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Community Quality-of-Life Indicators: Best Cases V

Springer

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Community Quality-of-Life Indicators: Best Cases series

Volume 3

The Community Quality-of-Life Indicators: Best Cases book series is a collection of books, each containing a set of chapters related to best practices of community quality-of-life indicators projects. Many communities (cities, towns, counties, provinces, cantons, regions, etc.), guided by their local planning community councils and local government, and other organizations, develop community indicator projects. These projects are designed to gauge the "social health" and well-being of targeted communities. These projects typically involve data collection from secondary sources capturing quality-of-life indicators (i.e., objective indicators capturing varied dimensions of economic, social, and environmental well-being of the targeted communities). The same projects also capture community well-being using primary data in the form of survey research. The focus is typically subjective indicators of quality of life such as community residents' satisfaction with life overall, satisfaction with various life domains (e.g., life domains related to social, leisure, work, community, family, spiritual, financial, etc.), as well as satisfaction with varied community services (government, nonprofit, and business services serving the targeted communities). The book series is intended to provide community planners and researchers involved in community indicator projects with prototypic examples of how to plan and execute community indicator projects in the best possible ways.

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Preface

Community indicators are not a new phenomenon. Indicators of various sorts have been used over a long period of time. For example, in 1910, the US-based Russell Sage Foundation initiated the development of local surveys for measuring industrial, educational, recreational, and other factors (Cobb & Rixford, 1998). The processes used by the Sage Foundation are similar to those that reemerged during the latter half of the twentieth century. These newer approaches are a bit different though, with the emphasis on considering the full spectrum of a community's well-being, not just isolated factors. This reflects the importance of, and desire for, sustainable approaches for community and regional well-being and incorporates the now well-recognized "three E's" of sustainability – equity, environmental, and economic aspects.

In the past, indicators were mostly identified and used by a top-down approach; now, indicators are used by many constituencies within a community, not the least of who are its citizens. The strength of a community indicators measuring system is directly related to the involvement of citizens. It's clear that citizens are not merely content to watch what happens, they want to be involved in identifying, directing, and measuring progress in their communities. And it's this aspect that is particularly encouraging – if citizens participate in the identity, calibration, and use of indicators, then there's a greater chance that measuring and obtaining progress toward desirable community goals will occur (Phillips, 2003). This ability to effect positive change is at the heart of the usefulness of community indicator systems. Nearly a decade ago, Thomas Kingsley declared, "Community indicators drive change" (Kingsley, 2002 cited in Phillips, 2003). He directs the National Neighborhood Indicators Project (NNIP), an indicators research and education initiative with numerous community partners. In 2002, NNIP had 19 community partners, now there are 34, evidence of the power that indicators can have as change agents in society. An update of NNIP is provided in Chapter 4.

In addition to citizen engagement and participation, sustainability is a focus in many chapters in the volume as well – not only sustainability as a community or regional approach but also sustainability of indicator systems as well. We're at a juncture now with many community indicator projects, where some have been implemented into decision making at the policy level in communities while others

have not achieved longevity. How do we ensure that indicator systems are both used and valued? One way to do so is through a coordinated advocacy of their use from such organizations as The International Society for Quality of Life Studies (ISQOLS) and the Community Indicators Consortium (CIC) (see website contact information at the end of this preface). These organizations have been developed, in part, due to a desire by both academics and practitioners to make public policy decision makers aware of the wealth of tools that are available to them when making decisions concerning their local, regional, and national communities. CIC, in particular, has raised awareness among community planners by providing both theoretical and application tools through their conferences and the four previous volumes of this publication. In continuing this work through this volume and those to follow, the long-term goal is to provide community decision makers with an indispensable collection of measurement methods and a "best cases library" to give examples of how to apply those methods. At the same time, advocacy cannot forget the fifth estate. These volumes can be used to school the media in how monies spent on these indicator projects are as valuable, if not more, as the traditional single-dimensional economic indicators that legislators and other funding agencies commit to community projects.

The scope of projects presented here runs the gamut from locally focused, metropolitan-level applications, to rural contexts, to regional approaches. We are pleased to present this collection of 14 chapters, and hope that it will inspire additional, and valued, applications of community indicator systems.

We begin the volume with Chapter 1, "Comprehensive Local Community Development via Collaborative Quality of Life Planning: Best Practices from Two San Diego Neighborhoods," by Mirle Rabinowitz Bussell and Kerry Sheldon. This case presents a quality of life planning tool, developed while participating in the Local Initiatives Support Corporation's Sustainable Communities Initiative. San Diego's efforts to foster community cooperation, coordination, and resident engagement in two low-income neighborhoods are chronicled, with best practices factors discussed.

