

Transforming Subjectivities

Service that Expands Learning in Urban Planning

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In a recent service-learning course we taught at the University of Southern California (USC), our goal was the “transformation of subjectivity,” as students traversed their own paths from students to professionals, learners to doers and coeducators, and from experts to collaborators. Our intent was to minimize the boundaries separating classroom and community. We encouraged students to bridge the gap between disciplines (urban planning, public policy, public management, public administration, and real estate) and sought to help them become collaborative and socially responsible professionals. We also tried to change the role that community partners usually play in service-learning partnerships. Many public agencies and nonprofit organizations welcome the assistance of students but do not see themselves as educators. We entered each partnership with the goal of becoming coeducators with them. Students were also made explicitly responsible for coeducating their peers on the different project areas they were working on, as they needed to give updates to the rest of the class throughout the semester and their grades were partially assigned by their peers.

The transformation of student identities or subjectivities was a central objective of both the service-learning instructors and providers. It was also a major factor in our methodology. We used student evaluations to assess the value of service-learning experiences, and the evaluations were basically a test of whether the transformation we hoped for actually occurred. We used student journals, interviews with community partners, course evaluations, and other course documents to assess this change.

As a result of our experience, we offer practical suggestions to urban planning faculty and others who are interested in developing meaningful, sustainable service-learning partnerships that minimize the boundaries between campus and community, student and professional, learner and educator, expert and collaborator, and academic and practitioner. We suggest a pathway to service-learning experiences that can transform the subjectivities of all those involved.

Service-Learning at the USC Joint Educational Project

The USC Joint Educational Project (JEP), established in 1972, is housed in the university's College of Letters, Arts and Sciences. JEP partners with instructors who wish to offer their students the opportunity to work in communities for course credit. The organization places an average of 2,300 students each academic year. As a "full service" service-learning center, JEP staff develop and monitor service-learning assignments, design curricula, and evaluate students' service and academic performance.

Historically, JEP has placed most of its service-learning students at public schools in the predominantly Latino and African American working-class neighborhood surrounding the campus in South Los Angeles. More recently, JEP has partnered with nonprofit organizations and government entities to design service-learning projects. In addition to its work with undergraduate courses, JEP supports a small number of graduate students, "Salvatori Community Scholars," whose dissertation work contributes in some way to the public good, connecting them with undergraduate service-learning students who receive course credit for serving as research assistants for the Scholars.

Integrating Service-Learning and Urban Planning Pedagogy

In the Fall of 2007 and Spring of 2008, JEP partnered with the USC School of Policy, Planning, and Development to develop new service-learning assignments for students in Professor Clara Irazábal's introductory urban planning course. This chapter focuses on the first semester of this experience, Fall 2007. The course had five primary goals: (1) introduce students to urban planning and development and the theories and methods underlying planning processes; (2) introduce substantive subfields of planning (e.g., community planning, transportation, housing, urban design); (3) expand students' analytical, problem solving, and public presentation skills; (4) develop the capacity for reflective and socially responsible practice; and (5) develop research and collaboration skills (Irazábal 2007). Although the instructor

had taught this course several times, she had never integrated a community service-learning experience before 2006. Similarly, JEP had limited experience working with courses outside of the College of Letters, Arts and Sciences, or with placing service-learning students at nonprofit organizations or government agencies.

Irazábal and JEP staff identified the following goals for the service-learning assignments:

- Provide introductory students with pre-professional experiences in the same areas of urban planning explored in class;
- Allow students to use the theories and methods learned in class to address real urban planning problems;
- Encourage reflective practice and effective presentation skills by requiring weekly journals and periodic presentations;
- Develop students' capacity for teamwork and collaboration through their interactions with the staff of complex (and, in some cases, multiple) organizations and through their work with peers on group projects;
- Encourage the transformation of subjectivity and identity while developing professional urban planning skills.

With these goals in mind, JEP contacted the staff at a variety of organizations to discuss the possibility of developing a service-learning partnership. Rather than "cold calling" organizations, the instructors drew on existing relationships and contacts at sites that either the professor or JEP staff knew to be receptive to student interns and university partnerships. Ultimately, five new partnerships were established for the Fall 2007 course. These are outlined below.

