

“Cities Are Places, Too”<sup>i</sup>:  
Urban Studies Education at the Secondary Level

A dual senior project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts  
in Educational Studies and Urban Studies

by

Sophie Mode

Advisor: Maria Hantzopoulos

Second Reader: John Elrick

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank my incredible advisor, Maria Hantzopoulos, who provided the grounding and support I needed throughout this process. Thank you for expanding my understanding of research, for helping me stay calm through my chaos, and discussing New York City public school politics when I needed a break. This would not have been possible with you.

To John Elrick, for going above and beyond as a second reader, I understand the importance of urban studies because of you. To Leonisa Ardizzone, my first education professor and mentor of the last four years. To Brian Godfrey, for all of your guidance. To John Bradley, for connecting me to PHS. To Erin McClosky, Katherine Hite, Kimberly Williams Brown, Kahdeidra Monét Martin, Erica Stein, Allison Puglisi, and every professor who forever changed how I think. To my fellow Education and Urban Studies majors, I am so grateful to have learned from you.

To the students I had the honor of working with at Poughkeepsie High School and to Ms. Cat Bryson, for welcoming me into your classroom. Thank you all for your openness, excitement, and support. Getting to work with and learn from you has been the best and most important part of this project. I am more grateful than I can ever say for the inspiration and joy you brought.

To all the incredible organizers, educators, and leaders I have had the honor of working with at the Service Learning Project, Youth Journalism Coalition, Teens Take Charge, OnPAR, EngagePK, and OCEL who inspire me every day.

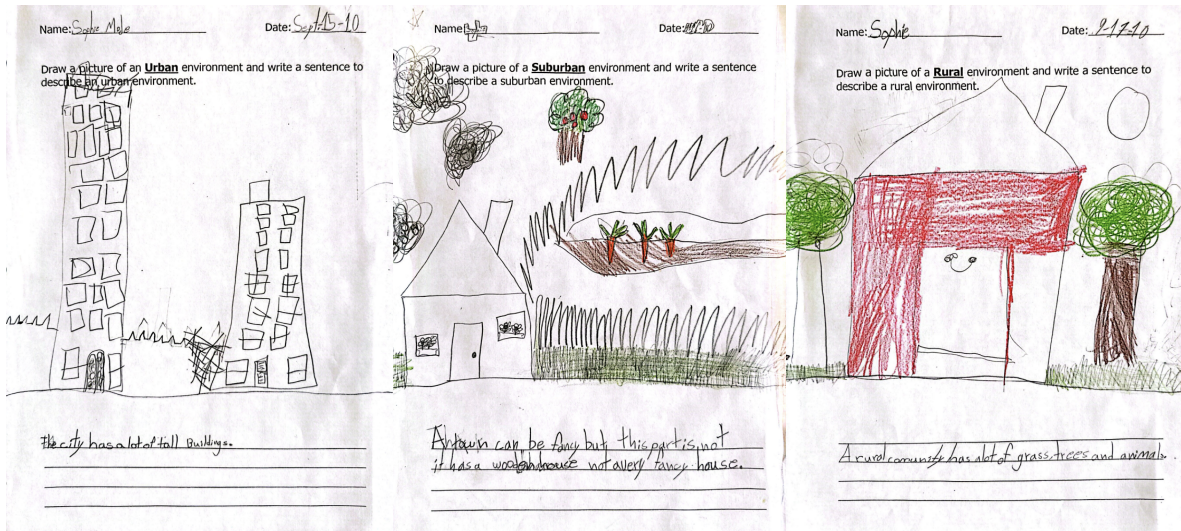
To Mo Kelly, for all the grind and deal sessions, without which this thesis would not have been possible. You define Vassar for me. To Annie Brewer and Cai Hellman, for all of the support and the joy you have brought me this year.

To Henry Burdick, whose nightly phone calls were my foundation of support over this year. Thank you for your endless encouragement and excitement.

To Graeme Lauterbach-Mason, for your professional partnership, and for changing my life.

To Ia Andrews, who has been my pillar for the last nine and a half years. I wouldn't be at Vassar without you.

To Henry Mode, for being my best friend. To David Mode, for showing me how much I had to say, giving me the confidence to vocalize it, and for teaching me how important it is to do the same for others. And most of all to Liz Pitofsky, who through truly incredible will got me here, and has raised me to be the most engaged, empathetic community member I could be since I was born. I want to be you when I grow up.



*My first urban studies education, in second grade at age seven.*

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	4
Chapter One: Place as Personal and Grassroots Urban Planning .....	13
Chapter Two: Critical Community-Engaged Place-Based Education .....	22
Chapter Three: Curriculum Overview & Lesson Plans .....	30
Chapter Four: Reflections & Implications .....	55
Appendix A: Course Materials .....	68
Appendix B: Reflection Form Questions .....	86
Appendix C: Reflection Form Results.....	88
Bibliography .....	90



## INTRODUCTION

I remember the moment in which I knew urban studies was a field I had to pursue more seriously. I was in a class called Cinemas and Urbanisms, and I learned one specific fact: that a major part of the reason homeless populations in Los Angeles congregate in Skid Row is because planners have very intentionally pushed groups into that space through the use of anti-homeless architecture in the surrounding area. One can see the difference literally in the benches that exist in the Skid Row area and then just a few blocks from the central point, in the bright lights that shine all night on the edges of Skid Row and beyond. I remember realizing the extent to which the major social issues which concern me are embedded in our physical landscape, and as a result I saw a completely new and expansive realm of solutions we could explore to solve some of these issues. It felt like a field that prepared me with the necessary tools to analyze my environment, landscape, and community by focusing on root causes and a broad imagination of a new future. It felt like a field grounded in both critical ideological practices and the practical, material, lived experiences of community members. It opened my mind, and empowered me to realize a breadth of new possibilities for ways that I could engage with my community and address the issues I care most about.

With this senior project, I hoped to empower students using the same tools that I have received through the development of a six week urban studies elective which I taught to a class of students at Poughkeepsie High School.

My research questions are twofold: How does further developing a student's sense of place impact their desire to be engaged community members and citizens? How can urban studies as a field serve as a tool for empowerment at the secondary level?

My hypothesis was that urban studies as a field of study is a tool with which educators can empower their students. My definition of empowerment is very specific here. Young people are having constant experiences of place, and feelings about those experiences, but are never given the space to reflect on or share these ideas. When students are given a setting in which they are provided language and tools to understand their own experience of place, encouraged to share those experiences (whatever they might be), and have the platform to engage with other young people about their similar and differing experiences, they will feel more equipped and encouraged to address the issues that concern them. Before young people can make change, they have to have room to discuss what needs to be changed and be supported by adults who tell them that what they have to say matters, and that they have the power to make that change.

In addition, I anticipated that when students feel more deeply connected to the place they live, and understand more about the systems that impact their daily lives and the structures that govern them, they will feel both more inclined to participate and included in the political process. I use the term participate broadly, to mean engaging in any action that benefits any community they might find themselves a part of, with the knowledge that community members engage with each other and take action in different and equally important ways. I believe that always, and particularly in our current geopolitical climate, it is essential for educators to focus on a variety of means by which we can help our students feel empowered, encourage them to feel a responsibility to their communities, and push them towards meaningful engagement and action.

In this thesis, I will discuss the impact that the project had on the student participants, and the implications these experiences hold for future work with students and teachers who might utilize the designed curriculum. I hope that the work students produced and the experiences they

had in the course prove that place-based learning with a more comprehensive focus on urban studies is beneficial to students, and can be incorporated more broadly and beyond this course.

In conducting this project, my hope was that ultimately, when students participated in this program, they felt more deeply connected to their local communities and saw the ways in which the issues that matter most to them are connected to decision making around their physical landscape. I also hoped that the concrete nature of urban studies would help pathways of social change feel more possible and accessible. All activities in the course were meant to help participating students see the ways in which issues of social justice can be either furthered or undone through changes to the spatial landscape, and thus they will see planning and related tools of the field as an opportunity through which they can analyze and make change.

The course included 7 students from Poughkeepsie High School (PHS) as well as an eighth student for the final two class sessions, and we met once a week over six weeks, each time for fifty five minutes. I pushed into a co-credit class, where students were receiving high school credit and college credit from Dutchess Community College, titled Social Problems in Today's World. The process of connecting with a school or other opportunity to teach the course was very challenging. I tried multiple avenues in both public and private schools in Poughkeepsie, and a public library in Kingston, reaching dead ends each time. Ultimately, I reached out to Exploring College, a four year enrichment and mentorship program run through the Vassar Education Collaborative and their director, John Bradley, ended up connecting me with Ms. Bryson from PHS. After a very challenging recruitment process that felt like it might never be successful, this ended up being a perfect fit, matching my initial goal of doing this program within the Poughkeepsie City School District (PCSD).

For context, PHS is the only high school in the district. The district is in close proximity to two other school districts, the Arlington Central School District and the Spackenkill Union Free School District. The districts are highly segregated and stratified. The racial demographics of the student population in the PCSD are 44% Black or African American, 43% Hispanic or Latino, 7% multiracial, 4% white, and 1% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander. 82% of students are classified as economically disadvantaged and 16% are English Language Learners.<sup>1</sup> The student makeup of my course differed from the general racial demographics of the school, as all students in my course were Black or African American.

Throughout the course, students explored different themes in urban studies in order to more deeply understand their relationship to place. In between course meetings, students completed exercises that helped them connect what they were learning in the course to their lived experience of place every day.

To conduct my project, I followed three key phases. First, I developed the curriculum through an iterative feedback process. Second, I taught the course and conducted personal critical reflection as I journaled about the teaching and implementation experience. Finally, I conducted qualitative coding and analysis of my journals and all student outputs and reflection materials. Throughout the process, I also revised the curriculum to address what I learned through teaching the course. As a result, the curriculum itself may have differences to the version I taught to students but is more appropriate and effective for use by other educators in different classroom or afterschool settings.

I believe that this project addresses a gap in the field I see around urban studies education at the secondary level at large while also building on critical existing research. I have found

---

<sup>1</sup> “Poughkeepsie City School District Enrollment (2023-24),” *New York State Education Department (NYSED) Data*, 2024, <https://data.nysed.gov/enrollment.php?year=2024&instid=800000053351>.

many sources addressing the importance of place-based education, but much of what I found (particularly in terms of concrete curricular resources) is focused on environmental education, not urban studies as more of an interdisciplinary field. I find urban studies to include elements of environmental education, but also to have a unique impact by bridging together a deep involvement in the sociology, geography, history, and politics of one's local community and connecting that to greater systems that shape our world. I believe that the multidisciplinary nature of urban studies is what makes it so important, and its impacts need to be expanded beyond just higher education settings.

This research also builds on existing work around social justice education, service learning, and action civics education, but particularly emphasizes spatial reading as a tool in that work. It is also unique in its existence as a stand-alone unit, as place-based education is often incorporated into existing subjects (often Social Studies or Science).

Another area that this will grow research in is through its focus on cities. One of the most impactful quotes I discovered in the research process for this work is “cities are places too.”<sup>2</sup> These words, which became the title of the project, were written by Gregory A. Smith and David Sobel, two leaders in the field of place-based learning, in their seminal book *Place- and Community-Based Education in Schools*. Often, place-based learning has focused on more rural places where students can conduct more hands-on environmental research. As a result, places where there are farms, fields, forests, rivers, etc. are seen as the only locations for students to critically engage with physical locations. We often forget and ignore that there is just as much to analyze in a city, from the sidewalks students walk on to the buses they ride to the size of the buildings that surround them. This has also impacted the critical equity disparities in access to

---

<sup>2</sup> Gregory A. Smith and David Sobel, *Place-and community-based education in schools* (New York: Routledge, 2010), x.

place-based learning opportunities, as cities tend to be where students of color are living and learning. This equity gap has long term implications when one considers the proven impact of place-based learning. It is another example of how the voices of underserved communities continue to be ignored and marginalized.

In addition, I would be remiss to not acknowledge the complexities of “urban education” as a field of study. The term is often not used to unpack what it means to educate students in an urban geographical context, or to educate students on spatial themes and issues. It is often used as a synonym to mean education of Black students, particularly low-income Black students, similarly to the term “inner-city students.” This is not what this project is doing, and is why I will continue to use the phrase “Urban Studies Education” instead. This work very explicitly names the racial history and context at play when we consider spatial and social justice issues. While I hope this curriculum and course will impact the most marginalized of students in order to play a role in undoing historical systems of oppression, I am speaking very specifically to the role of the urban in education, not using the word urban as a synonym.

Another area that this study seeks to address is building on research around the general intersections between urban planning and education. I have discovered much research about the impact of urban planning on education, particularly around issues of zoning and segregation, but very little on the potential impact of education on urban planning. Urban planning is often discussed in a way that is not very accessible to outside participation, particularly for young people. There is little if any discussion of how youth could be involved in the urban planning process at all outside of the work of the Center for Urban Pedagogy, which I will discuss in my curricular materials. I see two major flaws with this. First, is that we will not be able to build a successful system of grassroots urban planning, where decisions are reflective of the needs and

desires of community members, if people do not feel desire or preparedness to engage in such processes. We must start this young if we want new generations to engage in collective planning processes. Second, is that youth hold critical knowledge about the experience of place, they just often are not provided with the language, tools, or opportunities to make those experiences known. If we want to truly engage communities as full partners in the planning process, we must include young people in this as well.

Urban studies education at the secondary level is not just an exercise, but a commitment to our students. By providing students with the concrete tools and lenses to understand the spatial manifestations of the issues they care about, we are helping them understand the world in a more accessible, tangible, and less overwhelming way. We are also showing them that if problems are manifesting themselves spatially, solutions can as well. We are preparing our students to plan for a more inclusive, accessible, equitable, and sustainable future, the four key words of this course.

In chapters one and two, I will contextualize my work with relevant literature in the field. In chapter one I will focus on the urban studies frameworks I utilized, addressing the personal nature of place and grassroots urban planning. This research is addressing the ways in which place is already such a personal and impactful experience for individuals, even without an urban studies education. From the emotional experience of moving through a city to the experience of memory and legacy and its physical embodiment in our landscapes, people are questioning and thinking about place and community all the time, we just are not often naming it. This is deeply connected to the idea of grassroots urban planning, meaning that decisions about our spatial landscape should be made in a participatory, bottom-up process. Theorists around this field make it clear that our physical world must reflect the actual needs of our communities, not just the elite

in positions of wealth or power. This must engage community members in a meaningful way, where community knowledge is respected and they are given genuine decision making power.

