

SUMMARY REPORT

Faith for Cities Data Convening

March 5, 2024



Find the Data Convening Presentation [here](#), including the presentation from our distinguished guest Robert Ndugwa, UN Habitat.

The following is a summary of the information generated by the Relight portion of the conversation, facilitated by Charles Henderson.

Overview

After participants were introduced to the Relight tool, they engaged in a guided discussion based on a set of questions designed to explore collaborative opportunities and challenges within the faith and urban development sectors.

General Summary of the Relight Conversation

Key Questions and Insights:

Collaborative Potential:

Question: What questions would you like this group to answer?

Insight: The group expressed a strong desire to explore ways to enhance collaboration, with a focus on collective impact.

The conversation swiftly transitioned to Graham Singh sharing his primary perspective, centered on church property redevelopment, and posing the next question to the group. Charlie then led an extensive discussion on this topic (“frames of reference”).

Diverse Perspectives:

Question: What are the respective frames of reference that participants bring to this conversation?

Insight: Participants shared a wide range of perspectives, emphasizing the importance of place, relationships with governments and NGOs, technology in placemaking, and the role of data in highlighting opportunities and challenges. The frames of reference discussed by the group include:

- The importance of place at multiple scales and the role of both governments and non-governmental organizations in getting places right.
- Relationships with various levels of government, philanthropic communities, non-profits, charities, and NGOs.
- Property, places of worship, and monastic spaces.
- Technology-enabled placemaking.
- Using data to highlight both threats and missed opportunities.
- Exploring themes such as polarization, trust and loyalty, and multi-cultural integration within religious groups.
- Ethnicity and language.
- Using data for advocacy within the tech community.
- Building trust and creating interfaces between vulnerable communities and local governments for resilient urban development.
- Civic advocacy for the impact of the faith community and increased efficiency in resource allocation.
- Providing a framework for city engagement.
- City transformation through leader development in various societal sectors.

- Holding big systems accountable to small places and strategies for real-time governance.
- Working with local communities and ensuring the reliability and uptake of data. To ensure the uptake of data with local authorities and its reliability, Graham Singh suggests understanding the work of the City Round Tables project, which can be found at trinitycentres.org/en/cities. Additionally, he highlights the importance of fund-level financing, suggesting that demonstrating how faith communities contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal #11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), can help address the challenge of refinancing parts of their future.
- Protectionism and sharing data generated by faith communities across denominations.
- Applying data at the city level and leveraging research from faith-based researchers.
- Examining internal projections on membership growth or decline within major religious groups.
- The gap in data regarding non-religious non-profits relying on space in religious properties.

These frames of reference highlight the diverse perspectives and approaches being considered in the group's work.

Diagnostic Tools Discussed

Question: What data-oriented diagnostic tools for the faith community exist that you are you aware of or have used?

Insight: The data-oriented diagnostic tools for the faith community that respondents are aware of or have used include:

- Know Your City (KYC) data collection program by Slum Dwellers International (SDI) – [Link](#)
- [CitiIQ](#) – A measurement system that helps cities manage and track progress in SDGs.
- [Barna](#) – Provides data on belief, church attendance, etc.
- ["State of the City"](#) reports .

- <https://thisspace.io/> – A platform that matches church spaces available for rent to people looking to rent spaces for events, etc.
- City Scan Toolbox – Provides surveys on the street, georeferences answers, and auto-generates GIS maps for analysis.
- [Nayba](#) – Asset mapping of neighborhoods and communities.
- [Urban Shalom Index](#) – Developed by Minh Ha Nuyegn.
- Housing + Transportation Affordability Index – Measures small area transportation affordability, travel demand, GHG emissions ([Link](#)).
- [Halo Effect Tool](#) – Evaluates six areas of congregational engagement with close to 50 metrics.
- Data and tools provided by UN-Habitat for SDGs – [Link](#)
- Earth Observation Toolkit for Sustainable Cities and Communities by UN-Habitat – [Link](#)
- Urban Opportunity Index – A scenario planning tool for reducing poverty in cities, available at [CNT](#) for 100 US cities.
- Distinction between tools for formal systems and innovative systems.