1. **Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Los Angeles (CRA/LA).** The CRA/LA is a public agency established to address conditions of blight in Los Angeles. Its mission is to "make strategic investments to create economic opportunity and improve the quality of life for the people who live and work in our neighborhoods" (www.crala.org/). Five students worked with CRA/LA staff on a mapping project of downtown Los Angeles aimed at identifying strategic locations for "greening" public space by adding landscaping, pocket parks, street furniture, bicycle facilities, pedestrian amenities, crosswalks, and other street improvements.
2. **Los Angeles Department of City Planning.** Five students worked on the department's campaign to increase citizen participation. The

students designed a flyer to provide information about the city's General Plan, especially with regard to housing, and to inform the public about upcoming town hall meetings. Students also developed a directory of neighborhood councils.

3. **Association of African American Professionals (AAAP), California Elder Care Initiative.** The AAAP is a nonprofit dedicated to raising awareness about issues of concern to the African American community. Its Elder Care Initiative "aims to make systems more responsive to the needs of older adults in underserved communities, and also helps these seniors make more informed choices about health care, safety issues, financial management, housing options, community involvement, and supporting the educational needs of young children in their care" (www.aaprofessionals.org/, accessed 2007). Five students conducted research on nursing homes and other health services available to low-income, minority senior citizens in Los Angeles County. They also documented various city departments' planning projects related to the elderly.
4. **Inquilinos Unidos (IU).** Inquilinos Unidos (United Tenants) advocates on behalf of tenants to improve housing conditions in Central and South Los Angeles. Four students worked with IU to help them broker a partnership with the Human Relations Commission (HRC) of the City of Los Angeles, which shares the goal of increasing access to affordable housing in Los Angeles.
5. **William C. Velasquez Institute (WCVI).** WCVI is a nonprofit educational and research organization that studies ways to "improv[e] the level of political and economic participation in Latino and other underrepresented communities" (www.wcvi.org/). Four students worked with the Institute to plan the National Latino Congreso, an annual gathering of activists designed to develop policy agendas on a wide variety of issues affecting Latinos nationwide.

In addition to the placements at nonprofits and government agencies, ten students opted to develop urban planning "mini-courses," working in teams of three or four to teach fifth and sixth graders in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). Their lessons covered such topics as mapping, land use, transportation, and the environment. Eleven students worked as research assistants for Ferdinand Lewis (JEP's 2007-08 Salvatori Community Scholar), a PhD candidate in the School of Policy, Planning, and Development whose research considered the factors that inhibit or encourage the

use of public parks by children. Lewis trained the students in the use of an audit instrument designed to collect field data about safety, pollution, traffic, noise, and other factors that affect children's willingness or ability to play in urban parks.

Each of the service-learning assignments required sixteen hours of service over the course of the semester; the number of hours per week varied significantly by project, although most required two hours on-site every week for eight weeks. JEP asked students to rank the service-learning assignment options they preferred, and made placements based on student preferences, availability of the student and site staff, and student access to transportation for distant sites.

The Study's Evaluative Methodology

Because this was a new experience for both of us, we wanted to consider as many factors as possible to help evaluate the successes and failures of the course. Our data sources include students' weekly reflective essays, mid-term and final oral presentations, final written reports, student course and program evaluations, student grades, and site evaluations (i.e., agency staff evaluations of the students). Forty-four students enrolled in the course and each submitted weekly essays, resulting in over 300 essays. We conducted post-course interviews with site supervisors and a small number of students to get additional feedback about their experiences.

It soon became clear that some of the service-learning assignments were more successful than others in eliciting effective service and learning from the perspective of students and community organizations. We use "service" and "learning" in an expanded sense here, with implications beyond the academic tasks of the course. Rather, we followed an integrative approach to learning and service that includes the students' own characterizations of service and learning success.