In chapter two I will dive into the educational theories and pedagogical practices which have shaped both my process of curriculum design and teaching of the course. All of my work is grounded in critical and community engaged learning praxes, a very broad area that encompasses critical research on best practices for engaging with community in an ethical way and addressing the critical elements of identity and positionality that impact how students and educators both engage in the classroom, particularly around issues of social justice. This project is also grounded in the field of place-based education, which is the study of both the importance of engaging students with their physical contexts and local communities and best practices in successfully doing so to develop engaged, active citizens.

In chapter three, I will share the actual curriculum that I have developed, as well as a brief summary of my goals and the texts and organizations that guided my process of curricular and instructional design. The curriculum is very hands-on and interactive, focused on activities that facilitate learning for students in a scaffolded manner to help them come to understand key concepts in the field. There are six lessons that include activities around personal mapmaking, the built environment, the relationship between social and spatial justice, creative placemaking, and more. In between each lesson I also provide an exercise for students to complete that will help them connect what we are learning to their everyday lives and build towards the creation of a multimedia atlas.

In chapter four, I will reflect on the experience of teaching the course and share my findings based on the data I collected during the project implementation phase. This includes my own personal reflections and journaling on teaching the course, and adapting the curriculum to



fit the students needs and interests. It also will include specific experiences of students in the class, details from the materials they developed, and findings from their reflection materials. I will place these findings in the context of my two research questions, and in the greater context of debates in both education and urban studies, particularly the areas discussed in my literature review. I hope the project I have conducted has both deeply impacted the students who participated and successfully makes the case for the role of urban studies in the classroom and youth in the urban planning process.

Conducting this project has been an immensely meaningful and critical experience for me. In both my academic and organizing work I have struggled with abstract conversations, from conducting research that did not feel like it would have any tangible impacts on the communities I was a part of to having endless discussions about the issues I care about without making the transition to action. With this thesis, I hoped to change this. I hope to bring action front and center, emphasize direct engagement with my community, and focus on concrete strategies for bringing these values outside of higher education and into the K-12 classroom. I hope that others find inspiration in this project, and can find meaning in urban studies education for them and their students as well.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Place as Personal and Grassroots Urban Planning

To understand why I believe urban studies education can be so beneficial in a secondary setting, it is critical to delve into the personal nature of place, particularly the power that place has on our personal development and vice versa.

Place as a concept is critical, and one that has been a deeply contested site of deliberation with a significant body of work unpacking, debating, critiquing, and discussing what place means, how we can define it, and how it shapes our lives. One of the most foundational texts comes from Doreen Massey in her essay “Power-geometry and a progressive sense of place.” In this piece, Massey both presents her own theories of place and critiques others, and encourages us to redefine place more broadly as a set of social relations, intersectional processes, flows and interconnections, and distinct power structures. She explains that a place is “constructed out of particular interactions and mutual articulations of social relations, social processes, experiences and understandings” that are significantly shaped “on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself, whether that be a street, a region or even a continent.”<sup>3</sup>

Massey also believes that a shift in our understanding of place to a more progressive view will have critical implications, explaining that these new conceptualizations allow us to understand place in a more socially imaginative way which will in turn enable us to address the major issues of concern around us with greater imagination.<sup>4</sup> This shift can start with young people.

---

<sup>3</sup> Doreen Massey, “Power-geometry and a progressive sense of place,” in *Mapping the Futures: Local cultures, global change*, ed. by Jon Bird, et. al, (London: Routledge, 1993), 66.

<sup>4</sup> Massey, “Power-geometry,” 63.

Rebecca Solnit is a more recent writer, who is both unpacking similar themes around place in her writing and practicing the kind of study that Massey implores us to pursue, particularly through the unique atlases she constructs. Solnit defines place very similarly to Massey, writing, “What we mean by *place* is a crossroads, a particular point of intersection of forces coming from many directions and distances.” She also problematizes common understandings of place, which she feels are often “implying a discrete entity, something you could put a fence around.” She provides an incredible image for how the concept of this kind of border fails, as she describes a high-security nuclear test site in which they put up a real fence of barbed wire around a 1,375 square mile area, but explains that “it didn’t keep in the radiation or keep out the politics.”<sup>5</sup>

Ultimately, Solnit, like Massey, believes that place is extraordinarily important. She writes, “Places matter. Their rules, their scale, their design include or exclude civil society, pedestrianism, equity, diversity (economic or otherwise), understanding of where water comes from and garbage goes, consumption or conversation. They map our lives.”<sup>6</sup> This is our sense of place.

A sense of place can be defined as the way individuals perceive or experience elements of the physical landscape, as well as how this perception or experience impacts them emotionally, shapes how they interact with the physical landscape and their local community, and what can be revealed about their values or desires as a result. This can be differentiated

---

<sup>5</sup> Rebecca Solnit, *Storming the Gates of Paradise: Landscapes for Politics* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2007), 1.

<sup>6</sup> Solnit, *Storming the Gates of Paradise*, 9.

between two key terms: *place attachment*, or “a bond between people and places” and *place meaning*, “symbolic meanings people ascribe to places.”<sup>7</sup>

Solnit agrees how important our sense of place is, and encourages us to consider a more holistic view of what makes up a place as we examine this sense. She explains that “the way we inhabit places also matters, and that comes from experience, imagination, belief, and desire as much as or more than from architecture and design.”<sup>8</sup>

It is also critical to understand that a sense of place is not a momentary experience, but a cumulative one that also incorporates historical elements of a place and what we want to imagine or contribute to the place in the future. There are large structures that shape these elements, such as “the intersections of culture, environment, history, politics, and economics” as well as “global mobility, migration, and blurred boundaries between the natural and built environment.”<sup>9</sup>

Dolores Hayden discusses these themes in her groundbreaking piece *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*. Hayden unpacks the intense emotional experience of place, and the way that urban planning defines our understanding of public history, by making some events visible and some invisible. Her work is unique in its merging of theory and practice, as well as her highly interdisciplinary approach. She explains, “From childhood, humans come to know places through engaging all five senses, sight as well as sound, smell, taste, and touch. Extensive research on perception shows the simultaneous engagement of several senses in orientation and wayfinding. Children show an interest in landmarks at three or earlier and by age five or six can read aerial maps with great accuracy and confidence, illustrating the human ability

---

<sup>7</sup> Jennifer Adams, et al., “Sense of Place,” in *Urban Environmental Education Review*, ed. Alex Russ and Marianne E. Krasny (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017), 69.

<sup>8</sup> Solnit, *Storming the Gates of Paradise*, 9.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

to perceive and remember the landscape.”<sup>10</sup> The desire to connect with and understand place is not only present, but embedded in us from birth. Hayden makes it clear that whether or not we talk about it, children are engaging with the world in an attempt to understand place and landscapes, and we must engage with this in a supportive and critical manner.

The power of place is not just internal, but connected to the formation of our communities and understanding of shared history as well. Hayden also writes, “The power of place-the power of ordinary urban landscapes to nurture citizens' public memory, to encompass shared time in the form of shared territory-remains untapped for most working people's neighborhoods in most American cities, and for most ethnic history and most women's history.”<sup>11</sup> Providing young people with opportunities to reflect on their understanding of place in a critical way also provides opportunities for students to more deeply understand their history, a necessary component of meaningful community engagement.

An area of study that can provide a strong lens for understanding the personal nature of place is the field of Psychogeography. The field was developed by the radical leftist collective of artists and cultural theorists called the Letterist International, later part of the Situationist International. Writer Wilfried Hou Je Bek explains, “Psychogeography is the fact that you have an opinion about a space the moment you step into it. This has as much to do with the space as with our hardwired instincts to determine if it is safe.”<sup>12</sup>

The two key practices that were fundamental in the initial vision of psychogeography were the *dérive*, or drift, and *détournement*, or turnabout. A *dérive* is an unplanned journey to

---

<sup>10</sup> Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1995), 16.

<sup>11</sup> Hayden, *The Power of Place*, 9.

<sup>12</sup> Karen O'Rourke, “Psychogeography: A Purposeful Drift Through the City,” *The MIT Press Reader*, July 16, 2021, <https://thereader.mitpress.mit.edu/psychogeography-a-purposeful-drift-through-the-city/>.

study a local landscape by experiencing the landscape differently than one would in their normal life. A détournement is when one reuses different elements to form something new. Both of these are meant to create “situations,” the ultimate goal of the Situationist International. Inspiration came from Charles Baudelaire’s flâneur, a “stroller” who is “constantly invaded by new streams of experience and develops new perceptions as he moves through the urban landscape and crowds.”<sup>13</sup> These tools are helpful both in understanding the ways in which we experience place in a personal way, and for invoking this feeling in young people.

Psychogeography both emphasizes the emotional and intimately personal experience of place, but also the power that one has over place, a power that can be used to build a new world and fight systems of oppression. They did not just want to experience place, but actively shape it. Constant, one of the founding members of the Situationist International wrote, “We, however, are committed to changing life here on earth... We are at the dawn of a new era, and we are already attempting to sketch out the image of a happier life, of a unitary urbanism—an urbanism designed for pleasure.”<sup>14</sup> There is a focus on action, on viewing place as important and then using that feeling to build a better life for all people today.

These ideas have been linked to other movements like Afro-futurism, eco-feminism, and Indigenous environmentalism. Hannah Steinkopf-Frank details “collective urban gardening, seed bombing to bring back native plants, and guerilla grafting fruit-bearing limbs onto trees” as a few examples of ways to “address issues around food insecurity, sustainability, and the restoration of nature in industrialized landscapes” that have similar methodologies to that of the Situationist

---

<sup>13</sup> Hannah Steinkopf-Frank, “Walkers in the City—and Everywhere,” *JSTOR Daily*, October 4, 2023, <https://daily.jstor.org/walkers-in-the-city-and-everywhere/>.

<sup>14</sup> Constant, “Another City for Another Life,” in *Situationist International Anthology: Revised and Expanded Edition*, ed. and trans. by Ken Knabb (Oakland, California: PM Press, 2024), 71.

International's psychogeography.<sup>15</sup> The Situationists provided models not just for reflecting on the ways that we have been shaped by our experience of place, but also using that to decide how we want to shape the physical place ourselves in return.

Recently, a Greek American painter named Gerasimos Floratos created a series of collages, drawings, and oil paintings titled "Psychogeography," meant to compare the busy systems of Time Square with the busy systems of the human body. In his press release, he wrote, "For me, psychogeography is about map-making. Mapping the inside of your mind simultaneously with your environment. Not the kind of linear maps we usually use, maps that simultaneously chart sensory data, emotions, memory, the physical body, culture, society etc."<sup>16</sup> This provides an example of the way in which we can broaden our conceptions of different geographical practices, particularly mapmaking. We can shift how we use a tool like this to not only unpack but emphasize the importance of the personal nature of place.

Also more recently, in *Momentary ambiances: psychogeography in action*, A.E. Souzis details her attempts to conduct psychogeographic experiments inspired by the ideas of the Situationist International, which Souzis hoped would "create disruptions that offer a momentary liberation from everyday life."<sup>17</sup> Psychogeography can clearly be used to relearn our own relationships to the built and natural environments, and can be a lens through which we can, like the Situationists hoped, use disruptions to imagine new situations that help us plan for the future of our communities.

In developing students' desire to participate in local civic life through a place-based lens, it is also critical to discuss the current state of citizen participation in urban planning, and a

---

<sup>15</sup> Steinkopf-Frank, "Walkers in the City."

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> A.E. Souzis, "Momentary Ambiances: Psychogeography in Action," *Cultural Geographies* 22, no. 1 (2015): 193–201, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26168633>.

vision for the future. Often, planning decisions are made by the elite who hold power and wealth, and thus are not reflective of the needs of the majority of a population. To prepare for the future of our urban spaces, we need to emphasize bottom-up participatory urban planning, such that it focuses on the daily lived experiences of the people who live in a community and encourages their participation in meaningful, genuine decision making processes.

The need for a shift in how planning decisions operate is not a new concept. Jane Jacobs discussed this at length, at one point writing, “If only well-meaning officials in departments of the city government or in freewheeling authorities knew intimately, and cared about, the streets or districts which their schemes so vitally affect—or if they knew in the least what the citizens of that place consider of value in their lives, and why.”<sup>18</sup> Jacobs also emphasizes the need to understand cities as processes, a sentiment which Massey shares as she writes “places are processes, too.”<sup>19</sup>

Any system of planning and governance needs to provide opportunities for people to share their input. However, community input forums are often treated as just a box to check off, not a meaningful engagement with the perspectives of the community. That is why Jacobs critically reminds readers that community knowledge must not only be heard but respected.<sup>20</sup> It does not matter if there are town halls or surveys if our planners and leaders do not view community knowledge as not only valuable, but necessary.

A similar approach is taken by David Morris and Karl Hess in their 1975 text *Neighborhood Power: The New Localism*. In this text, they highlight the need to design systems of governance around the neighborhood unit. While they explicitly say that the text is not a

---

<sup>18</sup> Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961), 528.

<sup>19</sup> Massey, “Power-geometry,” 66-67.

<sup>20</sup> Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 418.



manual, they provide very specific and concrete guidance around the development of neighborhood government systems. They describe the book as “a call for a return to a human scale of organization, a return of power to the people affected by that power, and a return to a sense of community.”<sup>21</sup> They explain that this begins with a deep value in citizenship, with a particular emphasis on the word “participate,” explaining that a lack of participation makes one not a citizen but merely a resident.<sup>22</sup> They describe the importance of not only having opportunities for people to participate in government and planning, but for individuals to take advantage of those opportunities. In addition to designing a system of participatory urban planning, we need to work towards a culture that views active citizenship as a critical priority and a responsibility of all.

