

Ghettometrics: An Urban Social Transactions and Negotiations System

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ABSTRACT

This paper, in addressing certain aspects of urban center communication systems, explores: 1) generalizations and assumptions about the ghetto or the ill-developed sections of our country; 2) the feasibility of developing and maintaining a computer center for educational purposes in the ghetto; 3) the advantages and potential roles of urban planners and computer personnel in jointly studying and documenting social transactions and negotiations in the ghetto; and 4) the need and function of a programmed course (ghettometrics) as a community educational tool. The end result is the proposal for an urban social transactions and negotiations system in which to harness this vast network of energy and information for optimal community dispensation.

Introduction

In 1966 approximately 6 million families (25 million persons) and another 5 million unrelated individuals were in poverty according to the U.S. Social Security Administration. The proportion of non-white households (families and single persons) in poverty was 30 per cent, 2.5 times that of the white (12 per cent).

Like the rest of America's population, the poor have been drawn into urban areas. Once there, they consistently are forced to reside in the oldest and most deteriorated areas. In these areas, they are subject to widespread discrimination and confined to a state of poverty.

The proportion of poor people living in large cities is still increasing as middle income residents rush off to the suburbs. Between 1960 and 1966, 1.2 million whites left the nation's 20 largest cities and 3.2 million non-whites moved in. Poverty is used in many contexts, however, it is not

an absolute condition. Poverty is relative, and it is normally related to the well being of the population at large. One of the principal demands from the ghetto is jobs, and one of the principal causes of rioting is the lack of economic opportunity. In fact, the problem is far more complicated; it reflects, in part, the failure of our educational systems, the rigidity of the job market, inadequate transportation, and the failure of government to be responsive to all its people.

There are a multitude of projects on the drawing boards around the country which, to some limited degree, have been designed to help the poor and generate new vitality in the ghetto. There are many programs being implemented to save the bustling, explosive, bankrupt cities. Most of these programs are being served in portions—too little, too late. There is a hesitancy on the part of our national, state, and local leaders to initiate well designed, comprehensive urban programs. It is as though the cure for our urban areas is thought to be worse than the disease. Pieces of legislation and pieces of programs are put on our government agendas, and pieces of these pieces are acted upon and served to residents in our troubled urban areas. What is proposed in this paper is not a means of eradicating our urban problems. It is, rather, a proposal to utilize the technological prowess of the computer and its technicians in conjunction with that of our urbanologists. . .

Social Transactions and Negotiations

Action is synonymous with life. While the heart beats (action) and the blood flows (action) and the human parts rotate and react (action), there is life. If the body is still, the eyes shut, and the inner flow of action is at work, one is alive even though his exterior demeanor appears to the contrary.

This analogy can be carried over to our cities, and the action that I am primarily concerned with is to be referred to as social transactions or negotiations which are defined in the following context:

Transaction—To drive or thrust through, perform or complete some business.

Negotiation—To confer, bargain or discuss with a view of reaching an agreement. To conclude a business transaction.

When a social action is repeated often enough, it can be reduced to a routine, eventually a habit and, ultimately, a custom. Social institutions support the continuation of specialized actions. A city, to function at its optimum, must promote the harmonious interaction of its population. A city is, however, an adaptive community comprising many subspecies living

together in a specific locale. A small number of the residents of our cities seem to control and enjoy an overwhelming proportion of the city's physical and financial resources. The thrust for self-determination by all of the city's population causes conflict and demands resolution. Resolution can result in power shift, economic compromise, or some form of political repression. The accordian control system explains the social dynamics of government and the interpersonal relationship between the classes of people in that system.

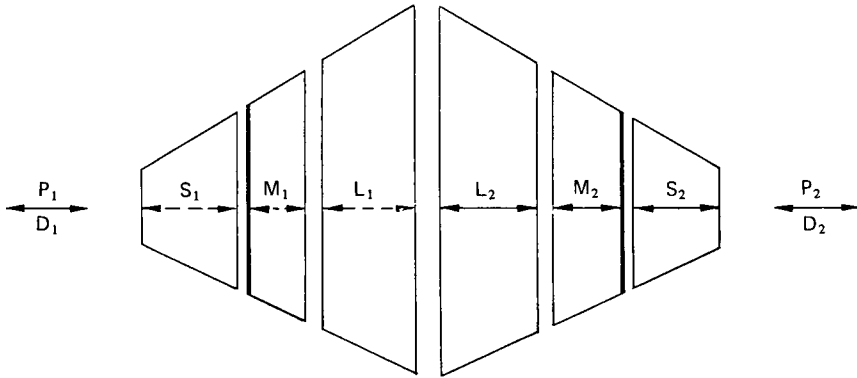


Figure 1. Accordion control system. *Note:* External pressure and depression controls the input (information) into the bellows (storage unit). Processing takes place as this small-keyed wind instrument admits wind to the metallic reeds, producing sounds. The output is the tones, music sounds, etc., generated.