One of the students in the class provided us with a useful tool that we adopted to categorize our findings. In her paper she observed that her service-learning assignment—teaching a mini-course to local elementary school students—resulted in what she deemed a "high service/low learning" experience:

The JEP program places USC students in local K-12 schools to teach 'mini-courses' as one alternative to placements in community agencies or nonprofits. The structure of this program is doomed to produce high-service/low-learning outcomes for the USC students. Regardless of their

enjoyment, and the intrinsic rewards, of their role as mentor, the USC student is still only parroting their own coursework, and at a less sophisticated level of understanding.

For this student, serving the community by teaching children was a personally rewarding experience but one with little educational value. While not all JEP mini-course students agreed with this assessment—indeed, many years of JEP program evaluation data suggest quite the opposite experience for most mini-course students—this particular student’s way of examining service and learning as separate components proved to be very useful for analyzing the outcomes of the course. Expanding on the student’s framework, we created four logical types to explore the strengths and weaknesses of each service-learning project: (1) high service–high learning, (2) high service–low learning, (3) low service–high learning, and (4) low service–low learning.

After getting a general sense of which service-learning assignments fit into which category, we used an inductive analytical approach to identify the key features of each type. Our impressions of the “high” and “low” learning outcomes associated with a particular assignment depended on how we defined “learning.” Similarly, our sense of what constituted a “high” or “low” service project became more complicated when we considered the perspectives of agency staff alongside those of the students.

Since the majority of our data come from student sources, our analyses focus primarily on the impacts and outcomes for students. However, we incorporate the perspectives of our community partners when relevant as well as our own reflections; our objective is to understand how the course transformed the subjectivities of all those involved.

High Service–High Learning

Our research identified several key elements that contribute to—or detract from—a successful service-learning project and make it more or less likely to transform student subjectivity.

Clearly-defined, significant projects

While students’ experiences varied at each site, three of the service-learning projects for the introductory planning course generally fit the “high service–high learning” profile: the CRA/LA, AAAP Elder Care Initiative, and Urban Parks projects. These three assignments shared several characteristics. First, they involved mutually beneficial service projects with well-defined tasks, producing results of great significance to the student, the site, and beyond.

The day-to-day tasks for these projects tended to be clear, concrete, and proportionate. For instance, *Jay*,¹ a student assigned to CRA/LA, describes his group's project:

My first week at the Community Redevelopment Agency was very productive and insightful . . . Our first order of business was to create a schedule of how we wanted to spend our time so that we could accomplish all our goals and still have time in the end to prepare for our presentation . . .

Our task is to: identify places where sidewalks can be extended without impacting traffic, identify places where landscaping, art, street furniture could go and to identify locations for mid-block paseos.

As *Jay* notes, this group understood the assignment and had a clear schedule for completing each task.

Students also enjoyed doing work that contributed to the "big picture." For example, the team assigned to Ferdinand Lewis's Urban Parks project hoped their research would have a wide-reaching impact. In their final report, the students wrote:

As a group we were determined to have our results serve a specific purpose besides the advancement of Mr. Lewis' degree. Our goal was to have our data as well as our analysis of the park situation in Los Angeles to be used by the city in future planning. We have already discussed amongst each other that we would like to submit all of our findings to the City Council as well as to the City's Parks and Recreation department.

The students working for the AAAP's Elder Care Initiative were also able to realize concrete results during the semester. The team produced a comprehensive map of nursing home services in Los Angeles County and at the end of the project, one of the students presented his team's work to an audience of over 200 policy makers. While the student, a junior policy, planning and development (PPD) major, learned a great deal from the experience, his team's efforts also informed the work of many who advocate on behalf of minority elders in the city.

These projects were beneficial for the hosts as well. Ferdinand Lewis (2008) noted the benefits of working with service-learning students:

First, the [Salvatori Community Scholar] Fellowship has given me a way to work out my methods in a "real world" situation that I could not have done by myself. Developing the research "instrument" is one of the hardest parts of the dissertation, and testing it in the field is a big part of the process. Having a research "team" gave me a way to find out what works, and what doesn't, much more efficiently than I could have done alone.

Also, the undergrads brought much more than their commitment and enthusiasm to the table—they also brought alternate perspectives and opinions, which I would not have had on my own. Equally important, though, is the opportunity I've had to train undergraduates in the process of advanced research. There is an aphorism that "teaching a subject is the best way to learn it" . . . Training the undergrads for my project has trained me for this research, more effectively than I could have imagined.