There are writers today working to imagine a new age of the urban. Key texts that have influenced my work are *Urban Futures: Planning for City Foresight and City Visions* by Timothy J. Dixon and Mark Tewdwr-Jones and *The City of Today is a Dying Thing: In Search of the Cities of Tomorrow* by Des Fitzgerald. These writers reflect on ideas of the past, conflicts of the present, and imagination of the future to present theories around designing the best cities and spaces we can. Well representing the lens of their entire text, Dixon and Tewdwr-Jones write, “Rather it is to understand places – place uniqueness – and the need to harness intelligence about how places are changing beyond the expectations of politicians and businesses, to keep the best features of the past that people have an emotional place connection to, and to develop scenarios for the future that highlight good trajectories.”<sup>23</sup> In planning the cities of the future, we must rely on local knowledge and lived experiences in order to design cities that reflect the needs of the

---

<sup>21</sup> David Morris and Karl Hess, *Neighborhood Power: The New Localism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975), 14.

<sup>22</sup> Morris and Hess, *Neighborhood Power*, 7.

<sup>23</sup> Timothy J. Dixon and Mark Tewdwr-Jones, *Urban Futures: Planning for City Foresight and City Visions* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2021), 76.

communities who reside there. As Morris and Hess write, “politics should live there, where the people do.”<sup>24</sup>

These theories and examples provide critical grounding for my project in two key ways. First, they emphasize how important place is, and how critical it is to learn and have conversations about our experience of place. They also highlight that these experiences are not simple, and understanding place involves necessary unpacking and untangling. This is evidence of how important this kind of learning is for students, and that urban studies education would be effective because of what a personal and emotional subject area it is. Second, it provides a vision for the future that we have to prepare for, one where power and policy are grounded in the needs, ideas, and perspectives of a community. To prepare for this future we must start with young people today and consider how we can best equip them, leading us to the next chapter on pertinent educational frameworks.

---

<sup>24</sup> Morris and Hess, *Neighborhood Power*, 10.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Critical Community-Engaged Place-Based Education

In both developing the curriculum for this course and teaching it, I draw heavily on theories of both critical community-engaged education and place-based learning.

The first, critical community-engaged education, can be further broken down into two sub-components: critical education and community-engaged education. Critical education focuses on critical thinking, partially around issues of social justice, identity, and positionality, while community-engaged education, also called community-engaged learning, service-learning, or action civics focuses on combining academic and experiential work in order to build meaningful relationships, enhance civic desire and preparedness, and address community issues of concern. Community-engaged education relies on action, moving beyond the theoretical and making active change. These are areas in which research and pedagogical practices have rapidly developed recently, and their critical nature has become a fundamental contemporary discussion in the field. But, it has deep roots in historical education theories, particularly democratic education, Black feminist thought, liberatory education, and radical political education. Key figures that ground this kind of work include John Dewey, bell hooks, and Paulo Freire.

John Dewey is often credited with formally conceptualizing the idea of democratic education. Much of his writing surrounds the idea that school is a critical site for the development of an engaged citizenry, and the teaching and learning our students are exposed to will define how they engage with the world. He imagined a future of education that connected the learning in the classroom to students' experiences in the world, and that promoted active participation instead of passive learning through rote memorization. In his 1899 work *The School and Society*, Dewey wrote, "the school itself shall be made a genuine form of active community

life, instead of a place set apart in which to learn lessons.”<sup>25</sup> He wanted educators to train students to be active citizens, but also change our understanding of where active citizenry could occur to include the classroom itself.

bell hooks has a significant body of work focused on the Black feminist praxis and liberation in education, particularly in her book *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* and the follow-up to it *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*. Throughout these texts she highlights her frustrations with education and academia, but also potential sources of power as “the classroom remains the most radical space of possibility in the academy.”<sup>26</sup> In *Teaching Community*, hooks writes, “Rather than embodying the conventional false assumption that the university setting is not the ‘real world’ and teaching accordingly, the democratic educator breaks through the false construction of the corporate university as set apart from real life and seeks to re-envision schooling as always a part of our real world experience, and our real life.”<sup>27</sup> We must treat our classrooms for what they are: a fundamental part of our experience of the world with immense and critical implications both inside and outside of the walls of the school building. We also must let the world outside of the classroom into the space as well, treating students as full people with lives that impact how they show up in any space, including each day at school. While hooks is writing about the university and college experience, this is just as, if not more, true at the K-12 level, where students spend much more of their time in the classroom with their teachers.

Paolo Freire reshaped understanding of liberatory education with his seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. An essential idea of this work is that of problem-posing education,

---

<sup>25</sup> John Dewey, *The School and Society* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1956), 14.

<sup>26</sup> bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 12.

<sup>27</sup> bell hooks, *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 41.

in which students are encouraged to participate in critical thinking and to connect their learning to action outside of the classroom. Freire posits that “The starting point for organizing the program content of education or political action must be the present, existential, concrete situation, reflecting the aspirations of the people,” which necessitates education that highlights the “human-world relationship.”<sup>28</sup>

In a later text titled *Pedagogy of Indignation*, Freire explicitly points to the importance of not just political education but action oriented education. He writes, “Children need to grow in the exercise of this ability to think, to question and question themselves, to doubt, to experiment with hypotheses for action, and to plan, rather than just following plans that, more than proposed, are imposed upon them.”<sup>29</sup> Here we see a critical piece of community-engaged learning, particularly that which is called action civics. It is critical in developing active citizens to not only provide theoretical models of changemaking but provide students with the concrete experience that their work can make a difference. They must be thinking critically but then do more than think, they must act.

These thinkers were fundamental in the development of our modern understanding of critical community engaged education. More contemporary scholarship seeks to both define this term in a modern context and examine the impacts of this kind of learning on students, schools, local communities, and our greater society. In one key study, Tania D. Mitchell, who defines critical service-learning as “an approach to civic learning that is attentive to social change, works to redistribute power, and strives to develop authentic relationships” conducted research into the experiences of alumni from three different civic engagement programs to evaluate the degree to which the participants' civic identity developed. Mitchell found a strong and positive impact on

---

<sup>28</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2000), 95, 106.

<sup>29</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Indignation* (Colorado: Paradigm Publishers, 2004), 37.

civic identity development, and shared core components of programs that make these experiences most impactful.<sup>30</sup>

In reflecting on the study, Mitchell also writes that the experiences “brought attention to social change, worked to redistribute power, and developed authentic relationships.” These are essential benefits that will stay with students long after they graduate as they internalize feelings of belonging and responsibility in relation to their local community.<sup>31</sup>

Mitchell heavily utilizes the writing of Atkins and Hart in 2003, who identified three key components in the development of civic identity. The first component is participating in one’s community, and the baseline necessity of that practical experience. The second component is acquiring knowledge about the community that one is a part of, which becomes very meaningful in the community-engaged learning experience and thus will be highly valued in the future. The third component is the need for an emphasis on democratic principles throughout the process, connecting the community-engaged learning experience to broader ideas about how we want to live and the kind of local and governmental structures we want to support. This discussion of democratic principles is critical for making sure this experience has long term impacts on students’ understanding of themselves as active citizens and community members.<sup>32</sup>

In another critical study titled *Youth activism in the urban community: learning critical civic praxis within community organizations*, Shawn Ginwright and Julio Cammarota unpack the ways in which negative perceptions of youth exist in the spheres of education and youth development, which impact teaching and programming. They explain that much research has

---

<sup>30</sup> Tania D. Mitchell, “Using a Critical Service-Learning Approach to Facilitate Civic Identity Development,” *Theory Into Practice* 54, no. 1 (2015): 20-21.

<sup>31</sup> Mitchell, “Using a Critical Service-Learning Approach,” 22.

<sup>32</sup> Robert Atkins and Daniel Hart, “Neighborhoods, adults, and the development of civic identity in urban youth,” *Applied Developmental Science* 7, no. 3 (2003), 157.

operated from a very negative perspective, focused on “problem behavior” and social disorganization while pointing to students as maladaptive and lacking agency. They explain the role of critical civic praxis in undoing this, in which educators have a new lens that “acknowledges structural constraints in their communities, but also views young people as active participants in changing debilitating neighborhood conditions.”<sup>33</sup> Here we see the ways that community-engaged learning opportunities shift both young peoples’ view of self and the way they are seen by external forces and communities. The shift is made from passive observation to active engagement, and both students and educators see that they have the power to make change already within them. This is critical for shifting narratives about communities facing systemic oppression.

While there is much overlap between the two, place-based learning has emerged as a distinct field in and of itself. David Sobel defines place-based learning as an educational process which utilizes the local community and environment to teach and emphasizes hands-on learning experiences based in the real world. He also explains that it leads to increased academic achievement, stronger relationships between students and their communities, greater appreciation for nature, and a stronger sense of desire and responsibility to active citizenship.<sup>34</sup>

Sobel and Gregory Smith discuss place- and community-based education as a response to what they see as one the critical issues facing students right now, that they are “community-deprived.”<sup>35</sup> Sobel separately describes the need to provide students with opportunities to feel

---

<sup>33</sup> Shawn Ginwright and Julio Cammarota, “Youth activism in the urban community: learning critical civic praxis within community organizations,” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 20, no. 6 (2007): 693.

<sup>34</sup> David Sobel, *Place-Based Education: Connecting Classrooms & Communities* (Massachusetts: The Orion Society, 2004), 7.

<sup>35</sup> Smith and Sobel, *Place-and community-based education in schools*, viii.

embedded in their environments, experiencing their community as full members of the collective instead of someone looking in from the outside.<sup>36</sup>

Two major benefits of this are that it develops feelings of belonging specific to place in students and encourages active participation in community affairs. They discuss that place-based learning “begins with the local and that draws students into real-time participation in civic life and decision-making [that] can help children and youth begin to see themselves as actors and creators rather than observers and consumers.”<sup>37</sup> A place-based lens encourages students to see themselves as active participants today, not just as people being trained to participate in the future. This shift from consumer to creator is essential in both providing students with the confidence in their ability to make change and pushing them to feel a responsibility to improve their communities. They provide a major emphasis on making sure that students see the genuine ability they have to make a difference, and to understand that they are not being prepared for the future but the present.

This process has important benefits on students, but also on the greater community. First, as students are engaging in their local community they are actively and positively impacting the physical landscape around them. In addition to gaining a sense of desire and responsibility to their community, they are gaining concrete skills that they will use throughout their lives to engage with the issues that concern them in a more effective way. There is also a shift in student perspective that is critical for the impacts they will have on their community, particularly, as Sobel highlights, the shifts from extraction to sustainability and from fragmentation to systems thinking.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Sobel, *Place-Based Education: Connecting Classrooms & Communities*, 12.

<sup>37</sup> Smith and Sobel, *Place-and community-based education in schools*, vii.

<sup>38</sup> Sobel, *Place-Based Education: Connecting Classrooms & Communities*, 16-20.



In addition, when local citizens and community organizations are engaged in their local school the learning and broader community benefits. These have long term impacts that last beyond the length of a class or a unit. Sobel explains that a benefit of place-based learning is an increase in social capital in students, or a desire in individuals to support the wellbeing of a community. He prompts us to reconsider the way we measure the success of the community by how many people have this kind of social capital, how many people serve on local committees, are willing to coach youth teams, sign up for trash removal volunteer opportunities, and so on.<sup>39</sup>

Place-based learning can also shift greater cultural values around modes of knowledge production. Smith and Sobel detail the ways that place-based learning “honors local expertise and connections,” and emphasizes forming connections with local community organizations.<sup>40</sup> Gruenewald and Smith also speak to the nature of hands-on, practical work, and how it can help us unlearn hierarchies in our education system in a greater sense. They write, “Place-based education’s emphasis on the completion of real work in communities also calls into question the common belief that high-status knowledge is more theoretical than practical.”<sup>41</sup> Again, this connects to the impacts place-based education can have on general debates in education. It can help us undo some of the “ivory tower” perspectives which dominate academic pursuits, where theoretical knowledge focused in the classroom is seen as the more respected form of teaching.

In addition to these texts which help one understand key themes and case studies, there are also texts that share specific curricular ideas and resources to support educators in teaching place-based lessons which I have also been influenced by. *Place-based Curriculum Design: Exceeding Standards through Local Investigations* by Amy B. Demarest is a key example. While

---

<sup>39</sup> Sobel, *Place-Based Education: Connecting Classrooms & Communities*, 37.

<sup>40</sup> Smith and Sobel, *Place-and community-based education in schools*, 17.

<sup>41</sup> David A. Gruenewald and Gregory A. Smith, *Place-Based Education in the Global Age: Local Diversity* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 349.

more environmental in focus, *Into the Field: A Guide to Locally Focused Teaching* and *Ecological Education in Action: On Weaving Education, Culture, and the Environment* provide ideas of ways to incorporate this kind of learning into the classroom.

While I lean heavily on place-based learning, part of why I am differentiating this curriculum with the moniker “urban studies education” is because place-based learning emphasizes the incorporation of place-based practices into existing subject areas like Social Studies, Math, Science, English, Government, Art, etc. I will be conducting a separate unit, completely dedicated to place-based learning and its principles. In addition, none of these texts discuss urban studies in name as a field that can be accessible to secondary school students. While they bring up common themes in urban studies, they do not specifically discuss this field’s potential for student empowerment. Finally, even though many of the authors discuss the importance of bringing place-based learning to urban settings (and the ways in which place-based learning is lacking with more of a focus on rural spaces than urban ones), much of the writing and curricular ideas are still ecological in focus. While ecology and nature will be a component of this curriculum, it will also include our understanding of place more broadly.

Together, critical community-engaged education and place-based learning provide a strong model for a kind of teaching that emphasizes student voice, critical reflection, local engagement, and active participation. These are primary traits of the kind of course I would like to teach, making this necessary grounding in the development of this curriculum.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Reframing Poughkeepsie: A Place-Based Urban Studies Elective for Secondary Education

In addition to the key texts which framed my curriculum development for a theoretical perspective, I was deeply guided by Carol Ann Tomlinson and Jay McTighe's *Integrating Differentiated Instruction and Understanding by Design: Connecting Content and Kids*. In this book, the authors connect two important models in curriculum design and instruction. The first is Understanding by Design, a curricular design model that "focuses on what we teach and what assessment evidence we need to collect," emphasizing designing lessons based on the "what" and "how" we want students to walk away with.<sup>42</sup> The second is Differentiated Instruction, an instructional design model which focuses on "ensuring that teachers focus on processes and procedures that ensure effective learning for varied individuals."<sup>43</sup> Together, these models guide a kind of curriculum and instruction that focuses on providing meaningful learning opportunities for all students.