1. Social dynamics of government (T) involves classes of people which are representatives of (S_1) (S_2), lower socio-economic stratum; (M_1) (M_2), middle socio-economic stratum; (L_1) (L_2), larger/higher socio-economic stratum.
2. External pressure (P_1 , P_2) and depression (D_1 , D_2) in a model of social dynamics taking place in an accordion control system is initiated and controlled by forces of government (political instrumentalities).
3. Initial impact under the system (T) reaches (S_1 , S_2) with a follow through thrust, touching (M_1 , M_2) and on through to (L_1 , L_2). Once depressed, a reverse action occurs.
4. The lower SES (S_1 , S_2) is the first to be touched by the force of government control and the last to be relieved of it. Higher SES (L_1 , L_2) is conversely the last to be affected by government control and, always, the first to be relieved.
5. Higher SES (L_1 , L_2) is the dominant influence in the Accordion System (T) with the lower SES (S_1 , S_2) having the least influence.

In the context of this paper, I will accept the inevitability of human conflict, disproportionate power, influence and money among the citizenry, as well as the ethical hangups, the aggression, and passivity. My attention will rest on the social dynamics of the ghetto because, above and beyond the end results of social transactions and negotiations, ghettos (poverty) exist next to suburbia (affluence). Ghettos reflect the failure of our social institutions to come to grips with the ultimate reality of providing a healthy mode of living for all its citizens. Ghettos exist that suburbs may blossom. Many suffer and expire while others thrive in the highly technological society of America. The Statue of Liberty still holds a torch of freedom and calls out for the wretched and poor of the world, while her very own perish under a system that stifles, restricts, and suppresses untold millions.

Generalizations and Assumptions About Non-ghetto Areas

1. An accelerated degree of social transactions and negotiations take place between residents and between residents and their institutions.
2. Transactions seem to work to the direct advantage of the institutions and residents.
3. Transactions and negotiations seem to be both self-serving and educational in that they serve as success models for the negotiators.
4. Residents have a greater capacity for instigating action.
5. The caliber of transaction and atmosphere attracts residents who are more achievement and success oriented.
6. Affluence breeds broader and varying new degrees of affluence.
7. Social institutions are designed to support the continuity of the specialized actions which will aid the customer (student, worker, cleric) in high-level social performance.
8. Streams of action seem to be self-repairing and self-maintaining.
9. Life style is made up with properties of self-esteem, ownership, some degree of self-actualization, sense of community identity, and overall purpose.
10. The social-system seems to possess fewer miscalculations.
11. Opportunity exists, for the most part, for self-actualization and mobility.
12. There are relatively few social barriers or hurdles clogging up the social processes.
13. Abundance predominates.

Generalizations and Assumptions About the Ghetto (by Comparing Activity In Non-ghetto Areas)

1. A minimum amount of social negotiation between residents and between residents and institutions.
2. Transactions tend to have a limiting effect on the service institutions, general community development, and resident self-esteem.
3. Negotiations rarely serve as educational models and tend to be self-defeating.
4. The ghetto tends to generate friction, insecurity, chaotic conditions, doubt, and a reluctance on the part of its residents to participate.
5. Social conditions in the ghetto tend to discourage achievement and success-oriented people from in-migration.
6. Poverty, failure, and destruction tend to perpetuate themselves.
7. Social institutions tend to be working at cross-purposes as regards the residents. They tend to provide maintenance rather than tools for separation and elevation.
8. Streams of action seem to be self-defeating and maintained or instigated by external social forces.
9. The life style is made up of survival kits, short-range goals, unfulfilled aspirations, and lack of community purpose.
10. The social system seems to possess an abundance of miscalculations and negative consequences.
11. There is limited opportunity for self-actualization, mobility, and accrued advantages.
12. There is an abundance of social barriers and hurdles clogging up the social processes and working to the disadvantage of the residents.
13. Scarcity predominates.

Role of Urban Planner

The role of the urban planner, from my point of view, is that of being a *source of idea formation*, as well as that of a catalyst of accelerated, rewarding, social transactions. The planner works with people under a given set of social conditions (political, economic, religious, etc.) for some social good. He works with information and the interactions between flows of information. He works with people and clusters of people (coalitions, agencies, businesses, systems, etc.) to bring about harmonious human negotiations. He realizes that *people in action tend to remain in action, while those at rest tend to remain at rest*. He serves as a catalyst to the least active and encourages transactions (participation and feedback).

Role of Computer, Technicians, etc.