High level of support from on-site staff

The students in these assignments received a relatively high level of mentoring, supervision, and training from the project staff. The staff viewed their work with service-learning students as an investment in their programs and many saw themselves as coeducators for the students. They took time to meet individually with students, answer their questions, and provide training and guidance. These projects had support at the highest levels of the organization; the department's deputy chief helped design the service-learning project for the CRA/LA, and the executive director of the AAAP served as the students' supervisor.

These professional urban planners were passionate about their work and eager to impart their knowledge and enthusiasm to students. The deputy director who oversees the CRA/LA department in which the service-learning students served described his goals for the project:

One is that we want to create an environment in which there is the opportunity to learn. Two, we wanted to see that there is a way that what they're getting the academic training in can be applied—[a] practical application side to the academic training.

This exceptional group of supervisors taught the students professional skills related to their work as planners and gave them access to experts with these skills. Students at CRA/LA, for example, were introduced to a GIS mapping software program, and Lewis taught his research assistants a variety of data-gathering techniques, including the use of instruments designed to measure the environmental features of public spaces. The students recognized and appreciated the support provided by their site supervisors. *Spencer*, a sophomore PPD major, stated:

Both of [our supervisors] have been very helpful in giving us books and printouts which would be pertinent to our project. Actually, it came as a pleasant surprise that they actually took a lot of time to help us.

Close connection between service and course assignments

A third characteristic of high service–high learning projects was a close alignment between the deliverable for the agency and the research project assigned for the course. We discovered this primarily through our review of student evaluations of other projects that did *not* relate closely to the course. For example, the team assigned to work with the Los Angeles Department of City Planning wrote the following:

Overall, we were unfortunately unable to obtain primary or secondary research and actually contribute to the revision process. We felt that we were underutilized by our supervisor and her colleagues, and wish we could have contributed a more substantial amount to the organization.

Transformed subjectivities

These high service-high learning assignments were the most likely to transform the subjectivity of students, encourage them to see the world and themselves as urban planners do, grasp a more comprehensive realization of the challenges and opportunities faced by professionals in the field, and become more informed and sensitized about social responsibility and ethics in the profession. Even as early as the first week of the assignment, some students felt the impact of their experiences. *Paula* describes her first week at the AAAP:

On my first day . . . we talked about personal goals and the goals the Initiative is trying to achieve . . . I walked away feeling important, professional, and also with the idea that I was finally going to be able to make a difference and have an impact on the lives of other individuals.

At the end of the semester, the same student reflected:

These past weeks working with the AAAP and their Elder Care Initiative have been an exhausting, however amazing, experience . . . I learned that planning is one of the most important aspects of life . . . it is the basis of organization within cities. I also learned that planning is not an easy job, especially when dealing with a large city like Los Angeles. It requires a lot of research, thought, telephone calls, and driving! Through this program though, I have discovered that this is the job for me. It was a solidifying aspect in my choosing to be a PPD major.

Carlos, who worked with Lewis on the Urban Parks research project, described what he learned from his experiences in two journal entries near the end of his eight-week assignment:

Echo Park is a large, beautiful park with so much potential. I attended the park my whole life, however, when I attended the park with Mr. Ferdinand Lewis I was taught to see the park in a completely different light. (Week Seven)

To begin I would like to say I didn't know what my future with a degree in PPD would be. I have enjoyed PPD 227 and all the activities we have participated in so much that I wish to pursue a career in planning and development. When I look at cities I see them differently, as I have gained knowledge about [what] the city planners may have thought before it was constructed. (Week Eight)

High Service—Low Learning

In these assignments, the service projects were of great help to the agency but generally did not provide the opportunity for students to learn or apply new skills related to the course. Three projects fell into this category—the Department of City Planning, the William C. Velasquez Institute, and the LAUSD mini-courses. The fundamental problem with each assignment—from the students' point of view—was that the work involved mundane or simplistic tasks that were unrelated to course objectives.