There are two organizations whose work deeply guided my efforts as well. The first is the Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP), which brings together community organizations, schools, artists, designers, educators, and other stakeholders to develop community materials to advocate and educate around issues of social justice, particularly how they manifest in the built environment.<sup>44</sup> Their model is extremely effective, and I use zines developed in their community and youth education programs to guide students through the connections between social justice

---

<sup>42</sup> Carol Ann Tomlinson and Jay McTighe, *Integrating Differentiated Instruction & Understanding by Design: Connecting Content and Kids* (Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2006), 2.

<sup>43</sup> Tomlinson and McTighe, *Integrating Differentiated Instruction & Understanding by Design*, 3.

<sup>44</sup> "Homepage," *Center for Urban Pedagogy*, <https://welcometocup.org/>.

and the physical landscape in session three.<sup>45</sup> The second is the Service Learning Project (SLP), an action civics program where K-12 students are empowered to be agents of change through the five steps of SLP’s model: “identify a school or community concern, become experts through intensive research, develop an alternative solution, and implement their plan to raise public awareness and advocate for change.” Through the hands-on and student driven process with a tangible final impact, participants learn through experience that active participation in their communities and our democracy is “not only a right but a critical responsibility.”<sup>46</sup> I was guided through my own personal experience with this organization as a participant, teen facilitator, and member of the youth board. In addition, the organization shared elements of their faculty manual with me, which was of particular importance in designing session four, the neighborhood walk.<sup>47</sup> Both of these organizations are doing absolutely critical work that has been foundational to this project and to thousands of public school students, primarily in New York City.

This curriculum is geared towards students in grades 9-12. The course includes six sessions which should ideally be taught in order. Primary objectives of the course include:

1. To introduce students to themes in the field of urban studies, particularly through the lens of accessibility, inclusion, equity, and sustainability.
2. To provide students with the tools to analyze the physical landscape of the world around them, with a particular focus on their local community or neighborhood.
3. To prompt students to reflect on their relationships to their local community, specifically the relationship between aspects of the physical place and their personal power.

---

<sup>45</sup> All zines used in this session are linked in the lesson plan, and came from the CUP website. The citation for each individual zine is included in the bibliography.

<sup>46</sup> “Our Mission,” *Service Learning Project*, accessed April 20, 2025, <https://servicelearningnyc.org/mission/>.

<sup>47</sup> “Internal Faculty Manual,” *Service Learning Project* (Brooklyn, NY: last modified 2024).

4. To empower students as change makers through the concrete nature of urban studies.
5. To promote values of active participation and community engagement, and provide students with pathways to make their voices heard.

#### **LESSON PLANS:**

1. Session One: A Personal Poughkeepsie (31)
2. Session Two: Breaking Down the Physical Landscape (36)
3. Session Three: Social Justice and The Built Environment (39)
4. Session Four: Walking Poughkeepsie (43)
5. Session Five: Introduction to Creative Placemaking and Adaptive Reuse (45)
6. Session Six: Our Poughkeepsie (49)

## SESSION ONE

**TITLE:** *A Personal Poughkeepsie*

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S) FOR THE LESSON:** *How do I understand place?*

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR THE LESSON:

- *Students will reflect on their understanding of place, specifically the place they occupy and the community they are a part of*
- *Students will be able to identify the core components of a place, and compare and contrast with their maps*
- *Students will begin to reflect on the visible and invisible elements of the city, and how that impacts their understanding of place*

### MATERIALS:

- *Paper*
- *Pencils, pens, colored pencils, markers*
- *Whiteboard, chalkboard, or poster paper*
- *Slides*
- *Homework Handout*

### PROCEDURE:

Time	Activity/Teacher Actions:	Rationale
7 minutes	<p>Welcome the group to the class.</p> <p>Start by saying that I am going to tell them a bit about why I am here, but first I would love to have them all introduce themselves with their name, grade, and their favorite building or place in Poughkeepsie (emphasize that this can be any kind of place).</p> <p>I will go first, answering those prompts.</p> <p>Transition to introduce the project. I will be joining your class once a week for the next six weeks! We're going to work together on a project to examine Poughkeepsie, talk about how the issues we care about are present in the physical space and how we</p>	<p><i>It is critical for students to feel both connected to each other and to understand the purpose and organization of the course to feel welcomed into the space and like active participants in the creation of the course environment.</i></p>

	<p>can use the physical space to help solve these issues.</p> <p>Some questions that we will think about are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What resources do we have?</li> <li>• What resources do we wish we had?</li> <li>• What social issues do we care about?</li> <li>• How are they present in the physical space around us?</li> <li>• What kinds of creative ways can we use the physical space around us to make positive change?</li> </ul> <p>Over the course of the class we will create a multimedia atlas—a collection of maps, photos, sound recordings, writing, and more—to represent Poughkeepsie as we see it now and imagine it in the future. This will take the form of your choice! It may be a website, a gallery or exhibition, a book, a zine or magazine, a video, a presentation to community members, or something else. Each class we will do activities or share exercises to do outside of class that will build towards this atlas, so we don't need to do anything right now but I wanted to share this plan at the beginning of our time together.</p> <p>You are the experts! You already have all the knowledge because of your time spent in Poughkeepsie, this class is really about piecing through your relationship to the city, focusing on the physical landscape. I have spent the last few years in Poughkeepsie, you have spent much more time living in this place and as a part of this community. I'm excited to learn from you!</p>	
--	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--

	Offer a minute to answer any questions before you get started.	
<i>10 minutes</i>	<p>Provide each student with a piece of paper. Have pencils, pens, colored pencils, and markers out on the tables for student use. Tell the group that they will be doing a personal mapmaking activity, and that they have 8 minutes to each create a map of their community. Do not answer any questions.</p> <p>Students work independently on their maps.</p>	<i>Mental mapping is an extremely helpful exercise for recognizing your relationship to place. It is accessible for students who have never thought about planning, and helps them know that an understanding of the local landscape is something they are already experts in.</i>
<i>8 minutes</i>	<p>Bring the group back together, put guiding questions up on the board (first slide) and let students know they should each share their map with their partner and then discuss the questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What was hard about working on this map? What was easy?</li> <li>- What did you choose to include? Why?</li> <li>- What similarities and differences do you notice between your and your partner's maps?</li> </ul> <p>Students have conversations in pairs based on questions on the board. The teacher should walk around and listen to the group conversations as they are happening.</p>	<i>Critical reflection is necessary for students to feel the full impact of participation in the activity. They will begin to think critically about how they understand place as they also begin to understand place as a subjective, personal experience as they compare their work with other community members.</i>
<i>1 minute</i>	The teacher will put up a list of “elements of a city” on the board (second slide). Explain that this is not a comprehensive list, that there is more to a city as well, but this is a list of some foundations. Tell students to	<i>Before the full group discussion, it is important to take time to pause and let students think independently to have a discussion that is both fruitful and equitable.</i>



	take a minute to compare their maps and the list on the board, and reflect independently.	
<i>12 minutes</i>	Facilitate a full group conversation, focusing on comparisons between the “elements of a city” list and their maps. Where do they see overlaps between this list and their maps? What is included on the list but not in their maps? What is included in their maps but not on their lists? Ask students to consider why they did or did not include these elements. Take notes on board or poster paper as students share out.	<i>This continues to build on their critical reflection, as they think about concepts of place outside of their experiences and their peers' experiences.</i>
<i>5 minutes</i>	Have students look at notes and consider what trends they see, and what this tells us about how they experience their community and place. Take notes on board or poster paper as students share out, separately from the last conversation.	<i>This will help students take these concepts and analyze what it means on a greater level. If they understand these trends they will start to recognize “visible” and “invisible” parts of the city.</i>
<i>4 minutes</i>	Have students turn to their partner again, and have them discuss if there is anything they would change in their maps after the full group discussion.	<i>Students will be able to connect the broader themes back to their personal experience.</i>
<i>3 minutes</i>	Bring the group back together. Have each pair share one thing they agreed about and one thing they disagreed about with the group.	<i>Continuing to share out and summarize their thoughts in different formats solidifies the impact of the activities.</i>
<i>4 minutes</i>	Have each student share their answer to the following close-out question: what “element of the city” do you think that you interact with most? Give students a minute to think before calling on the first student to answer.	<i>This continues to prompt students to consider “visible” and “invisible” elements of the city, and closes the class session with a return to their personal experience of place and the opportunity to share</i>

		<i>their opinions and have the freedom of choice.</i>
<i>2 minutes</i>	Let students know that next class we will be breaking down different elements of the physical environment we experience. Share exercise for students to complete this week. Provide students with homework handouts.	<i>It is important to share what we are working on next week so they have a sense of what to expect and how it contributes to the structure of the course. The exercises help students connect the work of the class to their daily lives. This both helps urban planning feel more accessible and allows them to bring more of their personal experience into the classroom.</i>

### **HOMEWORK EXERCISE:**

*On one of your trips to school, reflect on the experience of travel and moving through your community after having created your map. Feel free to reflect openly or consider the following questions:*

- *What were you doing when you were reflecting (walking, taking the bus, driving, being driven, biking, etc.)?*
- *What is one thing you noticed during your travel to school that you had not noticed before?*
- *How was your experience of traveling to school different after making your map?*
- *How was your experience of traveling to school different when you were having focused reflection?*

## SESSION TWO

**TITLE:** *Breaking Down the Physical Landscape*

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S) FOR THE LESSON:** *What is the built environment? How do I interact with it?*

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR THE LESSON:

- *Students will begin to understand the impact of using a place-based lens on their daily lives*
- *Students will consider different elements of the physical landscape of the city*
- *Students will be able to analyze their relationship to different kinds of places*

### MATERIALS:

- *Slides*
- *Paper*
- *Pencils/Pens*
- *Poster Paper*
- *Markers*
- *Cards with Prompting Questions*
- *Homework Handout*

### PROCEDURE:

Time	Activity/Teacher Actions:	Rationale
8 minutes	<p>Welcome everyone back, facilitate a full group conversation about the reflection activity. Have the questions up on the board (slide one):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- What were you doing when you were reflecting (walking, taking the bus, driving, being driven, biking, etc.)?</li><li>- What is one thing you noticed during your travel to school that you had not noticed before?</li><li>- How was your experience of traveling to school different after making your map?</li></ul>	<p><i>This furthers the impact of participating in the homework exercise through targeted independent reflection. It also will prepare students to participate in the group discussion. Additionally, if students were not able to complete the homework exercise they can do some reflection now so that they can still participate.</i></p> <p><i>Group share out is important for hearing other</i></p>

	- How was your experience of traveling to school different when you were having focused reflection?	<i>perspectives, and helps students think critically about their own answers.</i>
<i>14 minutes</i>	<p>Have students split into three groups of two or three. Explain that each pair will be focused on one way that they experience the physical landscape of their community, but will not be told what the focus of their group is. The three thematic experience areas are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Nature &amp; Recreation</li> <li>2. Access &amp; Ownership</li> <li>3. Movement &amp; Transportation</li> </ol> <p>Each group will receive a set of cards with prompting questions related to the theme. Have students go through each card and share their responses and experiences related to each question with their partner. All members of the group should answer each question. If needed, the teacher can pace the questions for the student groups.</p>	<i>There is so much to learn about different elements of the built environment, and the jigsaw activity helps students learn more without being overwhelmed. It is also good to provide students with opportunities to learn in different ways, with small group settings being key. It is also helpful to focus on their personal experience of the city, rather than overwhelming them with content. This makes their learning more accessible while also enhancing depth and meaning.</i>
<i>20 minutes</i>	Prompt students to discuss the themes that came up in their pairs, and create a poster to present their findings to the group. Ask them to come up with a title that they think summarizes the theme their questions were getting at and to include at least three key ideas and two specific stories or examples that came up during their conversations.	
<i>12 minutes</i>	Bring the group back together. Give each group four minutes to present their findings, documented on poster paper.	
<i>1 minute</i>	Let students know that next class we will be looking to understand how the social issues	<i>It is important to share what we are working on next week</i>

	<p>we care about are represented in the physical environment. Share exercise for students to complete this week, provide students with homework handouts with instructions.</p>	<p><i>so they have a sense of what to expect and how it contributes to the structure of the course. The photo exercise will be a key contribution to the atlas, a strong visual representation of how students see their communities. It also helps students consider how different places make them feel, reiterating the idea that places hold deep emotional meaning, making them extraordinarily personal.</i></p>
--	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

### **HOMEWORK EXERCISE:**

*Take 10 photos of places or spots in your neighborhood or greater physical community:*

- *A place you feel joy*
- *A place you feel inspired*
- *A place you think is well designed*
- *A place you think is poorly designed*
- *A place you feel safe*
- *A place you feel unsafe*
- *A place you want to run or move your body*
- *A place you want to sleep or relax*
- *A place you want to read or learn*
- *A place you feel creative*

## SESSION THREE

**TITLE:** *Social Justice and The Built Environment*

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S) FOR THE LESSON:** *How can the built environment both represent the social issues of concern to students and be a pathway to solve those issues?*

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR THE LESSON:**

- *Students will be able to connect social issues to a study of place*
- *Students will be able to understand how social issues are present in our built environment, and how our built environment can be used to solve social issues*

**MATERIALS:**

- *Poster paper*
- *Post-its*
- *Printed and assembled zines*
- *Note Catcher*
- *Homework Handout*

**PROCEDURE:**

Time	Activity/Teacher Actions:	Rationale
5 minutes	Welcome students back to the class. Have each student share the photos they took for this week's exercise with a partner.	<i>Sharing and presenting will help make the exercise they did feel increasingly meaningful. Because there are 10 photos to share, it is easier to conduct this in pairs instead of as a full class.</i>
5 minutes	Ask students if they noticed any trends in the photos they took between them and their partner. Take notes on board or poster paper as students share out.	<i>This helps students take their personal experience of place and connect it to trends in the emotional experiences of place in their community overall.</i>
6 minutes	Tell students that today we are going to think about the ways that the social issues we care about can be seen in our physical communities, and how we can	<i>It is important to provide students with thematic framing that can serve as critical context. This focus on social</i>