In making reference to the computer, it should be understood that the inference is all-encompassing and includes the technicians, analysts, designers, etc., who make the equipment function in an optimal fashion.

I recognize some of the computer assets as being: 1) data storage; 2) processing; 3) reduction and readout; and 4) a source of decision-making. These assets, when made available to the ill-developed areas of our country and the residents therein, will provide for them an information system that will have a profound effect on how the residents see themselves, their total community, and the social transactions of their community as compared to the negotiations of other communities.

A *ghetto information system* would hastily provide a careful calculation of the aggregate cultural and social consequences of alternative proposals. This information would serve as a basis for economic results. It would also serve as an instrument to measure ones relative standing in both his own community and in the regional area as well.

The computer, with high-speed counting and precise classification, could process and store social transactions in all phases of public life. The payoff would be a *foundation for quantitative measurement*. In constructing transaction and negotiation rates, the computer would be able to aid in the identification of the most active participants in social-trading and, ultimately, report the where, the what, and how much.

Negotiations should include:

1. A means of extracting information from the environment.
2. A reassignment or adjustment in social roles.
3. Some changes in ownership or attachment.
4. New relationships.

Cooperative Efforts of Urban Planners and Computer Technicians

The information-feedback systems of urban planners, when computerized, will highlight the interaction between the flows of information (money, politics, power plays, etc.). The resulting interlocking system will spell out the fluctuations which effect decisions, policies, budgets, and community life styles.

The computer expert or technician would work with the urban planner in the system design of a tool for measuring the social negotiations that occur in the ghetto over a given period of time. They would come together to specifically define the problems and the system's modifications. The computer experts would be in charge of the design and implementation.

The computer expert would also join with the urban planner in developing a language that would serve both the computer and the experts working with the community and “relating” in a language that would provide a common denominator. Finally, the urban planner uses his skills to read, react, formulate ideas, and measure the feedback of his community into a comprehensive, viable social program. His work with the computer expert, who knows how to use and apply information without consuming it, serves to bring modern technology into the midst of a crisis area. We have learned that information, once stored, can be retrieved and used repeatedly in different ways. This function of the computer provides a new vista for clearing social bottlenecks. There is an abundance of information stored in the ghetto, but it is either frozen or not classified sufficiently to be of assistance to the ghetto residents. Jointly, the planner and computer expert could thaw out the ghetto information. They could process it, index it, and write it into a language suitable for city administrators to act upon. They could further serve notice to the ghetto residents and other city dwellers of the quality and quantity of ghetto transactions.

Categories of Information

Ghettos reflect scarcity. They reflect an insufficient quantity of goods and services while reflecting a massive demand for those goods and services that exist. Exploitation is seen in the ghetto when one notes the economic transactions (legal or illegal) that occur there. The exploiters and their communities benefit while the ghetto (site of negotiations) suffers. Ghettos imprison. They serve as a means of separating people based upon religion, color, and political persuasion. Residents are destroyed from both within and without. Physical, psychological, and environmental conditions sag. The end result is ugly human behavior, ugly physical surroundings, and a total suffering resulting from the failure of all people to achieve and prosper as their abilities will allow.

Ghettos store information. The thesis of this paper is that *the salvation of the ghetto rests in the ghetto*. The computer will permit administrators (city, business, or decision-makers) to view this information in a new context. The results will provide a new look at the ghetto resident and the people and agencies that are there to supposedly bring about meaningful social change.

Some of the categories of information that is of interest in measuring the units of quantitative and qualitative social transactions are:

I. *Traits (ghetto residents)*

Task performance—stamina, problem-solving

Aggression—the ability to perceive and exploit power

Socialization—Sense of humor and number and kinds of relationships

Communication—skills (verbal and nonverbal); the ability to debate

Self-worth—self esteem and self-control

Thought process—judgment and the ability to think under pressure

Knowledge—community and adjacent communities

II. *Vital Statistics*

Death rate

Accidents

Health

Business and health insurances

Employment

Migration (in and out)

Activity of the aged

Birth rate

Transportation

Real property and utilization

III. *Social Intercourse*

Unequal nature of transactions

The degree to which losers withdraw from social negotiations

Telephone calls (business, personal, home, public)

Bank action (mortgages, loans, savings)

Mail delivery

School attendance

Advertising (how, when, and where)

Business activity

Transportation flow (patterns of movement)

Cultural materials and institutions (museum, theater, publications, media)

Bargaining behavior and personality

Religious organizations and dollar value

Quality and frequency of maintenance

Acreage of parks and green area

Plants and equipment

Production—release potential as opposed to the production-retain potential

Constraints on residents

Automobiles per square mile

Utilization of natural resources

In analyzing social negotiations, it is clear that neither party is rewarded

for his effort until the deal has been consummated. The completed phase moves the anticipated result into the personal experience. Each negotiation represents a micro-adaptation to changing conditions. The frequency of completion also reflects the population's adaptability and its capability for meeting new and more demanding adjustments.