These tools vary in their focus, from measuring city management and SDG progress to analyzing congregational engagement and urban poverty reduction strategies.

Identified Gaps in Data Tooling

Question: Where are the gaps in the data tooling that already exists in the faith sector?

Insight: The gaps in data tooling in the faith sector mentioned are:

- The challenge of turning insights from data into impactful actions.
- The need for a movement that addresses multiple solutions, such as poverty reduction and climate protection, simultaneously.
- The complexity of framing problems, such as the influence of religious communities on city building and housing affordability.

- The lack of a foundational data framework to guide municipal decisions from a faith sector perspective.
- The need for robust faith-based data that is reliable, valid, and real-time across different traditions.
- The opportunity to avoid creating duplicative data or silos by working together and sharing data on property disposition and usage.
- The potential role of church properties in urban resilience hubs and the need to move beyond seeing them only in terms of declining attendance.
- The importance of understanding regional development stories and long-term planning before making city-level decisions, especially in areas affected by industrial decline.

Enhancing Tools

Question: How can we make the tools everyone has better?

Insight: To make the tools better, collaboration with existing stakeholders working with communities and data is needed. Integrating existing data into a collaborative data platform for different regions and liaising with local governments together is suggested.

Who Should Join the Conversation?

Question: Who should we have here who isn't here?

The following suggestions were made:

- Maddy Johnson, Program Manager for the Church Properties Initiative at the Fitzgerald Institute for Real Estate, Notre Dame.
- Nadia Mian, Senior Program Director at Ralph W. Voorhees Center for Civic Engagement Rutgers University Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University.
- More representatives from Muslim, Sikh, and Buddhist communities
- Urban Sustainability Directors Network, <https://www.usdn.org/index.html#/>

- Scholar Practitioner Network ([get more details and webpage link](#)). Eventually engage the network, which produces original research and data in cities and looks for ways to disseminate it.

Active Participants

Notable contributions were made by:

Graham Singh:

- Emphasized the importance of framing complex problems and the role of religious communities in city building.
- Highlighted the need for fund-level financing to show how faith communities contribute to the SDGs, particularly for sustainable urban development.
- Discussed the gaps in data regarding non-religious non-profits relying on space in religious properties.

Mark Matlock:

- Mentioned the use of Barna data on belief and church attendance for "State of the City" reports.
- Suggested Nayba for asset mapping of neighborhoods and communities.
- Discussed civic advocacy for the impact of the faith community and the need for increased efficiency in resource allocation.

Smriti Singh:

- Recommended collaboration with stakeholders working with communities and data, and integrating existing data into a collaborative platform for different regions.
- Mentioned the Know Your City (KYC) data collection program by Slum Dwellers International (SDI) for addressing slum issues.

Questions Answered Without Corresponding Discussion

Question: What are some of the countries/regions where you work and have a database on? What are the different kinds of organizations and stakeholders you collaborate with for data collection and dissemination?

Responses:

- National statistics offices.
- In Canada, financial data for faith communities is obtained from the Canada Revenue Agency, as well as demographic data from Statistics Canada.
- In the USA, work is being done in California, Colorado, and Minnesota with congregations, judicatories, and nonprofit partners.
- Data is sourced from hospitals, school districts, and civic organizations that are publicly available. Some country-level and city-level research has been done with Barna.

Question: What kinds of data would be most helpful to increase our impact for the cost required?

Insight: To increase impact for the cost required, citizen-generated data and big data are seen as helpful in filling gaps for missing policy-oriented data.

Unanswered Questions

Question: How to make the tools better fit with the UN SDG's (Sustainable Development Goals)?

Question: What is the name of your organization and what does it do? What is its role either as a maker or user of data/diagnostic tooling?

Question: What is a personal story of how data has informed a planning process you are involved with in a good way or some other social problem you've used data for?

Question: What are the solution(s) you would suggest to the needs, challenges, and gaps we've articulated? Please submit each solution as a separate reply so that we can discuss each solution individually.