	<p>think about solutions to these issues through the lens of place.</p> <p>Have four pieces of poster paper up around the room with the following words on them: inclusive, accessible, sustainable, equitable.</p> <p>Hand out post-its and have students put at least one post-it on each poster.</p> <p>Tell them they can write what they think the word means, what the word makes them think of, and/or a question they have about the word.</p>	<p><i>issues marks a shift in the course, and it is important to recognize that. The poster paper activity allows students to work to fully define and understand key terms in a generative way that leaves room for different forms of expertise and collaborative learning. It also provides students with the opportunity to ask questions more easily, without being put on the spot.</i></p>
8 minutes	<p>Ask four students to volunteer to read out the post-its, one student for each poster. At each poster, pause and have students share a summary of the definitions or content for each word, and discuss answers to any questions written on the posters.</p>	
3 minutes	<p>Put printed zines out on the table. Tell each student to select one zine (only have one of each zine out on the table). Let them know that at the end of today they will have to select a social issue area of focus that they will return to over the next few sessions, and it can be the issue their zine focuses on but it does not have to. Also explain that while many of these focus on the manifestations of these issues in New York City, the ideas included are very relevant to Poughkeepsie, the zines are just very strong resources.</p> <p>1. <a href="#">Housing</a></p>	<p><i>This activity allows students to independently explore the relationship between the physical landscape and one social issue. A narrower focus helps the subject matter to feel more accessible, and gives students the opportunity to make choices based on their areas of interest. The scaffolded notetaking document helps students learn independently with guidance and support. In addition, zines are an important way to express and</i></p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. <a href="#">Green space</a></li> <li>3. <a href="#">Food Insecurity</a></li> <li>4. <a href="#">Transportation</a></li> <li>5. <a href="#">Air Quality</a></li> <li>6. <a href="#">Designing for Climate Change</a></li> <li>7. <a href="#">Police in Schools</a></li> <li>8. <a href="#">Displacement</a></li> </ol>	<i>communicate information that students will be introduced to.</i>
<i>12 minutes</i>	Instruct students to independently explore their zine and fill out their note catcher.	
<i>10 minutes</i>	Have each student share their findings with the group based on their note catcher.	<i>Students can bring their learnings to a higher level as they find connections between efforts and work across different social issues. They will also learn from their peers and consider perspectives they might not have come to on their own.</i>
<i>4 minutes</i>	Have students think about the issue their note catcher focuses on, or a different issue if they would like to select an alternative. Ask them to consider how this issue might come up in Poughkeepsie, and then think of a question (that would only generate brief responses, either multiple choice or 1-3 sentences) they could ask people in their communities to learn about how people in their community feel about the issue.	<i>Continuing to focus on one issue helps students take ownership over a project. Their work will feel more continuous and thus they will take more responsibility. In addition, the question helps them think about what they want to learn about the issue, giving them independence to consider their next focus of study.</i>



	Pass out the homework handout so each student can write their answer at the top of the sheet.	
<i>2 minutes</i>	Let students know that next class we will be going on a neighborhood walk, to take what they have learned so far and use it as a lens to view the area. Share exercise for students to complete this week. Share additional copies of all zines, encourage students to take as many as they are interested in.	<i>It is important to share what we are working on next week so they have a sense of what to expect and how it contributes to the structure of the course. This exercise will help students learn more about how others in their community experience place and their selected social issue. It also builds skills as they practice surveying. The optional readings allow students to learn about the relationship between planning and other social issues of interest.</i>

### **HOMEWORK EXERCISE:**

*Survey at least 10 people about your question and record your results. The provided handout has places for them to log answers (which should only be 1-3 sentences) and includes tips for conducting the survey.*

**TITLE/TOPIC:** *Walking Poughkeepsie*

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S) FOR THE LESSON:** *How can I apply what I have learned to how I read my own community? What resources does my community have? What resources are lacking? How is this represented in the physical space of my neighborhood?*

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR THE LESSON:**

- *Students will be able to read the landscape of their local neighborhood*
- *Students will be able to connect their chosen social issue to the local landscape*
- *Students will be able to reflect on the importance of conducting neighborhood walks/land surveys*

**MATERIALS:**

- *Scaffolded notetaking document*
- *Pencils*
- *Clipboards*
- *Map with planned route for walk*
- *Homework Handout*

**PROCEDURE:**

Time	Activity/Teacher Actions:	Rationale
<i>7 minutes</i>	Tell students that we will be going on a neighborhood walk today. Let them know that as we walk around we will make stops at various locations, and they should take notes as we walk and when we make stops. Let them know that they can take notes in words and drawings. Hand out the scaffolded notetaking document on a clipboard for each student with a pencil. Get everyone organized to leave.	<i>These instructions will help students ground themselves in the course before the walk begins, and will help the class get organized before we venture out of the classroom.</i>
<i>40 minutes</i>	Conduct the walk with students taking notes. Tell students to let the teacher know if they need to pause to take notes or if they want to look at something more closely.	<i>A neighborhood walk is critical for helping students apply their learning to read their community. Doing it as a group allows students to learn from each other, and to feel the impact of different perspectives and experiences.</i>

		<i>It will also allow them to recognize the strengths and areas of growth in their community as they move through their neighborhood with their social issues and the context of the class in mind.</i>
<i>5 minutes</i>	Have students complete a reflection question at the bottom of the handout about the experience of doing the neighborhood walk.	<i>Reflection is critical for the ideas developed on the walk to retain their full impact. It will also help the students understand the importance of neighborhood walks and community mapping, as it is likely a new activity for them.</i>
<i>3 minutes</i>	Let students know that next class we will be talking about creative placemaking and adaptive reuse, both refer to ways of using existing structures to change and utilize urban spaces in ways that address the needs of a community. Share exercise for students to complete this week, provide students with homework handouts with instructions.	<i>It is important to share what we are working on next week so they have a sense of what to expect and how it contributes to the structure of the course. The exercise will be a key contribution to the atlas, a strong auditory representation of how students see their communities. It also helps students consider the different means by which they experience place, and the role of their different senses. The optional readings also provide space for further learning but without any pressure.</i>

### **HOMEWORK EXERCISE:**

*Recording 1-3 sound clips of your neighborhood, make each clip at least 10 seconds long.*

## SESSION FIVE

**TITLE:** *Introduction to Creative Placemaking and Adaptive Reuse*

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S) FOR THE LESSON:** *What is creative placemaking? What is adaptive reuse? How have these practices been applied to solve social issues? How can I apply these practices to address the issues facing my community that are important to me?*

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR THE LESSON:**

- *Students will be able to explain what creative placemaking and adaptive reuse are and analyze examples of both*
- *Students will come up with creative placemaking/adaptive reuse solutions to problems in their own community*

**MATERIALS:**

- *Posters for gallery walk (6)*
  - *Content for posters (images and text)*
- *Gallery Walk Handouts*
- *Creative Placemaking and Adaptive Reuse Project Handouts*

**PROCEDURE:**

Time	Activity/Teacher Actions:	Rationale
<i>7 minutes</i>	Have each student share out the sound(s) they recorded and briefly share why they selected the sound(s).	<i>Sharing and presenting will help make the exercise they did feel increasingly meaningful. By asking them to explain the reasoning behind their selection they are also further developing their understanding of their emotional reactions to their physical locations.</i>
<i>18 minutes</i>	Have the gallery walk set up in advance of class. On each poster (6) show an example of a creative placemaking or adaptive reuse project. Have students visit 3 posters, spending 6 minutes at each one. The teacher should keep time. At each	<i>This helps students come to understand the deeper meaning of creative placemaking on their own before they are given the definition. Examples will help them more genuinely</i>

	poster, the students should fill out one row in their gallery walk handout.	<i>understand the concept, and the scaffolded nature of the handout will facilitate accessible learning.</i>
<i>7 minutes</i>	Facilitate full group discussion. Have students share what stood out to them, what inspired them, and what lessons they took away from them.	
<i>2 minutes</i>	Define creative placemaking and adaptive reuse for the students. Explain that both refer to ways of using existing structures to change and utilize urban spaces in ways that address the needs of a community, and often work together. Creative placemaking refers to efforts where artists, designers, or arts organizations play a critical role in urban planning and community development, usually in altering an already existing space's design and/or function. Adaptive reuse refers to the process of utilizing an existing building or structure for a different purpose than it was initially intended for. The use of the existing building is often appreciated for its sustainability and historic preservation.	<i>This helps summarize the ideas that the students learned through direct experience with creative placemaking and adaptive reuse projects. It bases their understanding in knowledge they built independently, but supports their learning by providing key definitions.</i>
<i>12 minutes</i>	Prompt students to consider the social issue and question they selected. Provide students each with a copy of the creative placemaking/adaptive reuse handout. Cover the table in images of 5 different local locations (actual photos as the places currently look such as vacant lots, abandoned buildings, neglected transit stops, etc.). Prompt students to design their own creative placemaking solution that addresses the social issue they have chosen	<i>This empowers students to really understand urban planning as a pathway for creative change. They will hone their expertise as they continue to focus on their selected issue, and see how they can use the built environment to make change. The use of real locations around Poughkeepsie helps the work feel more concrete and meaningful.</i>

	in one of the provided locations. Students should work independently.	
<i>8 minutes</i>	<p>Remind students that the class will culminate in the creation of their multimedia atlas. Explain that traditionally an atlas is a book of maps, but they will be thinking of it more broadly, as a representation of their experience of the physical place where they live. Tell students that they get to choose the form that their atlas takes, and that it will include all of the work they have done throughout the course. Let them know that we will plan and finalize the details next class, but that today we will decide what form the atlas will take. Have a brief discussion, and then hold a vote. Let the students know they can choose between the following suggested options or come up with something else if they have a different idea.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Website</li> <li>2. Gallery or exhibition</li> <li>3. Book</li> <li>4. Zine or magazine</li> <li>5. Video</li> <li>6. Presentation to community members</li> </ol>	<p><i>This is critical planning for the final project, and leaves a lot of room for student choice. The voting and ability to discuss and defend their preferences encourages students to think critically about the forms that knowledge sharing takes and to take ownership over the final project.</i></p>
<i>1 minute</i>	<p>Let students know that next class we will be reflecting on the course overall, imagining our vision for the future, and planning our atlas. Share exercise for students to complete this week.</p>	<p><i>It is important to share what we are working on next week so they have a sense of what to expect and how it contributes to the structure of the course. Students can take their time and</i></p>

		<i>put the effort they desire into their creative placemaking and adaptive reuse projects. The optional readings also provide space for further learning but without any pressure.</i>
--	--	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

### **HOMEWORK EXERCISE:**

*Finish creative placemaking and adaptive reuse projects from class.*

## SESSION SIX

**TITLE:** *Our Poughkeepsie*

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S) FOR THE LESSON:** *With our new understanding of urban studies and our relationship to place, how do we imagine a Poughkeepsie that represents our needs? How can we make a multi-media atlas that represents our experience of place and power?*

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR THE LESSON:

- *Students will be able to bring their learnings from throughout the course together, and develop a future, solution-oriented vision of their community*
- *Students will reflect on their experience with the class and how they want to share their learnings*
- *Students will be able to discuss what it means to develop a creative, experimental, collaborative, multi-media atlas*
- *Students will collaboratively decide and plan to share an atlas based on the work they have done and materials they have collected over the class*

### MATERIALS:

- *Maps from the first day of class*
- *Whiteboard, chalkboard, or poster paper*
- *Pencils, pens, colored pencils, markers*
- *Large paper (from a roll)*
- *Slides*

### PROCEDURE:

Time	Activity/Teacher Actions:	Rationale
8 minutes	<p>Bring the group together and hand out their maps from the first day. Instruct all students to take a moment of independent reflection, and write responses to their answers in the provided handout. Looking at their maps with the knowledge they have gained through the course:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. What would they change now?</li><li>2. What would they remove or add?</li><li>3. What resources do they now know their community has?</li></ol>	<p><i>This is a critical moment of reflection that will help students connect their understanding of place at the beginning of the course to their understanding at the end. The map helps this reflection feel more concrete, and is grounded in their actual understanding of place at the start of the class.</i></p>



	4. What resources do they wish their community had?	
8 minutes	Have students share their responses with the full group, specifically to the last question. Take notes on poster paper, a white board, or a chalkboard. Ask students to call out any trends they see in peoples' answers.	
15 minutes	<p>Set up the large piece of paper and writing materials on the floor, have all students work together to express their vision for the future of Poughkeepsie. Ask them to include drawings and words and share anything they want to see in the future. Allow students to begin without any prompting besides what has already been given. If students feel stuck, ask them to consider the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Where do children play?</li> <li>2. How can people get food?</li> <li>3. Where does everyone live?</li> <li>4. Where do people work?</li> <li>5. Where do people learn?</li> <li>6. Where do people get access to other critical resources?</li> <li>7. How does everyone have access to nature or green space?</li> <li>8. How do people receive medical or mental health care?</li> <li>9. How do people move around?</li> <li>10. Where are decisions made?</li> </ol>	<p><i>This allows students to connect their reflections to a vision of the future. In this, they are empowered to feel like they have a role in imagining the future of their community. They are bringing their ideas and focusing on solutions, helping them feel oriented towards change and action and reminding them of the knowledge they all hold. The prompting questions allow students to receive support if needed, but work solely from their questions and thoughts if they do not, thus being highly responsive to the needs of the students.</i></p>

	<p>11. How do people contribute to the decisions that affect their community?</p> <p>12. Where do people make art?</p>	
<i>2 minutes</i>	Have students pause and stand above their vision, looking over it. Have each student share one word about how they feel as they look at what they have created.	
<i>8 minutes</i>	Remind students about the multimedia atlas and the form they selected last week. Prompt students to discuss what could be meaningful about an atlas that includes different forms of media.	<i>This provides key framing for the final activity, and builds up to the big questions they will be asked to answer so it does not feel sudden.</i>
<i>11 minutes</i>	As students finalized the form of the atlas in the last session, discuss all of the different elements that the students have developed for the course that could be included (have up on the slides). Ask if students would like for all of these things to be included in the atlas or if they want to remove anything. Ask students if they want to add any additional things to the atlas, and if so make a plan to create or identify those things. Finally, organize any next steps for finalizing the atlas.	<i>All students will contribute to this final project, which will help their experience of the course feel more concrete. It will also provide them with the opportunity to celebrate all of the work they have done. The optional readings also provide space for further learning but without any pressure. The reflection form will help them process the impact the course had on them, and will be very helpful for the teacher and development of the curriculum and curricular materials.</i>
<i>3 minutes</i>	The teacher should share some brief reflections of the class, and explain that you will also follow up with next steps to share the atlas once it is finalized.	<i>It is important to provide space for reflection after any major project, particularly one which is, in many ways,</i>

	<p><i>Note: Here I also provided students with the reflection form for feedback on the course.</i></p>	<p><i>very different from the typical learning and teaching style of the classroom. It is important that both the teacher and students conduct this reflection.</i></p>
--	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

### **HOMEWORK EXERCISE:**

*Finish assigned tasks for the atlas and complete reflection form.*

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Reflections & Implications

The day we did our neighborhood walk was chilly and windy. We were on a modified schedule because the students had a pep rally and basketball tournament that afternoon, so the teacher warned me that there was a chaotic energy. I had not brought clipboards, so the process of notetaking became more difficult. We stepped outside onto Forbus Street, and as I previewed our walk the students complained when I revealed that we would be walking on Main Street, an area of the City of Poughkeepsie that has come up in all of our class sessions so far. In summary, I was very worried about how it would go.