Despite the lofty goals of the major projects in which they were involved—e.g., to increase civic participation or to convene a national policy-making forum—the actual work of the students often involved basic, low-skill tasks that are essential to an organization but not reflective of the professional work performed by urban planners. Students spent much of their time finding contact information for individuals, confirming speakers, or entering information into a database. Put simply by one student who worked for the City Planning Department: “All the tasks and errands I did could have been done if I worked at Kinko's rather than City Hall.”

Similarly, some of the students placed in the Los Angeles Unified School District complained that their assignments—teaching young children about urban planning—made it difficult to engage with course concepts in a “sophisticated” way. The process of developing lesson plans more closely mirrored the work of teachers than urban planners. This was a source of frustration to some students who had no intention of becoming school-teachers or professors of urban planning.

At the William C. Velasquez Institute, the initial plan was for the service-learning students to work on the Institute's “Greening of the Los Angeles River” project. However, as one of the lead sponsors of the National Latino

Congreso, the agency needed more help to organize the conference, which occurred midway through the semester. *Lauren*, a junior, describes her assignment at the Velasquez Institute:

After the orientation and tour we were given a list of officials, CEOs, politicians, and other important figureheads in the Latino community, and we were instructed to call them (or their assistants) and find out if they would be able to speak at the Congreso or if they had to decline the invitation. I was disappointed with the assignment that [I was] given, but at the same time I did not have any expectations . . . Although I understand that what I did on Monday was very important in securing speakers at the Congreso, I hope that as the weeks progress my tasks will be more exciting.

The supervisor at WCVI acknowledged that the project was not ideal for students:

It probably exactly wasn't what the students were looking for in the end. You know, I know that we did the best that we could. When they first negotiated, I believe they negotiated for river project stuff. So this is slightly different . . . With the nature of how short a time they had per week and then the nature of us in a frantic organizing mode, we couldn't quite give them, you know, a project they could call their own.

The students who benefited most from these assignments made efforts to go above and beyond the initial scope. Unlike his teammates at the Department of City Planning, *Robert* took time to talk with urban planners about their work and learn more about the goals of the project. He wrote:

Everyday we came out of the office, I felt a sense of accomplishment knowing that, however small our progress was for that day, we were still able to make somewhat of an impact. Going into the experience my ultimate goal was to come out with knowledge of an aspect of the field of urban planning. I feel that I've accomplished this overall goal as I have obtained knowledge regarding not only what [my supervisor] does in regards to city planning, but also an overall knowledge of the goals of city planners and the work that goes into planning a city.

Robert's comments contrast with those from *David*, another student at the site:

I am by no means a negative person, however, the work I did for City Hall really had nothing to do with the planning class that I'm currently enrolled in . . . I really had no premeditated goals going into the semester

therefore I was not upset when I came to find out our job was simply "busy work" in a planning type environment.

These examples show that while the assignment design is important to student learning outcomes, so is the attitude of the individual student. Students who took advantage of the resources and experiences available to them were more likely to have positive learning outcomes, regardless of the scope of the service-learning project itself. These depictions also suggest that "learning," to a large extent, is in the eye of the beholder. Nevertheless, it is very likely that the students would have benefited more had these projects involved consistent, pre-professional experiences that were closely aligned with the goals of the course.

Low Service–High Learning

Two service-learning projects had "low service–high learning" outcomes for most students. These projects benefited the students personally and academically but provided little apparent service to the organizations. The staff at Inquilinos Unidos, for example, initially tasked the students working with the city's Human Relations Commission to develop a joint effort to improve affordable housing options in Los Angeles. The broader mission of the organization inspired the service-learning assignment: "Our objective in this project is to not only find a way to produce more affordable housing, but more importantly to make affordable housing more equitable," explained one student. "The work we are conducting will help improve the quality of life of these tenants who have been exploited and forced to live in unsanitary conditions," noted another. However, the steps necessary to reach these considerable goals were unclear. As a result, the students initially struggled with the placement since the "service" component lacked direction and structure.

