NNIPCamp Milwaukee, June 14, 2019

Session 3 – Community Centered Governance

Led by Eric Jackson

Notes by Kelley Hanni

Participants: Harvey Miller, Eric Jackson, Gerardo Mares, Milika Miller, Vishnavi Vaidya, Courtney Steele, Katie Prtitchard, Mark Abraham, Shahrukh Farooq

Links:

* WNC Community Data Collaborative Governance Principles :

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tPFoLexxGJu0qQtGITptHmqHD9v9Sm_Iu9DawuhDj_4/edit?usp=sharing>

* Urban Institute DataWalk: <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/data-walks-innovative-way-share-data-communities>

***Name, org and why are you here***

* Harvey Miller-Columbus is a divided city, its growing but has challenging neighborhoods and we’re trying to figure out how to make Columbus more inclusive and grow sustainability. *Urban Crisis – Richard Florida*
* Gerardo Mares – I’m interested in this conversation because we’re working with an equity lens but what does that mean when it comes to community data. When you talk to the communities they say that the data betrays the narrative. I want to know how to engage with residents and different populations. I attended data for black lives and that peaked my interest.
* Vishanvi Vaidya – at UHC we are a center that studies neighborhoods and health. I want to see what other people are doing. How can we use community voices to drive research and policy.
* Milika Miller – the foundation has launched a strategy where they are trying to get community input on how they spend their money. You always think that you are putting the community at the center but that’s not always correct. I have a fear of data doing bad. Often the intention is to do good but it doesn’t always work out
* Courtney Steele – we are in the process of taking our open data tool and taking it state-wide. Our community engagement has been pretty simple so far but now that we’re expanding it poses new challenges
* Mark Abraham – we’ve expanded state-wide and added local spokes people, but we try to determine how to best work with the nonprofits
* Shahrukh Farooq – interested in the conversation around data and how to use it to better the community

Eric- some experiences that have led me to this place: we’re creating a data intermediary at my organization. We started engaging more in the community and they had a lot of ideas about what we could do and it was centered around data work. There is a whole eco system in a community and you can’t just tie into one. If there is a release of data you need to have people involved, but first you have to go out to the community and have them help with how to best present the data.

Courtney – Milika, what have your community engagement sessions looked like?

Milika – I’ve only done one so far, but the one that I did attend, there were about 30 residents. The foundation will admit that the foundation does not have a strong presence in that particular neighborhood. The residence were very forthcoming and the foundation was good about letting them talk. Other sessions that I was not at – there are usually 3-4 per neighborhood. RFPs are distributed based on feedback. Cons – the whole pot of money is limited and there is a lot of work for 100k. and it must be 12 months. Building community relations with community and police that doesn’t get you far at all. The level of concern and getting residents excited the money just isn’t there. I’m always thinking about how do you get it and how do you use it.

Courtney – how did you engage in the community

Malika – Door to door, fliers. A lot of people didn’t hear about it directly, but indirectly from someone in their neighborhood. We also had issues with people not feeling comfortable with going door to door. Going to businesses, but business owners are not residents. We tried social media, but there aren’t a lot of people engaged on FB.

Harvey – Sustainable urban systems work. A report was published by the national science foundation looking at urban sustainable systems science. Looking at co-production of data, science, etc. they want co-production with community groups and citizens. They are going to put a lot of money into this and an RFP will be coming out. Any successful grant will have to address engagement with community stakeholders. They assemble a team of experts that develop a long-term research design. They hold workshops. We’re organizing one of those that is 50/50 community and data people.

Eric – One fear is that as people start to talk more about this, if it’s not grounded in building a real relationship its more extractive. Somehow we need to think about the relationship that’s not just based on the project, but that you’re part of the community. It’s hard to draw the line – how do I embed that into and organization so that it consistently gets it right.

Mark – how do you define resident engagement?

Harvey – we received money for the smart Columbus tech initiative and they claimed that they had gone into the community to get feedback. But we held a discussion on campus and received feedback that some of the implementation was not well received. They had been talking to the usual community activists and not the actual residents.

Katie – We had a similar experience with a neighborhood crime initiative. We worked with residents to do the survey and set up. We spent time and money getting tablets to take the survey, but received feedback that it was a bad idea

Vishnavi- I was sent out to survey people, there was an initiative that was designed and they wanted me to go out and get confirmation that this is what they wanted done. But the feedback was overwhelming negative. And the way the survey was administered was very random and involved a 5 page survey with almost no incentive to a store that wasn’t in their community.

Eric – example of user testing – this happens in software, tools, etc. this is different than surveys – after 3 or 4 testing you’ve learned what is wrong. It doesn’t require statistics, but it’s interesting how little this happens. If you take the narrative approach you save time.

Courtney – We struggle with the question of how do we support partners and getting the right people speaking. In Denver there was a public health official in rural Denver and the woman that they hear from all of the time they have one specific concern – the rabid raccoon, but isn’t disclosing other issues. How can we be a supportive partner and address concerns and issues.

Katie – Often the agenda isn’t an issue until there is critical. How do we build some trust?

Harvey – one thing I worry about is data getting away from us –

Eric – in general the technical data people are not thinking about how the data is getting used. One way to build a relationship between the community is to actually be in the community and not just rely on the spokesperson.

Malika- I argue that data is often used for bad. When people see data they assume it’s being used for bad. Even when it seems neutral it’s not. When I come into this work its very reactive. I think that when you deal with the community I think it would go a long way to be honest about the limitations. “Thank you for the input and we’ll do what we can but we can only take this so far.” Let us know what we can do outside of this that can be more helpful. I think about the issues around the Milwaukee street car but that MKE is still a food desert and I need a car to get from point a to b because the city isn’t accessible to some communities. But we keep building mass transit.

Harvey – When you have evidence from your data how do you reconcile that opposition since cities are becoming more data driven. What do we do?

Malika – I’ve lived most of my life in MKE in the same zip code. What people think about that zip code is not representative of who lives there. In my zip code there is a high use of emergency rooms in a nearby area, but instead of thinking that these people aren’t getting regular care and using the ER. Think about that there aren’t healthcare providers in that area and there is one place, but there are trust issues there. There are a lot of things under the first layer, under the data. But most people working with data don’t look beyond that.

Eric- One of our roles is maybe to (the default is that data is bad) give the message that the data tells a story, and whatever that story is it’s not the whole story. The questions is how do you go deep, but how do you generalize.

Harvey – Data is so compelling so it can be easy to ignore the whole story. We can dress up the data, but we drown out other stories that don’t get picked up by data.

Eric – we start talking about templates for presenting data. Often if we had templates that said “whats underneath this data” don’t just believe this that there is a story there.

Mark – we use the UI datawalk and that leads people to share their stories.

Gerardo – we need to stop looking at numbers, but associate the numbers to actual people. Maybe before getting to the neighborhoods, but talk to other colleagues that share the same passion. But I struggle to find other people that do share that desire, background, etc.

Vishanvi – The focus of a project I’m working on is connecting minority groups and professional development and we would recruit fellows from minority groups across the US. The focus of the grant is to create a community of professionals that are like-minded and send them to conferences and events. We did this because there is a lack of diversity in the work that we do.

Malika – Milwaukee Evaluation is a good organization lead by a woman of color and focus on decolonization of data.

Eric – one thing that an organizations has to think about is representation. Often you only have one person of color and only lean on that person to represent the view of all black and brown people.