Less than ten minutes into the walk, I asked students what they were noticing about their community, streets that they walk every day but are looking at through a different lens in this course. There was a pause before anyone spoke, but then people started to share. They noticed how uneven the sidewalks were, that the concrete needed to be repaved. They noticed that there was trash on the ground, and trash cans tipped over in the street. They heard the sounds of the elementary school, and wondered whose little siblings or cousins were there. We crossed and discussed the East West Arterial, a three lane highway which every student in the class has to cross everyday to walk to school because there are no school buses. We talked about the storefronts on Main Street as we passed them, the cats running outside of houses and under cars. Things they appreciated about Poughkeepsie, but above all things that concerned them.

And on this walk I was reminded why I find this kind of learning so important. At every moment, we are having a visceral experience of place. We are constantly taking in our physical surroundings, and having emotional reactions. Young people see and experience these things too, but are not given the tools to name these things. They are not empowered to feel that their

experience of these things is important. At the end of the course, 75% of students said the neighborhood walk was their favorite activity we did.

Throughout the course, the most impactful moments were those in which the links between the physical landscape and the students' daily lives were made the most clear. This meant that one of my biggest goals as a teacher was to make urban studies feel relevant to their lives, by emphasizing their experience of place. There were often times in which we were able to have more casual conversations about the issues at hand, that would lead students into moments of animated storytelling as they shared anything from the craziest things they have seen on the bus to the arguments they heard their neighbors get into through an open window. Students were able to engage most deeply when I was not instructing them on the details of urban studies, but prompting them with questions that helped them see that they are already experts of the urban landscape around them.

A balance that was critical, and often challenging, to strike was making the work we were doing in the class feel both important and accessible. This was particularly true with two of my major goals being to help students see themselves as experts in the physical landscape already and to provide them with further language and tools to empower them to more deeply analyze and eventually make change in their communities. These do support each other, but in terms of practical classroom applications can sometimes stand in opposition. It needed to be both something already present in their daily life, and a new framework for them to understand. Similarly, I had to find a balance of helping students see the relationship between the work we were doing in class and the greater societal implications clear without moving into moralizing lectures.

I also definitely had to find a balance in how much content to introduce. There needed to be enough that students did not get bored, but not too much so students did not become overwhelmed. My instinct in moments where finding this balance felt challenging was always to return to students' own experiences, to storytelling that would connect the areas of focus to their own lives. If we were talking about nature, I decided not to bombard them with images, maps, readings, or other content about green space in cities, but instead have them reflect on times they spend in parks, any other instances of nature in the city, if it feels accessible to leave the city to get to nature, how the use of nature (particularly parks) changes across different age experiences. It was in these moments that students were most engaged in conversation and I could see the learning goals being achieved in a transferable way, so the ideas would not just stay in the classroom but stick with the students long after.

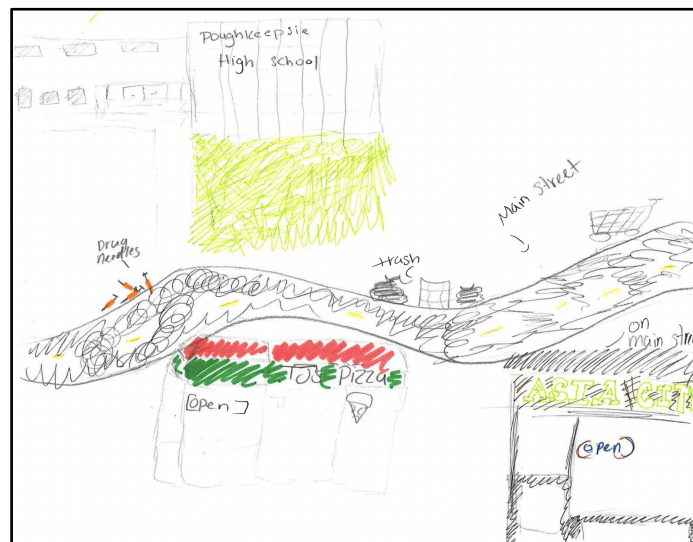
Finding these balances was particularly evident in designing session two. In this session, I wanted students to identify different elements of the built environment and how they interact with it. My initial plan was to design a jigsaw activity where students were introduced to images, text, videos, and other multimedia content in small groups around three elements of the built environment: buildings, green space, and transportation systems/infrastructure. Afterwards, they were to come back together to share what they learned about their element with the rest of the class. I was really struggling to develop this session, particularly to finalize the media for the jigsaw and to design a handout for students to capture the information. Through conversations with my advisors I realized that difficulty was because the content itself was really inaccessible. A lot of it used language that requires a background in the field or at least a lot of previous knowledge, and much of it was just not that exciting for a teenager being introduced to these areas, perhaps for the first time. After realizing that students would not be engaged, I stepped

back to reevaluate my overarching course goals and I realized that the jigsaw activity was not in line with that either, as it did not center student experiences and the personal and community-based experiences of place. I shifted instead to small group conversations focused on thematic question areas that got at these elements of the built environment by instead centering students as holders of knowledge that just needed the right prompting to be able to name and share these experiences. I then had them create posters to visualize and communicate this information (which I will discuss again later in my reflections). Ultimately, I think this was much more successful and one student said it was their favorite activity we did in the course.

Students shared a lot of positive feedback, both anecdotally and in the survey I provided at the end of the course. One of the best pieces of feedback I got was that their experience of the class was fun and engaging. The students expressed that they really liked having me come in, and the teacher of the course also expressed not only that she enjoyed it but that it was a good experience for her that provided a different way of thinking. It reminded me how important it is to expose students to different kinds of learning, and how fun and exciting educational work that pushes outside of the boundaries of the classroom can be. This is true of placed-based learning and more generally, is very in line with thinkers and writers like Dewey, hooks, and Freire who emphasize the enjoyment and power of classroom settings which are interactive.

In terms of the survey results, 100% said that the class helped them understand the social issues they care about more, and possible solutions to said social issues. 100% also said that during the class they were more aware of aspects of the physical landscape of their community and the issues that concern them. 75% agreed that studying the physical landscape of Poughkeepsie and other communities they might be a part of is important. 75% said that the class increased their belief that they can make change in their community, and that the class gave them

more language to help name experiences of the physical landscape of their community and the issues that concern them. On the lower end, only 50% said that the class helped them more deeply understand their relationship to their home town Poughkeepsie, and that they feel like being engaged in their local community is important. Survey results can be found in full in Appendix C, and for context only four of the student participants in the class filled out the survey, ultimately limiting the results but still providing critical feedback.



*One student's personal map shows Poughkeepsie High School and Main Street, on the latter including two local businesses and issues of concern (trash on the street, loose shopping carts, and drug needles).*

Many of the issues that came up in the course were a result of this being my first teaching experience outside of a one on one context. I was definitely nervous, which at some points could be noticed by the students. They were very understanding, multiple of them encouraging me to not be nervous on the first day and reminding me they were a “chill” and kind group, which was extremely true. My nerves decreased throughout the course, but it likely impacted my teaching. I also struggled with some pacing issues, both in terms of each individual class and the structure of the six sessions overall.

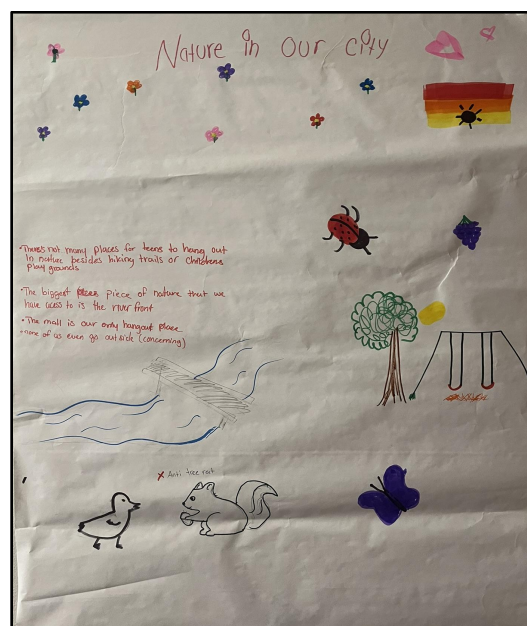


In addition, there were some logistical issues that came up due to the nature of my pushing into the existing class once a week on a rotating block schedule. Some elements of the curriculum had to be switched in order or cut as a result. Another factor that influenced the experience of the course in a unique way was my role as a push-in teacher who was only spending these six sessions with the students. Many of the earlier sessions needed to be more introductory as I built trust with the students, which may not be the case if the students' typical classroom teacher were teaching the lessons as a unit themselves. As a result, we did not complete all activities that are provided in the curriculum.

A unique element of this teaching experience was the nature of the very small group of students I was working with. It was great for this project, but I am unable to comment on what the curriculum would look like in a more typical classroom setting with a greater number of students. In one example, I found that parts of the curriculum were most effective when adapted to the needs and preferences of the students in the classroom, especially around balancing group work and independent learning. This kind of personalization may not be possible in a larger classroom, but in a more typical classroom the teacher would be more familiar with their students' learning needs ahead of time and could plan accordingly. Any teacher of this course will definitely need to be flexible and prepared to shift and provide more or less context to students. For example, I based the personal mapping activity off of a task I was given in a Vassar course titled Cinemas and Urbanisms, where we were given a short amount of time and very little guidance. We all took very different approaches, and thought very expansively about what a map can look like. At a younger age, students have not been exposed to as many non-traditional maps, and as a result more context needed to be provided about different possible ways to express their spatial experiences visually.

In terms of the content that came up in the course, specifically ideas or experiences generated or shared by students, there was a mix of both surprising and expected information. Two areas that came up a lot, guided by both myself and the students in the course, were transportation and recreation spaces. These were the two areas of focus for second session activities, as the students preferred to get in two groups instead of three, so we focused on Nature & Recreation and Movement & Transportation and left out Access & Ownership (which I do regret upon reflection, though the previous two thematic areas did yield strong conversations).

When recreation spaces were discussed, like the students highlighted on this poster, a common theme was how few recreation spaces are accessible for teenagers. This did not just include the outdoors, parks, or access to nature but even areas like malls. The local mall – the Poughkeepsie Galleria – recently instituted a policy that young people under the age of eighteen cannot spend time in the mall unaccompanied by an adult, a policy that has deeply frustrated the students I work with, one of whom got in trouble for being in the mall alone when they were heading to work in a retail store located in the mall itself. This was not the only time these areas were highlighted. Transportation in particular came up in every class session.

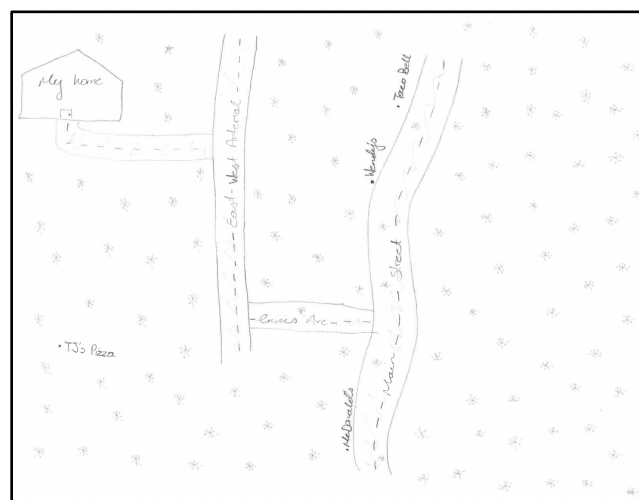


*Students created this poster representing their conversation and conclusions based on prompting questions about their experiences around nature and recreation in the city.*

One thing that surprised me from the very beginning of my teaching experience was the predominantly negative read of the local community and their experience living in Poughkeepsie. They repeatedly discussed how there is not much to do, particularly for young people. They also often talked about Main Street, which they said was both the central area of the city for them and a place that felt unsafe and uncomfortable as they talked about constantly seeing “crackheads,” “used needles” in the street, random shopping carts, trash on the ground, and more. For Exercise #2, the community photography assignment where students were asked to take photos based on listed prompts, one student said that for every positive prompt on the list she would only include her bed, house, and room and for anything negative she said she would include everything else.

A major frustration that came up repeatedly was around their transportation options, especially having to walk across the arterial to school. None of them had cars, and they tried to get rides to or from school but usually had to walk. They felt like the buses were unsafe and did not go anywhere they were interested in going or needed to go besides the local mall. This contributed to feelings that there are no places for them in Poughkeepsie, leading to a diminished sense of belonging and a general feeling that this is not a place they want to be. While students left the course with continued negative feelings about their local community, I believe having the platform to discuss and share these negative experiences openly and without judgement was critical. Like Massey and Solnit explain, place is complicated, and often painful. Urban studies education cannot have a goal of pushing students to just love being a part of their community, but to allow them to name their experiences as full, respected community members. It is an act of care for the places and people around us to engage with our community in full, both the good and especially the bad.