Next, Chapter 2 "Developing and Sustaining a Community Information System for Central Indiana: SAVI as a Case Study," by David J. Bodenhamer, James T. Colbert, Karen Frederickson Comer, and Sharon M. Kandris presents the history and development of a large data system since the early 1990s. This community information system, the Social Assets and Vulnerabilities Indicators (SAVI), integrated multiple datasets with visualization tools. Lessons and recommended practices are provided that are useful for learning about increasing usability and longevity of community indicator projects.

In Chapter 3, "Sustaining the Operations of Community Indicators Projects: The Case of Twin Cities Compass," Craig Helmstetter, Paul Mattessich, Andi Egbert, Susan Brower, Nancy Hartzler, Jennifer Franklin, and Bryan Lloyd focus on sustainability of indicator projects. As mentioned previously, this is of vital concern to many and provides information on how operations can be sustained over time. It uses the case study of Minnesota's Minneapolis-St. Paul 7-county metropolitan area; it is similar to many other projects driven by the mission to help improve the

region's quality of life and economic competitiveness. Strategies are discussed for maintaining an audience and clientele with core activities as well as for diversifying funding with contractual work.

In looking at the broader scale of collaborative work in US indicator projects, Thomas G. Kingsley and Kathryn L.S. Pettit provide a review of their efforts at NNIP in Chapter 4, "Quality of Life at a Finer Grain: The National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership." It tells the story of a network of indicator projects rather than focusing on one case. Further, it provides a level of analysis that is not seen as frequently, that of the neighborhood. The value of expanded networks and developing capacity is discussed, as well as links to tools and guides.

Chapter 5, "Sustainable Well-Being Initiative: Social Divisions and Recovery Process in Minamata, Japan," by Takayoshi Kusago is an inspiring case about the recovery of a community trying to cope with some of the worst industrial pollution situations in the world. This story can serve as a lamppost for like communities around the world currently trying to come to grips with the massive environmental problems brought about by rapid industrial expansion that has occurred globally. The story illustrates the power of community through citizen action and local leadership. Jimotogaku, as a philosophy of neighborhood revitalization, is explained – a profound practice with a driving principle of, "Stop asking for what we do not have, let us start from finding out what we have." This is one of the fundamental essences of sustainability, building on inherent assets versus reliance on external factors.

"The American Human Development Index: Results from Mississippi and Louisiana," Chapter 6 by Sarah Burd-Sharps, Patrick Guyer, Ted Lechterman, and Kristen Lewis examines a composite measurement of well-being and opportunity for two of the most distressed states in the United States of America. The data are humbling, and the need for policy response quite clear from their analysis of three dimensions of indicators: health, knowledge, and standard of living. The authors go beyond analyzing the data to discuss implications and recommend policy responses. They begin their chapter with a quote from 1968 that makes one stop and ponder the question about what we measure and why, and the all-important relations to quality of life. It bears excerpting here to give us pause:

> Our gross national product. . .if we should judge America by that – counts air pollution and cigarette advertising, and ambulances to clear our highways of carnage. It counts special locks for our doors and the jails for those who break them. It counts the destruction of our redwoods and the loss of our natural wonder in chaotic sprawl. . .Yet the gross national product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education or the joy of their play. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages; the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials. . .it measures everything in short, except that which makes life worthwhile.
>
> Robert Kennedy, March 18, 1968

Chapter 7, "The Metropolitan Philadelphia Indicators Project: Measuring a Diverse Region," is by Brian Lockwood, Jason Martin, Cathy Yinghui Cao, and Michelle Schmitt. It profiles the case of a massive US indicators project, encompassing 353 municipalities spanning 9 counties in the states of Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Driven by the need to "think regionally while acting locally," the project helps

connect local work to broaders patterns and trends. Five typologies are used for different kinds of communities throughout the metro area, and these are useful for capturing variation between areas located within individual counties.

Chapter 8, "Portraits of Peel – A Community Indicators Portal Project," by Srimanta Mohanty provides another regional approach to indicators. Using the case of Peel, adjacent to the City of Toronto, Canada, the author provides three portals of information as tools in community well-being: an online database, target group profiles, and overall statistics. It creates a new level of data accessibility and usability, helping foster social policy changes in this region of over one million inhabitants.

In Chapter 9, we shift attention to rural applications of community indicators. The universality of the desire of communities to monitor their well-being is seen in "The Development of Quality-of-Life Indicators in Rural Areas in Iran: Case Study – Khaveh Shomali District, Lorestan Province." Authors Mohammad Reza Rezvani and Hossain Mansourian measure quality of life using objective and subjective indicators. The weighting of various measures is discussed, along with development of a composite index to gauge quality of life in overall terms.