Computer Center

The computer is thought of as being a rich man's toy; it is viewed with indifference by many residents of the ghetto. To date, the computer has been used by business and government in the fulfillment of given tasks. What does the schematic scale of a polaris missile mean to a person in search of a job or his identity? Similarly, what does a computer mean to millions of disadvantaged people unless it is working for them or available for their use.

I propose the development of a "computer center" in the ghetto. It is in such centers that training programs could be initiated. Furthermore, education programs for elementary and high school students could be conducted here in conjunction with school curricula. The computer center could be utilized by colleges, in adult and continuing education programs, small businesses, and government-funded community programs.

A community news room could serve the community by informing them of their social transactions in units and classification. The translation here would be in a language idiomatic of the ghetto residents. Various forms of media would be available here for community use.

A lottery system could be developed and implemented in the ghetto as a means of competing with the underworld activity which thrives on the "numbers game." Here, ghetto residents and all interested parties could play the *Ghettometrics Game*, based upon the number of daily social transactions. Since each ghetto would tabulate different results, this would alleviate the need for a central clearing house. This form of community activity would generate interest, serve as a grand transaction, and generate capital for community use.

Ghettometrics

A course in Ghettometrics, or the measurement of social negotiations and transactions, should be designed for implementation in the ghetto schools at all levels. It would be a real-time course in that the information given to the students would be current and relevant to their daily social intercourse.

The processed material would serve as a basis for urban, social, and

psychological interpretation. The relevance would allow the students in this "setting" to be experts. After all, if there is one thing that we all know, it's *how we are getting along*. A course of this nature would also have a cathartic effect on the students and community residents, for it would permit them to look at themselves in aggregate analyses. The advantage here is that of having company in measuring one's problems.

Volumes of material, sociological and otherwise, have been written about the ghetto. Yet, in my research, I have failed to find any work sufficiently documented to have a continuing impact on decision-makers and/or social service institutions. The reason rests in the nature of the reporting: research, documentation, and publication. Publication time dates the material and renders it useless in the scientific interfacing with actual urban problems. Computerized data collection and processing occurs with a time lag, as well. However, the payoff is timely and can be of *immediate value*. Ghattometrics, written in "street language" or in the vernacular of the ghetto, will have an intimacy and appeal that few social science or technically written books can generate.

Conclusion

Ghattometrics is a proposed system for measuring the social negotiations and transactions of residents in the major ghettos throughout our country. These voluminous social results would be processed and stored in the computer. The collection, analysis, and interpretation would be made by the urban planner in conjunction with the computer experts. The payoff would be one of permitting ghetto residents the opportunity to participate in: 1) a new form of sociological introspection; 2) an educational experience with relevance and personal appeal; 3) an exercise which would acquaint them with the capabilities of the computer and how such applications might be applicable; 4) a novel means of distinguishing between transactions; 5) an evaluation of their social complications, restrictions, and options on an aggregate scale; 6) a program which would be viable enough to provide some benefit to all people; and 7) a fund raising, educationally uplifting, and community building program.

This process would bring together the urban planner and the computer expert for a common goal; namely, *that of challenging the potential of the machine and the men who utilize it*. The bonus is vested in the ultimate task of how quickly and how efficiently people's needs might be served. The planner, with his task of trying to make a more harmonious society, now has a partner who can enable him to gather his data and make better decisions.

Decision-makers, who are overwhelmed with paper work and statistics,

oftentime are given problems and few innovative means of resolving them. I cannot be convinced that with knowledge all human problems will vanish. However, I do see properly packaged information serving as a basis for attracting the coalition forces essential in making decision-makers and politicians more responsive to "people problems" and realistic priorities.

Social relationships are subject to the whims of the people who form them. Influence by others and the unpredictability of life are factors in the payoff (social contract). The paper, *Ghettometrics*, has focused only on the measurement of negotiations and transactions that lead to contracts. Social contracts, by category, are: temporary, simple, multiple, and open-ended. The essential elements are: 1) mutual acceptance; 2) mutually rewarding results; 3) voluntary consent; 4) no misrepresentation; and 5) the capabilities of the participants to meet the terms of the contract.

Although the social contract is essential in the overall scheme of *Ghettometrics*, the priorities of social transactions and negotiations were set forth to provide a bridge for joint professional efforts between urban planners and computer experts.

This proposal suggests numerous ways in which, through joint community action, professionals, machines, and community people might work toward the eradication of problems. It is, at best a new experiment in trying to unravel some of our urban entanglements.