

**Report by Development Workshop to Cities Alliance
on the Santa Fe Institute Conference
19 – 21 November 2014
Santa Fe – New Mexico**

**SFI -Acting Locally, Understanding Globally - Building an International Community of
Practice for Neighborhood Data Collection”
Organised by Joe Hand, Jose Lobo & Luis Bettencourt**

Development Workshop’s senior ICT/GIS expert Kamal D’Nigel attended the SFI conference, titled “Acting Locally, Understanding Globally - Building an International Community of Practice for Neighbourhood Data Collection” on behalf of Cities Alliance. The conference served as a unique opportunity for individuals/organisations across the urban planning/design sphere to contribute and raise awareness of the importance in working together in the co-production of information to achieve greater impact.

For three days, various experts and NGOs with the Santa Fe Institute discussed things in accordance with

- Development being the ability to solve human problems
- How do we solve problems
- The pillars of knowledge
 - Knowledge is true
 - Knowledge is shared
- Technology standing as the thing that binds everything together
- The notion that without a common framework to organise findings isolated knowledge does not accumulate

The main objective of the conference was to identify strategy collaborations and technology needed in moving forward to address the issue of development both in the northern and southern hemisphere.

The wide range of presentations and discussions resulted in the creation of a manifesto (working) for the community to work on and identify with:

Cities are the essential means by which human development happens.

The science of cities will provide an integrated understanding of the process of human social change in shared spaces.

Historically, scientific models of cities have not been able to systematically tap into local knowledge, preventing them from iteratively improving.

Local knowledge provides a true view of the immense diversity and heterogeneity in cities, how individuals behave, and of processes of change in peoples lives and communities. Mechanisms of change are local.

The process of synthesizing local knowledge also provides individuals an opportunity for self-organization, empowerment, and engagement with the decision making process. Recognizing that a plurality of conceptions of well being exists, we must ensure that the capacity for individuals and local governments to actively engage and improve their own wellbeing is built into this synthesis process.

We cannot understand how cities function as a whole without an understanding of the individual, particular and local, and how that integrates back up to the global level.

*Thus, urban development policy and practice must be based on **observing and understanding** how people actually live in communities.*

Held at the Santa Fe Institute in Santa Fe New Mexico the conference attracted over 40 participants from NGOs, Slum federations, Universities, Foundations, the UN, media and developers. The conference was organised by Santa Fe Institute with emphasis on their collaborative work with Slum Dwellers International (SDI).

The first day of the conference was broken down into 5 sessions:

- **The Global View: Development, Community Organization & Data**
- **Planning and Building with Community Involvement**
- **Government-Community Interactions in Neighborhood Development**
- **The Role of Data Collection and Technology in Community Development**
- **Open Data & Data Sciences for Global Knowledge and Social Good**

These topics resulted in the following discussions and points being raised:

- Community involvement needs ownership and leadership
 - Low trust = low speed and high cost
 - High trust = high speed and low cost
- Projects need to be based on databases by the poor for the poor
- Yes we may run with good ideas for the poor, but we need to ensure that the poor stay in full control – they need to own the data
- Community unity and trust needs to be at the forefront of development
- Housing is not the only problem. The issue is a web of spatial inclusion, social; inclusion and economic inclusion
- To bring about better livelihood in developing countries formal and informal markets need to coincide
- Does it need to take 3 to 4 generations for change to take place? How does this sit with 2-5 year funding from international organisations/foundations?
- If you want data, you need to ask:
 - what the data is for
 - what do we want the data to do
- Do not try and replicate solutions, but rather look at the context and then adjust accordingly
- How do maps enable development
 - Local data needs to meet a demand/issue
 - Allows visualisation and tracking of changes from bottom up approach
- How does data enable change:

- Local data gathering brings about empowerment
- Data is not the final product, it's the process that brings about change
- The tool is not the solution, it's just the starting point that can be linked with local knowledge to create change
- Local politics cannot be ignored
 - Local governments need to recognise that there is an opportunity for the community to help them in making change
 - Data is only part of the political process
- Use the youth to gather data, they have a say in their future

The second day looked the Challenges being faced by organisations and Opportunities arising across the world, with emphasis on:

- **Data Collection Practices and Uses in Informal Settlements**
- **The Uses of Local Data in US cities**
- **Data, Inclusive Cities & Knowledge Networks**
- **Co-designing Data Tools for Development and Informal Communities**
- **Interfacing Community NGOs with International Organizations**

