contribute to their community (Green, 2010). To include these people, rapport with the key person from various stakeholder groups will be necessary. The relationship with the Congolese community can be a good starting point. Understanding their visible/invisible barriers and solving them one by one can be a foundation for trust. As mentioned in the introduction, friction has existed in the community, and this is a common issue in a college town. The Democracy Collaborative stressed in their paper (2013) that equitable partnership can help build trust, and these can be facilitated through investments that build the capacity of local partners to be stable, effective, and strong.

According to survey data collected from city government, budget ranked as top challenges they face in their department, followed by staffing and

communication. Considering the nature of the volatile community as a college town and limitation of financial/human resources, frequently conducting comprehensive needs assessment may not be realistic. Instead of pursuing the scale of assessment, one alternative would be to focus on analyzing the interpretation of the nuanced data, potentially collected from data walk that I introduced in the Methodology section. One of the strengths of data walk

is we can start small. As students in the Community Data class did, we can conduct this survey individually as one of the course project in the class, or fieldwork methodology for their paper. However, collaboration or feedback from community members is indispensable. Student's perspectives are not always practical. Although

The merit of collaborating with students here is that students often have different insights for neighbors, and this perspective potentially leads to community assets local people haven't realized.

students have a certain academic background, they are usually not aware of the contexts and dynamics of the community. Engagements of the local community members also reduce the risk of student fall into the utilitarianism that Scott (1998) described as 'seeing like a state'. Thus, if the resources meet for both ends, it will be more preferable to conduct this research with community members, so that data become more nuanced.

Community development and its measurement should be considered in tandem. But the granularity of assessments varies greatly depending on institutions to institutions. As argued in the Anchor Dashboard (2013), although most institutions assess their impact at the level of individual programs, the field lacks agreed-upon methods for measuring or evaluating their broader impact on addressing disparities in community economic development, public health, education, and the environment. Thus, we need several indicators and data source to capture the dynamic aspects of the community. Based on indicators attached in the appendix section, starting a dialogue such as which outcome should be prioritized can be an initial step. If any of the important data weren't collected this can be a time to have consensus on starting collect new sets of data.

Conclusion

  Data itself seems neutral and right. As Haraway (1988) described in her idea of situated knowledge, however, there are almost always contexts and interpretations exist. Thus, my premise is that there are no such things like perfect needs assessment. With this in mind, the goal of this paper is to leverage community assets collected from the recommendation, and use them as a starting point to start constructive discussions for the next step, such as improvement of quality of our life.

  Community, residents, students… There are many ways to represent individuals, and more or less we have the inclination to generalize and label a group of people we don't know. By this paper, I hope broad idea of 'data' became a group of person with personalities and faces, for many people as possible.

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<u>Appendix</u>

Appendix A

Anchor institution Community Benefit Dashboard

OUTCOME	INDICATORS	DATA SOURCE
COMMUNITY BUILDING		
STABLE AND EFFECTIVE LOCAL PARTNERS	• Existence of partnership center or community advisory board • Positive feedback from survey of service-learning/capstone partners • Civic health index rating	Institutional and survey data
FINANCIALLY SECURE HOUSEHOLDS	• Percent of households in asset poverty • Dollars spent on community financial education • Dollars and human resources directed to income tax filing assistance	Official records; institutional data
EDUCATION		
EDUCATED YOUTH	• High school graduation rate • Percent of students advancing to college or apprenticeship programs • Math and reading proficiency	Public school reported data
HEALTH, SAFETY & ENVIRONMENT		
SAFE STREETS AND CAMPUSES	• Dollars spent on streetscape improvements • Rates of violent crime • Rates of property crime	Institutional data, survey data, official records
HEALTHY COMMUNITY RESIDENTS	• Dollars spent on public health initiatives (e.g., clinics) • Number of grocery stores per zip code	Institutional data, official records
HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT	• Percent of carbon emissions • STARS index rating • Greenhealth index rating	Institutional data

Appendix B

Future land use map adopted by the city in April2005

ppendix C

Following charts are retrieved from the City of Urbana, Illinois Downtown Market Study, documented in March 2011 by a consulting farm Business District Inc.

https://www.urbanaillinois.us/businesses-5

The study was conducted as part of an update of the 2002 Downtown Strategic Plan, and 21-member Steering Committee representing City departments and local constituencies were guiding the project.

The charts are based on the web-based survey made between July 22, 2010, and August 13, 2010. The survey was distributed from August 17, 2010, through October 15, 2020, and 502 people responded to the survey.
City officials, Urbana Business Association, the Champaign County Chamber of Commerce and Convention and Visitors Bureau, and selected faculty, staff, and students at the University of Illinois circulated the link.
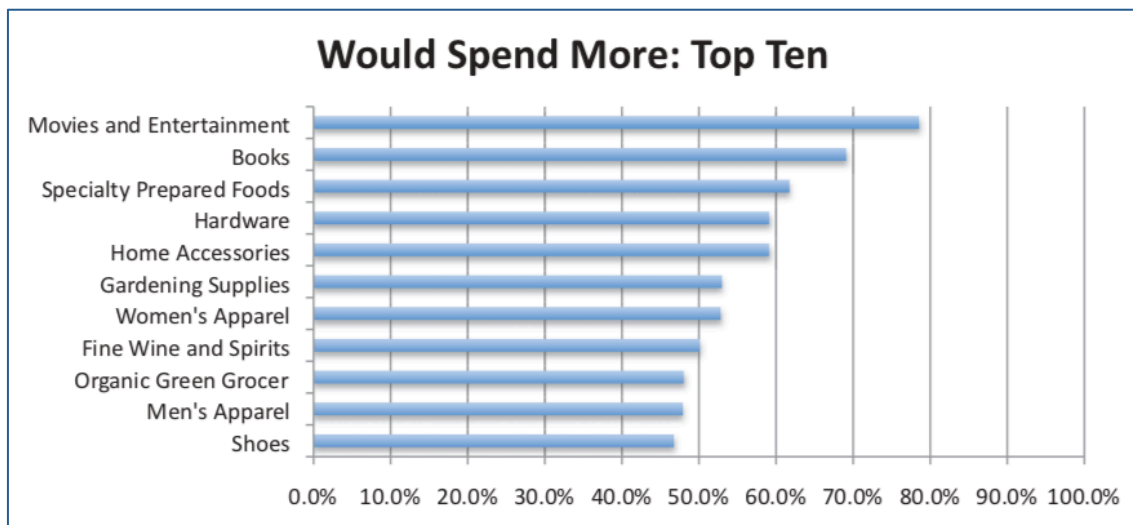

Chart of places respondents would spend more money on.