Another content area of focus that surprised me was how often students discussed interest in or a reliance on chain establishments. Food in general came up a lot as casual restaurants were the most common location for students to spend time besides their homes and school, in particular TJ's Pizza. Besides that, it was usually chain establishments. On one student's map, which can be seen below, one can see that they included four restaurants: TJ's and three major chains (Wendy's, Taco Bell, and McDonalds). Even for the final celebration where we got food, they only suggested chain restaurants, even when their teacher prompted them to consider local places. They ended up voting to select Wingstop. This was particularly interesting in the context of the creative placemaking and adaptive reuse projects, where multiple of the students selected chain establishments to bring into the community. One student wanted to revitalize the local YMCA which had been abandoned for decades to provide recreation space, childcare, and new jobs. Another wanted to bring a Walmart into the old Rite Aid building to provide more affordable groceries to the community. These large, outside corporations were seen as primary solutions to issues they were concerned about. This could be representative of the frustrations about Poughkeepsie and their local experience of place, or it could also be the context of their age and what feels popular and interesting right now.



*One student's personal map shows their home, two major streets and one side street, one small business, and three chain restaurants.*

As is a common issue in any classroom, we definitely struggled with time. In particular, we did not have enough time to develop the atlas communally, and as a result I did not emphasize the final project as heavily as I previously expected because it did not feel like it would be as meaningful. In addition, I wish I had built in more time for the creative placemaking and adaptive reuse projects. Students did not have enough time to fully flesh out their ideas, and I think it would have been better to provide students with examples of locations, photos of specific neglected spaces in Poughkeepsie, that would have left more time for students to develop their solutions instead of having to spend a significant amount of our limited time selecting a location. We also ended up doing this session before the neighborhood walk, which was challenging. I think it would have been easier and more impactful for students to select physical locations to focus on after they completed the walk, or they could have seen the locations pre-selected for the project.

There were three other content areas I really wanted to go into in the course but did not have time in the six sessions. First, I really wanted to incorporate layers of time into the activities. I wanted to focus on history and the past of the area, and how it relates to both the current state of Poughkeepsie and possibilities for the future. I thought this could be particularly impactful for people who have lived in Poughkeepsie their whole lives, and whose families have been here for many generations. Second, I wanted us to look at the same physical locations in different contexts. I wanted students to consider how they experience the same places they return to regularly influenced by different factors, both physical factors like weather and light and various emotional factors. Finally, I hoped to incorporate connections to different community organizations in Poughkeepsie. With each issue area we focused on, there are many groups in

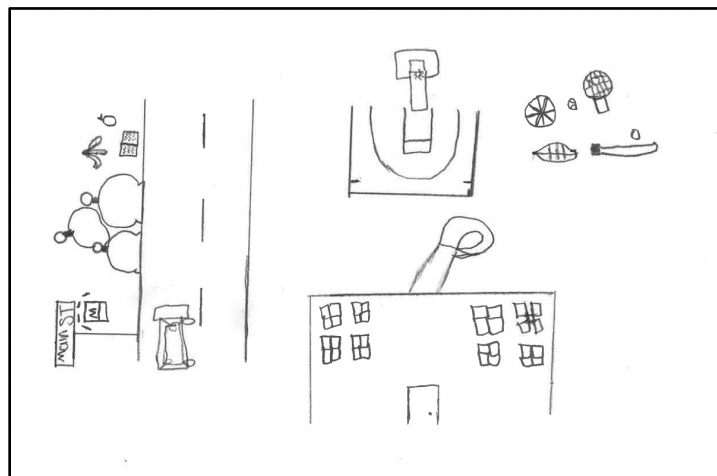
Poughkeepsie and Dutchess County more generally that are doing essential work for our communities, many of which are shaping and altering the physical landscape constantly. I would love for this to have been a part of the curriculum, either in discussing the work they are doing or even bringing in representatives from these groups.

Finally, this class is just a first step in urban studies education. Even on its own, more time would have been critical in going deeper into certain elements of the course, particularly the atlas. I also would really want to prompt students to take on more of a leadership role in the class setting, which was challenging in such a short period of time. Additionally, for urban studies education to have its full impact I really believe that there needs to be a meaningful action component as a next step for students. It was not possible to have students develop and implement any sort of complete action plan in six sessions, but I do believe students developed a critical foundation that would prepare them to take on this kind of work next, which I hope they will have the opportunity to do. If this was being incorporated by a classroom teacher, I would encourage them to pair the curriculum with hands-on action civics education to follow up on these six sessions.

Ultimately, I think that the curriculum was very effective, and the course was a meaningful experience for the students and myself. In the open ended section of the course reflection and feedback survey, one student wrote, “The class definitely made me look around Poughkeepsie and actually see what my surroundings is, not just walking by.” To me, this was the ultimate goal of the course. To give students the tools to name the experiences they were already having, to observe the spaces they have walked by their whole lives in a new way. Students are significantly more aware of the issues facing their communities and the greater world than we give them credit for. As a result, we are not providing them with language or tools

to make sense of a constantly changing and concerning global landscape. Urban studies is a pathway to do this. It shows students that we value their experience of place, that we know that what they have to say matters. It gives them a new lens to view the world, one focused on both their role within and their experience as a part of their community. It provides methodologies for students to address the problems that overwhelm them in a concrete way.

But urban studies in the classroom is just a start, and it is a start that we are a long way from. Most local government bodies, including those focused on planning, provide surface level opportunities for community involvement and decision making at best, and rarely do these opportunities include or amplify the voices of young people. We are not just training young people for the future, they need to be active contributors today. When we open up these opportunities for learning, we need to provide opportunities for them to apply and implement their learnings outside of the classroom, for their sake and ours.



*One student's personal map shows Main Street, Poughkeepsie High School, and a basketball court with other sports equipment.*

## APPENDIX A: COURSE MATERIALS

All materials are available in a usable, open access format [here](#).

### Session One Slides

### Questions for Discussion

- What was hard about working on this map? What was easy?
- What did you choose to include? Why?
- What similarities and differences do you notice between your and your partner's maps?

### Elements of a City

- Housing
- Schools/Daycares
- Places of Employment
- Religious Spaces
- Utilities
  - Sewage
  - Water
  - Steam
  - Electricity/Power
  - Waste Management
- Cultural Spaces:
  - Theaters
  - Museums
- Nature/Open Space:
  - Parks
  - Playgrounds
  - Yards and Gardens
  - Bodies of Water
  - Landmarks
- Transportation
  - Roads/Highways
  - Sidewalks
  - Public Transit
  - Parking
- Shopping
  - Malls
  - Stores
  - Restaurants
- Services
  - Hospitals/Clinics/Doctors
  - Fire Station
  - Police Station
  - Government Offices
  - Post Offices
  - Community Centers

### Session Two Slides

### Travel Reflection Questions

- What were you doing when you were reflecting (walking, taking the bus, driving, being driven, biking, etc.)?
- What is one thing you noticed during your travel to school that you had not noticed before?
- How was your experience of traveling to school different after making your map?
- How was your experience of traveling to school different when you were having focused reflection?

- On your poster, please include:
  - A title that you think summarizes the theme(s) your questions were about
  - At least three key ideas that came up during your conversations
  - At least two specific stories or examples that came up during your conversations
  - Any other words or drawings that you would like to share!

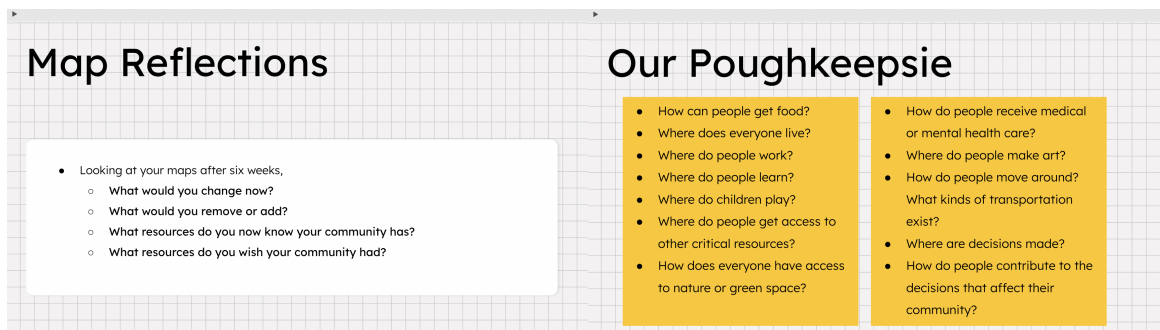
### Homework Exercise

Take 10 photos of places or spots in your neighborhood or greater physical community:

- A place you feel joy
- A place you feel inspired
- A place you think is well designed
- A place you think is poorly designed
- A place you feel safe
- A place you feel unsafe
- A place you want to run or move your body
- A place you want to sleep or relax
- A place you want to read or learn
- A place you feel creative

### Session Six Slides





## Session #2 Thematic Questions

### Nature and Recreation

1. Where do you see nature within the city?
2. Think of a time you experienced nature within the city. What did it look like? How did it impact you?
3. Do you spend time in parks? What do you do in parks? How has your time in parks changed over your life?
4. Do you spend time in nature outside of the city? How does it feel, if so or if not?
5. What spaces do you hang out in for fun? What spaces do your family members or friends hang out in for fun? How does age shape access to recreational space?

### Movement & Transportation

1. How do you move through the city? What are the ways you can move?
2. How do you move outside of the city to other places? What are the ways you can move?
3. When is a time that you felt physically stuck, or unable to move? What are the ways you can't move?
4. How do you get to the grocery store if you don't have a car?
5. Do you use the Dutchess County bus system? What has that been like? Have you noticed any changes to how they run the bus service? Why do you think this is?

### Access & Ownership

1. What are spaces you use or go to that feel open to the public? What are spaces you use or go to that feel private? What makes them feel this way?
2. In what spaces do you feel safe? What elements of the space make you feel safe?
3. In what spaces do you feel unsafe? What elements of the space make you feel unsafe?
4. What are spaces where you feel welcome? What are spaces where you feel unwelcome? What makes them feel this way?
5. Have you ever experienced hostile architecture, or elements that prevent you from using a surface, building, etc. in the way you wanted (example: arm rests on benches to prevent people from sleeping on them)?

## Session #3 In-Class Handout: Zine Activity Notecatcher

**NAME:**

**DATE:**

**WHAT ISSUE AREA DID YOUR ZINE FOCUS ON?**

**HOW IS THE ISSUE MANIFESTING IN THE PHYSICAL LANDSCAPE?**

**WHAT ARE THREE THINGS YOU LEARNED ABOUT THE ISSUE AREA YOUR ZINE FOCUSED ON?**

1.

2.

3.

**DO YOU SEE THIS ISSUE IN POUGHKEEPSIE? IF YES, HOW SO? IF NOT, DO YOU SEE ANY SIMILAR ISSUES IN POUGHKEEPSIE?**

**WHAT KINDS OF SOLUTIONS TO THE ISSUE DOES YOUR ZINE SHARE? DO YOU SEE THESE SOLUTIONS WORKING IN POUGHKEEPSIE?**

**ANYTHING ELSE YOU WANT TO SHARE?**

<b>NAME:</b>	<b>DATE:</b>			
<b>NEIGHBORHOOD WALK COMMUNITY MAPPING</b>				
<b>WHAT RESOURCES DO YOU NOTICE?</b>				
<b>WHAT CONCERNS DO YOU HAVE OR PROBLEMS DO YOU NOTICE?</b>				
<b>DO YOU SEE ANY EVIDENCE OF THE ISSUE AREAS WE HAVE DISCUSSED IN CLASS, EITHER THE PROBLEM OR SOLUTIONS?</b> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"><tr><td style="vertical-align: top; width: 33%;"><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Housing</i></li><li>• <i>Green Spaces</i></li><li>• <i>Food Insecurity</i></li></ul></td><td style="vertical-align: top; width: 33%;"><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Air Quality</i></li><li>• <i>Designing for Climate Change</i></li><li>• <i>Police in Schools</i></li></ul></td><td style="vertical-align: top; width: 33%;"><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Transportation</i></li><li>• <i>Displacement/Gentrification</i></li></ul></td></tr></table>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Housing</i></li><li>• <i>Green Spaces</i></li><li>• <i>Food Insecurity</i></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Air Quality</i></li><li>• <i>Designing for Climate Change</i></li><li>• <i>Police in Schools</i></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Transportation</i></li><li>• <i>Displacement/Gentrification</i></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Housing</i></li><li>• <i>Green Spaces</i></li><li>• <i>Food Insecurity</i></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Air Quality</i></li><li>• <i>Designing for Climate Change</i></li><li>• <i>Police in Schools</i></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Transportation</i></li><li>• <i>Displacement/Gentrification</i></li></ul>		

<sup>48</sup> Guidance from “Internal Faculty Manual,” *Service Learning Project*.

LOCATION	OBSERVATIONS	QUESTIONS

## Session #5 In-Class Handout: Creative Placemaking Gallery Walk Notecatcher

**Name:**

**Date:**

<b>Example Title:</b>	
What do you notice about this project? How was the greater community involved?	Do you notice any issues with this project, or any potential problems or missing elements?
What purpose does this project serve? Do you think this is a project that would be beneficial in your community?	
<b>Example Title:</b>	
What do you notice about this project? How was the greater community involved?	Do you notice any issues with this project, or any potential problems or missing elements?