Over the course of the semester, the students settled into a "participant-observer" role, interviewing the staff, observing meetings, and shadowing the work of their supervisors. The agency staff mentored the students, developing enriching experiences for them that deviated from the typical service-learning project. For example, the staff at the HRC and IU took the students on tours of public housing and new multiuse developments and arranged for them to interview tenants and landlords. They spent considerable time meeting with the students and sharing their professional experiences and wisdom. They connected the students to colleagues in other city departments and organizations. These impromptu tours and interviews, and the reports and other materials they gathered, were a rich source of "data" for the research paper

assigned for the course. In short, these professional urban planners were an invaluable resource for the students, who used what they learned from their experiences to produce “A”-quality work for the course.

The contributions to the organizations were less tangible, however. Regarding the benefit of the collaborative project for IU, *Evan* concluded:

As for Inquilinos Unidos and their relationship with the HRC, I feel both organizations would greatly benefit from future collaboration.

Evan cited the value of the experience and suggested that she learned about the resources available in city government regarding public housing. However, she also suggested that the students did not contribute in a meaningful way to IU, which presumably already knew that the “HRC has great resources” and had hoped to establish a collaborative plan of action.

We include the William C. Velasquez Institute in both the low service-high learning and high service-low learning categories. While the students felt that they learned little about urban planning through their service-learning assignment at the WCVI office, actually attending the National Latino Congreso turned out to be a highlight of the semester. Yet the experience at the Congreso was a “bonus” unrelated to their actual service-learning project. We comment on it here to highlight the inherent unpredictability of service-learning and to encourage readers to be on the lookout for such unplanned “teachable moments.”

Lauren explains:

At first, I did not think any of the stuff we were doing at the Institute was relevant for the course, but when we actually attended the Congreso we were able to learn a lot . . . We were able to generate a lot of ideas for our final project.

Araceli concurred:

Although I did not learn much through the planning process of the Congreso, I did learn a lot when I got to sit in on some of the workshops for the Congreso . . . Something great we also got out of the Congreso was the many contacts and great people we met through the Congreso.

The ability to attend the Congreso at no cost was a reward for all the “busy work” the students did for the WCVI. The volunteer responsibilities at the Congreso were minimal so they were able to take full advantage of the professional conference. The greatest learning—both personal and academic—for this group of students was only indirectly related to the

service provided to the organization. However, service-learning pedagogy is fundamentally about mutually beneficial partnerships, not just positive student outcomes. Indeed, the first “principle of good practice” that has guided the service-learning field for more than two decades states that an effective program “engages people in responsible and challenging actions for the common good” (Honnet and Poulsen 1989).

Low Service–Low Learning

The fourth type of service-learning project results in few benefits to either the organization or student. Fortunately, none of the assignments in our course had this outcome, but our review of other types allow us to surmise the factors that are likely to characterize “low service–low learning” assignments: (1) poorly-defined projects, (2) little direction or support by site staff, (3) little initiative by students, and (4) unclear connection between service projects and expected learning outcomes.

Notwithstanding the inherent unpredictability of service-learning outcomes, the risks for “low service–low learning” results can be greatly minimized with appropriate pre-course planning and in-course monitoring. Similarly, post-course evaluation can assist in identifying problems in order to make changes that will promote “high service–high learning” experiences in the future.

The Challenges of “High Service–High Learning” Projects

The goal for service-learning should be to create high service–high learning projects. However, the organizations that clearly benefited from the service provided by students identified several challenges. Many were related to the short-term nature of service-learning assignments, which can be difficult for organizations that do not operate on a semester calendar. It can be taxing for organizations to craft a project that is limited in scope yet meaningful to both the students and the site.

The “Perfect” Service-Learning Assignment?

The Green Mapping project at CRA/LA was a perfect service-learning assignment from the point of view of the students. They learned valuable new skills as they walked the streets of downtown Los Angeles, identifying potential green spaces and documenting them with cameras and GPS

equipment. They received expert mentoring from professional staff and their written product served both the organization and the course. Indeed, this service-learning assignment was the envy of the class—or at least for those students in “high service–low learning” assignments who felt short-changed by their experiences. One student expressed this sentiment in an anonymous course evaluation:

The big problem was that some class members had the opportunity to work with organizations doing professional planning work, to learn professional skills, and to network with professional planners, while others had to teach fifth graders and do research on education issues, rather than planning issues, *per se*.