Chapter 10, "Working for Water: A Baseline Study on the Impact of a South African Public Works Programme in Improving the Quality of Life of Programme Beneficiaries," by Robin Richards, results from a survey of experimental and control groups. In this chapter the author provides a tool to policy makers in developing economies to help them allocate scarce resources to critical projects and monitor their success or failure. Such monitoring ability is becoming even more crucial in today's world to be able to attract funding from a variety of not only government organizations, but from global aid organizations and other non-government organizations (NGOs). Objective measures of quality of life as well as subjective measures are analyzed to gauge the socioeconomic impact on households of this large public works program. Various dimensions are explored, including the ability for participants to make positive contributions to community quality of life.

Branko Cavric's Chapter 11, "Integrating Tourism into Sustainable Urban Development: Indicators from a Croatian Coastal Community," provides a case of indicators applied in a situation where spatial transformations and transitions are the focus. Using a GIS (Geographic Imaging System) system, indicators for sustainable urban development are presented for five major components. Rather than take a purely technical, top-down approach to indicator development, the project incorporated citizen and local leadership input to identify focus areas and priorities, with particular emphasis on the final users of the city's space.

Chapter 12, "Quality of Life in Buffalo City: The Changing Position of African Women in a Post-Apartheid City," by Leslie Bank and Ellen Kamman, explores quality of life data collected from 2001 and 2007. Exploring the situation post-apartheid provides insight into whether or not policies aimed at redressing inequalities are having an impact on African women. A survey conducted in both years provides the data on a variety of factors ranging from standard of living to emotional well-being. As with the Richards' piece such data are invaluable in helping transitional economies gather needed funding for optimal transformation toward a

better QOL. We see the same transformational data use in the following longitudinal work by Moller and Radloff.

Valerie Moller and Sarah Radloff look at "Monitoring Indicators of Living Conditions in a South African Urban Community," in Chapter 13. As with the prior chapter, this work utilizes data from household surveys: this time, conducted in 1999 and 2007. The focus of the work looks at South African service delivery in the post-apartheid context of human rights and rising expectations in Rhini, a low-income suburb of Grahamstown. While major changes in living standards were found, there are issues that are diluting gains overall.

Rounding out the volume is Chapter 14, "Community Indicators in Action: Using Indicators as a Tool for Planning and Evaluating the Health and Wellbeing of a Community," by Melanie T. Davern, Sue West, Sally Bodenham, and John Wiseman. This case presents Community Indicators Victoria, a project located within a southern state of Australia. The emphasis of this project centers on developing indicators for informed, engaged, and integrated community planning. Public health planning led to the development of a wide range of community indicators addressing community safety, youth, positive ageing, cultural diversity, and early childhood, for example.

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Websites of Interest: International Society for Quality of Life Studies (ISQOLS); http://www.isqols.org Community Indicators Consortium (CIC); http://www.cic.org

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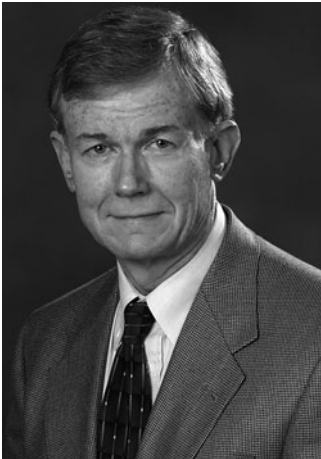
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Chapter 1
Comprehensive Local Community Development via Collaborative Quality of Life Planning: Best Practices from Two San Diego Neighborhoods

Mirle Rabinowitz Bussell and Kerry Sheldon

Abstract This study presents best practices in the quality of life planning process in two low-income, multiethnic urban neighborhoods in San Diego, California. We focus on the planning process since community engagement is frequently identified as a critical factor in successful quality of life planning, but the processes through which this occurs require further investigation. We analyze case studies from the Neighborhoods First initiative, a quality of life planning process launched in 2008 by San Diego LISC, a community development intermediary. Based on the Neighborhoods First experience, we found that the quality of life planning process in low-income urban neighborhoods benefits from five critical factors: (1) stakeholder participation that combines recognized neighborhood leaders and emerging leaders; (2) planning processes paired with immediate outcomes; (3) facilitators who ensure timely completion of the process; (4) transparency in the process; and (5) early acknowledgment and incorporation of each neighborhood's unique history.

Introduction

The contemporary community development movement took root during the late 1950s and early 1960s in response to the widespread failure of federal urban policy. The deleterious effect of federal urban renewal in concert with the pervasive malaise in low-income urban neighborhoods gave rise to grassroots organizing and empowerment (O'Connor, 1999). Community development corporations (CDCs) were established with a primary emphasis on community organizing, participation, and networking (Vidal, 1992). As these organizations matured, their capacity expanded and their programmatic efforts shifted to physical infrastructure improvements such as the construction of affordable housing, community centers, health care clinics, day care facilities, and technology centers (Pearce & Steinbach, 1987; Vidal,

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