Citizen Science Projects (MOOC) 2.5

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MEL WOODS: In citizen science people sometimes struggle to understand how sensor data is relevant to their lives or how environmental data is connected to the challenges they face. To support this, we sometimes need other types of information to give context to the data that is being collected by sensors. This can be done by using community level indicators, which are objective measurements collected by the community. This additional information helps to make the invisible visible by connecting the dots between sensor data and real life.	
For example, during a project called Making Sense in Spain, a group of local residents were suffering the effects of noise pollution due to the many people sitting in the outdoor plaza where they lived until late hours of the night. The residents planned to collect data on the level of noise in their homes using a sensor platform called the Smart Citizen Kit. The group also met up to discuss which other types of information they could collect to better understand the issue of noise pollution in their square. This discussion focused around the people and how they used the square. And the residents considered how people moved around the area. Often groups would gather on the ground to socialise.	
And when the weather was not too hot, the groups would move throughout the day to take advantage of the sunlight. The residents were curious about how these patterns could affect the levels of noise captured by the sensors. They considered counting and mapping where	

people sat in the square and how groups moved through the location. Other indicators, like how late local cafes and shops were open, were also discussed. Throughout the project, some citizens took photographs of the people in the square to keep a record of numbers and at which times people visited.	
This helped the participants to keep a record of the relationship between the number of people and noise levels and also to demonstrate the issue with additional evidence when they spoke to members of the local government to explain the problem they've been having with noise. These indicators also helped the residents to think of other ways that the square could be used instead of a place for drinking at nighttime. As a result, they worked with the council to create a local square which is family-friendly. They also arranged for quiet social activities like group yoga to take place.	
Understanding the other indicators, like the patterns of people using the area, along with the sensor data, helped them to think through this issue and ways to make small steps towards change. Can you think of any other types of data you could collect in your groups? If so, add them to the discussion below and speak to your fellow learners about your ideas.	
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