NNIPCamp Indianapolis, October 13, 2017

Session3 – Airbnb Data

Led by Rob Pitingolo - Urban/DC

Notes by Kathy Pettit

Present: Kathy Pettit, Rob Pitingolo, Anthony Galvan, Michael Williams, Lamar Gardere, Becky Zwicki, Ashley Williams, Jie Wu, Dabne Whitmore, Ryan Ferriman

Rob - Cities are trying to legislate, but they are flying blind because they don’t have the data to know what is going on. Furman did a study where they were official partners with Airbnb.

* <https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3048397>
* [https://www.wsj.com/articles/new-york-landlords-have-to-work-harder-to-profit-from-Airbnb-1507834113](https://www.wsj.com/articles/new-york-landlords-have-to-work-harder-to-profit-from-airbnb-1507834113)
* Urban is inquiring with Furman to learn more about the process

Anthony - we have not done any work around it. When I moved into my neighborhood, I didn’t sign up for living in a hotel. It is not a big deal in Dallas because we are not dense. It does affect some of the zoning. In my neighborhood, we are not allowed to have garage apartments.

Michael - In our city (Twin Cities), there is a big question about accessory dwelling units. . Loftium (<https://www.loftium.com>) In lieu of a down payment, you give a part of your equity, but you have to commit to renting. This is a big data gap.

Ryan - We have not looked at so far. I have not sensed a clear-cut animosity. In CO, there is a bigger concern around ski communities and vacation condos. It is an attempt to evade taxes - not quite the same concern.

Jie - We have plans to approach them to find out how many people approached them for hurricane relief. We are partnering more with private industry to get more data to inform decisionmaking. We have a relationship with Trulia and Zillow. They have been very generous in donating information to understand housing markets. We were not that lucky approaching Twitter (to find out how people use social media for rescue efforts). They charge for data.

Rob - What’s the best way to approach ? It might be easier for a limited request.

Becky - I am just interested because one of my neighborhood just built an apartment to rent out to Airbnb.

Lamara- the city of New Orleans did have a partnership with Airbnb. We reached a compromise about licensing/taxes and get their data. People use Airbnb as an scapegoat about why housing isn’t affordable instead of addressing root causes. The areas that are most saturated with rentals, those neighborhood were already unaffordable neighborhoods. I would like to know where have people tried to measure the impact?

* Link to NOLA data portal, search and browse housing or short term rental or look through the licensing and permitting data. [https://data.nola.gov](https://data.nola.gov/) (maybe could be test case)

OTHER SCRAPED DATA RESOURCES

* Tom’s Slee data - <http://tomslee.net/Airbnb-data>
* [http://insideAirbnb.com/](http://insideairbnb.com/)

The problem with scraping is that it is point in time and hard to see historical usage and is missing some fields.

Anthony - you could look forward to dates of availability, but don’t know booking.

It is likely permitted under their license agreement because there is a Ruby package that scrapes Airbnb.

Lamar - it may not be illegal, but it is easy for them to tweak their page and it’ll all break.

Rob - listing data is one side. We are missing information about landlord themselves. This is the huge deal. It could be giant company, not just 1 household earning a little extra money. It is hard to tell because the owner may not be the landlord. The system encourages this - a power user has the most listings and the most reviews.

This is a complaint that I’ve seen - it’s hard to know which one it is. Without data, there’s no way to repute/dispute it.

If it is not a problem we should focus on a different problem. If people feel like there’s a violation of neighborhood trust, that is an important.

Are they pushing neighborhood towards gentrifying? Are they ruining low-income neighborhoods? At our city council hearing (in DC), a person is renting Airbnb with 3 units in low-income neighborhood. They removed it from the rental market because they don’t want to deal with tenants.

Anthony - that may uncover a policy problem - that the process working with Housing Authority is too onerous. My city council person trying to change zoning to allow garage apartments. People who couldn’t afford a mortgage without Airbnb can now afford to live there.

Kathy - it would be helpful to tease apart the issues - affordable housing, city revenue/evading taxes, tenant protections, neighborhood quality of life.

Rob - it is hard to know where the spillover is. It also might be a workforce issue if it is reducing hotel jobs.

Lamar - I don’t think so. Hotels are not paying low-income workers well. Entrepreneurship might offer a better opportunity. They have a greater chance of making that work than the Hiltons of the city (that are not catering to minority business).

NOLA traded jobs in oil industry for jobs in hospitality. There is low potential for career advancement. Only 1 in 10 folks progressed to management position after 10 years. It is the main driver of jobs, particularly for people of color. People don’t then have income to keep up with cost of living. Contributes to income inequality.

Anthony - it could be a positive? Probably they are less likely to be in places with single-family. More likely in duplexes or 3-4 unit buildings. Does someone buy the house and make improvements and lead to gentrification?

Anthony - has anyone tried HomeAway or other similar companies?

Becky - I know someone at Homesuite in CA.

Similarly, has anyone tried to get Uber/Lyft data - cities did not demand public data when they agreed to allow them to operate legally?

Anthony - can we look forward to sharing economy movement? What’s the next thing we will want to measure?

Becky - maybe food delivery apps - Whole Foods/Amazon?