Discussions and questions from day 2 included:

- Resilient means bring back to shape and this should be used as a meaning for true urban form
- Power relations, the political will needs to be addressed
- Informality is normal
- It's good to invest in data, it allows for informed decisions
- The data is there for the world to see
- Involving the community may incur costs, but if investment is brought in changes can take place
- Make the community strong in getting the process going, by being involved from the onset with data gathering
- How do we use tools for tomorrow?
 - The actual problem is not the tools, but creating a tools that the locals can use to keep the local government informed and vice versa, i.e. Land tenure
- Are we currently using the datasets we have in the right manner and to their full potential?
- It's true that there are datasets we would like, but can't have. We need to work with what we have and carry on with the projects
- There are datasets that are incomplete. Ways need to be found in bridging the gaps
- There are various applications out there for helping us to collect data, but how do we pick the right ones.
 - Is there a tool that can help with all issues
 - Is there a list of tools with their pros and cons

The third day was themed Scaling Up Globally and dealt with sharing efforts to put communities on the map through community-driven data collection. Presentations were based on:

- **Experiences and Policies of Opening and Sharing Data**
- **A Vision for a Collaborative Program to Eradicate Poverty Globally**
- **Crucial Elements of a Global Framework for Knowledge Accumulation**

On the final day of the event several points were discussed , which included:

- Sharing your data can increase influence
- There is a need for global collaboration as we are all dealing with the same issues
- Knowledge is what is done when information is aggregated
- How will global knowledge benefit local communities?
- How will local information benefit international actors?
- What tools will allow us to tie these groups together transparently?

The final day also allowed Development Workshop to showcase its experience on the participatory gathering of urban information, mapping data, working with local communities and providing guidance to local government on policies and strategies.

The presentation started off with a brief into to DW and the context of things in Angola. From there 2 projects were presented:

1. **Voices of Citizens for Urban Change** (supported by BMGF and Cities Alliance)
 - a. This allowed Development Workshop to show its use of participatory planning to promote change in the way of influencing public policies
 - b. Creation of focus groups and forums
 - c. Empowering the people to have a voice that can be heard
 - d. Creation of an online municipal profile that users can interact with to get info on their localities
 - i. Downloadable atlases and posters to show change over time
2. **GSMA Mobil Water Monitoring**
 - a. A project born out of “Voices of Citizens for Urban Change” in relation to water provision
 - b. Targeting the need for cheaper water supply
 - c. Allowed DW to showcase their mapping capabilities
 - d. Allowed DW to showcase their use of technology and youth support to bring about change

A key finding from Development Workshop’s programs is about the co-production and co-ownership of information between urban communities and local government. This innovative approach facilitates the transformation of information into tools for public policy influencing since the data is co-owned by local municipalities from the beginning and supports a sense of common ground in the defence of community interests in improving access to basic services, tenure rights and participative planning. It was suggested by a number of conference participants that this approach to co-production developed by DW should be shared with partners internationally.

One of the outcomes of discussing around the table was the donation of 4 android tablets to DW by **Nicole Newnham** (<http://revolutionaryoptimists.org/the-filmmakers>), who is a filmmaker and

writer, She was impressed with how DW involves students in the field with gathering data, keeping them engaged in current projects and the weekly debates. Nicole suggested DW gets on board with using Map Your World (<http://mapyourworld.org>) (<http://www.macfound.org/documentaryfilm/387/>) for some of the students to tell their stories of living in a diverse city such as Luanda.

There was also an opportunity to meet up with creators of applications for gathering data based off of ODK (OpenDataKit), which would make it easier for the team in Angola to get to grasp with the technology, without being too technical. One of these applications is ONA which was built Matt Berg, who also collaborated with Nicole Newnham on mapyourworld.org. The suggestion is to also use the new tablets on the system to see how useful it could be with current projects as it has the ability to carry out basic analysis.

The conference showed that there are multiple projects going on around the world that are similar in many ways. It was suggested that DW partners with SDI, so both can benefit from expertise in community participatory planning, data gathering, visualisation and project management.

Due to the enthusiasm of the individuals that attended the conference a working group has been created to continue to look at frameworks and methodologies on data collection, visualisation, application development and urban science.