From the point of view of the CRA/LA, managing a service-learning project—even a “high service” project—is a challenging endeavor and requires a significant investment of time and resources. The CRA/LA staff supervisor, who has hosted other service-learning students and who happens to be a former graduate student of the course instructor, commented:

We’ve spent a lot of time coming up with a project that would be meaningful to the CRA/LA . . . [and] meaningful to the students . . . It’s not especially hard but it’s time consuming and so we’ve spent a lot of time making sure that what they’re doing is something that’s valuable all the way around.

In the end, the CRA/LA staff contributed nearly as many hours to development and support of the project as they received from the service-learning students.

Another high service–high learning project, at the Association of African American Professionals, also struggled with time management issues. The supervisor worked directly with the students and invested considerable time and energy into ensuring that they had meaningful experiences. She set high standards for herself and extended these to the students with whom she worked; just as she committed far more than a few hours per week to the project, she expected the same from the students.

Practical Steps for Transforming Subjectivities

We offer a list of questions for urban planning instructors and community partners to consider in order to cocreate truly transformative and mutually beneficial service-learning assignments.

• **For the university instructor:** Begin by thinking about the goals for your course and the learning experience that you seek for your students. Consider what the students might learn in a community context that they are unlikely to learn in a classroom.

- What type(s) of service-learning assignment is (are) most likely to help your students achieve the learning objectives of the course? Do these projects lend themselves better to individual or group work?
- Will the service component be required or optional? How much credit will be assigned to the service component? How will the work be assessed?
- What kind of pre-service training or orientation will be provided for the students and who will provide it? What information about the course and project needs to be included in that training? Could the training take place during class time? If not, when and where?
- What special skills are required for the service-learning assignment (e.g., direct contact with a Spanish-speaking population, the opportunity to practice certain technical skills)? Are there any prerequisites for the course?
- How will the students' work at the site benefit the organization?
- What are the short- and long-term goals of the service-learning project for the students?
- How will the instructor facilitate the delivery of research findings and final reports to the community partners after the service-learning projects end?
- What are the mechanisms for keeping track of student work (time sheets, attendance slips, sign-in logs, journal entries, etc.)?
- What are the mechanisms for discussing challenges with community partners?
- How will you incorporate the students' community experiences into classroom activities (e.g., reflection, course assignments)?
- Be sure to leave space to take advantage of teachable moments, as the inherent "messiness" and unpredictability of the pedagogy is often what leads to the most meaningful outcomes for students.

For the community organization: Begin by thinking about the work of your organization and break it down into concrete tasks. Understand the skills and time required to accomplish each task. Identify the additional assistance, skills, and knowledge that would benefit your organization and consider how service-learning students (in particular disciplines, such as planning) might help you fill this gap, breaking it down into concrete tasks. How much time does each task take? What skills are required to do the work?

- What type(s) of service-learning assignment would best serve the organization (e.g., direct service, consultation, research)?
- What will the students do, specifically, for the organization? Provide as many details about the project as possible.
- What special skills are required, if any? What kind of pre-service training or orientation will be provided for the students and who will provide it? What information about the organization and/or project needs to be included in that training?
- How many students can the organization adequately manage and in what roles?
- How much on-site training and supervision are the students likely to require? How many hours per week will the staff have to mentor students?
- What will students learn from their service experiences? How does this link to the course goals and requirements?
- What are the intended short- and long-term goals of the service-learning project for the organization?
- How can the service-learning project further the organization's mission?
- How will the organization implement the recommendations, use the research findings, or sustain the service outcomes after the project ends?
- How can the organization build on the project for future service-learning courses (in either the same or a different discipline)?
- What are the mechanisms for keeping track of student work (time sheets, attendance slips, sign-in logs, etc.)?
- What processes are in place for discussing challenges with university partners?

- How else could the organization contribute to the class (e.g., guest lecture, attend or host student class presentations, assist with student/project evaluations)?
- What other kinds of assistance could the organization use to more effectively manage students? Is this assistance available elsewhere at the university or in the community?