<p>What purpose does this project serve? Do you think this is a project that would be beneficial in your community?</p>	
<p><b>Example Title:</b></p>	
<p>What do you notice about this project? How was the greater community involved?</p>	<p>Do you notice any issues with this project, or any potential problems or missing elements?</p>
<p>What purpose does this project serve? Do you think this is a project that would be beneficial in your community?</p>	
<p>What do the three examples you visited have in common?</p>	

**Session #5 In-Class Handout: Creative Placemaking Activity**

<b>NAME:</b>	<b>DATE:</b>
<b>CONSIDER YOUR COMMUNITY. WHAT IS A SPACE THAT FEELS ABANDONED, NEGLECTED, OR AS THOUGH IT COULD SERVE A BROADER PURPOSE FOR YOUR COMMUNITY?</b>	
<b>HOW CAN YOU IMAGINE THIS SPACE BEING REDESIGNED OR UTILIZED IN ANOTHER WAY TO BENEFIT YOUR COMMUNITY?</b>	
<b>DRAWING/SKETCH OF DESIGN PROJECT:</b>	<b>HOW CAN YOUR PROJECT ADDRESS YOUR SELECTED SOCIAL ISSUE?</b>



**WHAT WOULD YOUR PROJECT LOOK LIKE? WHAT WOULD IT FEEL LIKE?**

**WHO WOULD BENEFIT? WHO NEEDS TO BE INVOLVED TO MAKE YOUR PROJECT HAPPEN?**

**WHY DO YOU THINK THIS PROJECT WOULD BENEFIT YOUR COMMUNITY?**

## Exercise #1 Handout

### Exercise #1: Personal Travel Reflections

*On one of your trips to school, reflect on the experience of travel and moving through your community after having created your map. Feel free to reflect openly or consider the following questions:*

- *What were you doing when you were reflecting (walking, taking the bus, driving, being driven, biking, etc.)?*
- *What is one thing you noticed during your travel to school that you had not noticed before?*
- *How was your experience of traveling to school different after making your map?*
- *How was your experience of traveling to school different when you were having focused reflection?*

## Exercise #2 Handout

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Exercise #2: Community Photography

*Take 10 photos of places or spots in your neighborhood or greater physical community:*

- *A place you feel joy*
- *A place you feel inspired*
- *A place you think is well designed*
- *A place you think is poorly designed*
- *A place you feel safe*
- *A place you feel unsafe*
- *A place you want to run or move your body*
- *A place you want to sleep or relax*
- *A place you want to read or learn*
- *A place you feel creative*

## Exercise # 3 Handout

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Issue Area: \_\_\_\_\_

**What question do you want to ask to learn more about how the issue is affecting people in Poughkeepsie?** The question should be simple enough that people can answer in just 1-3 sentences or give multiple choice options.

--

Survey Responses (at least 10):



## Exercise #4 Handout

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Exercise #4: Sound Mapping

*Record 1-3 sound clips of your neighborhood, make each clip at least 10 seconds long. When deciding what to record, take a minute to think about why you are selecting this clip, and what it tells listeners about your community.*

## Session #4 Gallery Walk Content

This exercise requires six posters that include the title and location of a creative placemaking/adaptive reuse project, images of the project, and text about the project that comes from a source local to the project or focused on creative placemaking/adaptive reuse efforts. The sources of images and text are all included in the bibliography.

### Leszczynski Antoniny Manor Intervention



This project has involved restoration and extension of three of the former farm buildings on the Leszczynski Antoniny manor and a construction of one new building, in order to convert it into a healthcare and residential building complex dedicated for elderly people. This building complex includes a rehabilitation center which provides care and medical services and is supported by hotel and catering facilities, cultural events, underground car park and all infrastructure needed. The entire complex has a total net area of 8928 square meters and a volume of 29315 cubic meters.<sup>51</sup>

### Pegasus Garden, Lansing, Michigan



A formerly vacant lot is now the home of Pegasus Garden, a communal garden and gathering space for neighbors in the Prospect PLACE neighborhood on the East Side of Lansing, Michigan.

After the city demolished a home, the resulting vacant lot attracted illegal drug activity to the area. Jennifer Grau, a Prospect PLACE neighborhood resident, said “Neighbors wanted to create a colorful space for gathering and gardening that would signal to those who live here and those

<sup>49</sup> Maciej Lulko, *Untitled Photo of Leszczynski Antoniny Manor Intervention*, ArchDaily, February 5, 2016, photograph, <https://www.archdaily.com/781567/leszczynski-antoniny-manor-intervention-na-no-wo-architekci>.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> “Pegasus Garden,” Creative Placemaking Project, *Center for Community Progress*, <https://communityprogress.org/resources/creative-placemaking/projects/pegasus-garden/>.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

passing by that we live in a connected, vibrant, and caring community.” A neighbor with an adjacent home acquired the lot to serve as that safe space for the community.

Pegasus Garden features a free book library and a tool shed where neighbors can borrow tools. It also serves as a communal space for campfires, potlucks, neighborhood meetings, youth activities, and free community concerts. Most importantly, the garden grows and provides fresh produce for the neighborhood. It even features raised beds to make gardening accessible for neighbors in wheelchairs.

The garden is communal by design; there are no individual plots. Anyone can plant, weed, water, or share in the harvest. The garden feeds those who tend to the garden and neighbors who do not have a garden of their own.<sup>54</sup>

### Poughkeepsie Underwear Factory, Poughkeepsie, New York



<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Sabrina Sucato, “Poughkeepsie Revitalization Efforts Put Community and Housing on the Rise,” *Hudson Valley*, Hudson Valley Magazine, October 17, 2018, <https://hvmag.com/life-style/michael-nam-sung-cho-md/>.

<sup>56</sup> “WINNER: The Poughkeepsie Underwear Factory,” *New York Housing Conference*, accessed March 10, 2025, <https://thenyh.org/projects/the-poughkeepsie-underwear-factory/>.

<sup>57</sup> Anna Kaigle, “The Poughkeepsie Underwear Factory,” *A People’s Guide to the Hudson Valley*, December 8, 2023, <https://peoplesgeographyofthehudsonvalley.vassarspaces.net/poughkeepsie/the-poughkeepsie-underwear-factory/>.

In 2015, Hudson River Housing acquired this former factory which had been deemed a Historic Place in 1982. It began a \$7 million renovation, implementing kitchen space and room for a coffee shop on the first floor, printmaking and artist studios on the second floor, and office space and apartments on the third floor. The Poughkeepsie Underwear Factory, the “community hub” and multi-use space we know today, opened in the spring of 2017.

When planning to renovate the Poughkeepsie Underwear Factory (PUF), Hudson River Housing surveyed the community, which specified the desire for food, art, and housing. And that is precisely what PUF does so well. The kitchens are located on the first floor and basement, which serve as shared, rentable spaces for businesses and entrepreneurs to use while they begin to test their products. On the third floor there is conference space, in addition to part of The Art Effect, where they hold after-school programming for high school students looking to learn film production skills. As for housing in the PUF, there are 5 apartments on each floor, some one-bedroom, and some studio apartments. Eleven of the fifteen are considered affordable housing and operate on a sliding scale, meaning the rent does not exceed 30% of the resident’s income.

A lot is happening at the Poughkeepsie Underwear Factory: as one of the first mixed-use community buildings in the area, it has found much success. The incubator kitchen helps raise businesses that eventually branch out and serve the larger community. The communal art studio is a more accessible entry point into the art world, and The Art Effect above helps prepare people for jobs before they have left high school. The various programs in place at the PUF are funded by a mix of grants and donors, in addition to the money from members using the kitchen and print studio spaces, which are reasonably priced. Visiting the PUF and speaking with some of the people who make it run, I realized that giving and receiving is a wonderful balance. Learning about all that is happening here makes it feel natural to combine art, food, and housing, but those things must be combined in a way that is accessible and inclusive. And that is why the PUF has had such continued success.<sup>58</sup>

#### Steps at Main, Reading, Pennsylvania

---

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.





59



60



61

In Reading, Pennsylvania, the Reading Public Library joined forces with community organizations to offer its steps as a venue for community events. Library administrators recognize that performing arts are a way to build relationships with community members and transform community members' perception of its space.

From the library's perspective, staff were seeking a way to make the library more relevant for the low-income Latino community who live nearby. As part of this work, the library established an outreach coordinator position to develop non-traditional programming, starting with baseline surveys to identify obstacles that prevent folks from using the library. Respondents expressed challenges like working multiple jobs, inadequate transportation, childcare needs, and undocumented status. Residents also cited that the building — a Carnegie library — seemed uninviting and not built for them. The coordinator quickly understood that typical methods of outreach were not going to overcome those challenges.

The library realized its work had to become more than just getting people into the library. So they brought their programming outside. In July 2017, the library hosted its first Steps at Main event. Channing Durant performed hip hop dancing in front of a large crowd on Reading Public Library's front steps. He had choreographed two dances, and led 18 participants in the performance.

<sup>59</sup> "Steps at Main," Creative Placemaking Project, *Center for Community Progress*, <https://communityprogress.org/resources/creative-placemaking/projects/steps-at-main/>.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

It would be the first of many “outside the library walls” programs that the library has co-designed with different organizations. Four years after the first performance the library steps have become a community engagement platform where community members have found dance, music, theater, and poetry performances that have created a sense of “this is ours, too.” Now it is not rare to see performances taking place, or even a wedding. And because the library is a democratic space, its steps attract residents from all walks of life.<sup>62</sup>

#### South of Penn Community Lot, Reading, Pennsylvania



A vacant lot in Reading, Pennsylvania, that was once full of abandoned cars and trash now serves as a focal point for neighbor-led programs, art, and activities for youth in the community.

The journey to transform the lot began in 2018, when neighbors raised their concerns about the then-abandoned lot at a community meeting. Jeanette Buchanon, a resident who has lived in the neighborhood all her life, asked community organizer Tony Veloz to help lead the efforts. After the meeting, neighbors were interested in using the space for new programming and events.

Initially, neighbors approached city administrators to acquire permits for individual events. After some challenges with obtaining permits for each individual event, residents realized the most efficient way to proceed with programming would be to gain temporary control of the lot. They requested a memorandum of understanding from the city to allow ongoing use of the lot. The process of creating and approving the memorandum took four years to complete, and was recently signed in April of 2021.

After temporary control was granted, the group organized a series of cleanups and put up “no parking” signs. Neighbors organized volunteers to cut the grass and do other basic maintenance. Little by little the lot has taken on a new identity as a usable communal space.

---

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> “South of Penn Community Lot,” Creative Placemaking Project, *Center for Community Progress*, <https://communityprogress.org/resources/creative-placemaking/projects/south-of-penn/>.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.



Putting programming together has been the easy part, according to Tony Veloz. Maintaining the momentum and keeping volunteers engaged has been their challenge. But through consistency, a volunteer reward system, and rotating shifts, the group is working to make the lot a community space for years to come.<sup>65</sup>

#### Tired-A-Lot Studio, Fort Wayne, Indiana



At the Tired-a-Lot Studio, low-cost, upcycled materials like pallets and tires transform vacant lots into pocket parks. The design/build team is comprised of local teens who want to make a difference in the Mount Vernon Park (MVP) neighborhood of Fort Wayne, Indiana.

In 2017, Bridge of Grace Compassionate Ministries Center (BGCMC) launched Tired-a-Lot Studios to address neighbors' desires for beautification and social offerings, creative outlets for a growing student population, and remediation of a large number of overgrown green vacant parcels.

Tired-a-Lot Studios was a series of summer and spring break camps that convened 16 campers and 140+ volunteers and community residents to activate three vacant lots and create two murals. The three new pocket parks on formerly vacant lots are Unity Park, a playground; The Harbor, a performing arts space; and The Yard, a community lounge space. The intention of the project was to implement low-cost, replicable solutions for address the vacant lots. The total cost of each park averaged less than \$4,000. The total costs for the Tired-a-Lot Studios, which consisted of two rounds of Summer Camp, one round of Spring Break Camp, and installation of three vacant lot installations and one mural was \$96,000.

BGCMC works to promote youth leadership development through civic engagement. In that spirit, Tired-a-Lot Studio invited campers to return to the second Summer Studio as junior

---

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> "Tired-A-Lot Studio," Creative Placemaking Project, *Center for Community Progress*, <https://communityprogress.org/resources/creative-placemaking/projects/tired-a-lot-studio/>.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

counselors and testify about their work at Fort Wayne Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) hearings. Campers have also shared their insights on the park projects at the Nontraditional Employment for Women Workshop and the Regional Neighborhood Network Conference, which convened leaders from five states.<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

## **APPENDIX B: REFLECTION FORM QUESTIONS**

Students were asked to answer the following multiple choice questions, with answer options of strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neutral, somewhat agree, and strongly agree.

1. I feel like studying the physical landscape (buildings, roads, trees, etc.) of Poughkeepsie and other communities I might be a part of is important.
2. I feel like being engaged in my local community is important.
3. This class helped me more deeply understand my relationship to my home town Poughkeepsie.
4. This class helped me understand the social issues I care about more.
5. This class helped me understand some possible solutions to the social issues I care about.
6. This class increased my belief that I can make change in my community.
7. During the course of this class I have felt like I am more aware of aspects of the physical landscape of my community and how they impact the social issues I care about.
8. This class gave me more language to help me name experiences of the physical landscape of my community and the issues that concern me.

Students were also asked about their favorite and least favorite activities from the following list:

1. Personal mapmaking
2. Small group discussions/poster making around thematic questions
3. Study of social issue zines
4. Analyzing examples of creative placemaking and adaptive reuse projects
5. Designing our own creative placemaking and adaptive reuse projects
6. Neighborhood walk
7. Final Day activities

8. Unsure/None
9. Other (open text box)

Finally, students had an optional space to add any other thoughts they wanted to share:

1. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience of this class? Do you have any feedback about how the class could have been better?

## APPENDIX C: REFLECTION FORM RESULTS

Question	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel like studying the physical landscape (buildings, roads, trees, etc.) of Poughkeepsie and other communities I might be a part of is important.	50%	25%	25%	0%	0%
I feel like being engaged in my local community is important.	0%	50%	50%	0%	0%
This class helped me more deeply understand my relationship to my home town Poughkeepsie.	50%	0%	50%	0%	0%
This class helped me understand the social issues I care about more.	25%	75%	0%	0%	0%
This class helped me understand some possible solutions to the social issues I care about.	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%
This class increased my belief that I can make change in my community.	25%	50%	25%	0%	0%
During the course of this class I have felt like I am more aware of aspects of the physical landscape of my community and how they impact the social issues I care about.	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%
This class gave me more language to help me name experiences of the physical landscape of my community and the issues that concern me.	0%	75%	25%	0%	0%

**My favorite activity we did was:**

1. Small group discussions/poster making around thematic questions - 25%
2. Neighborhood walk - 75%

**My least favorite activity we did was:**

1. Study of social issue zines - 25%
2. Unsure/None - 75%

**Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience of this class? Do you have any feedback about how the class could have been better?**

1. nun
2. Sophie was an amazing person who made the class extremely interactive and every discussion we had was engaging. The class definitely made me look around Poughkeepsie and actually see what my surroundings is, not just walking by.
3. i feel like the class was perfect

## Bibliography

Adams, Jennifer, David Greenwood, Mitchell Thomashow, and Alex Russ. "Sense of Place." In *Urban Environmental Education Review*, edited by Alex Russ and Marianne E. Krasny.

Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017, 68-75.

Atkins, Robert and Daniel Hart. "Neighborhoods, adults, and the development of civic identity in urban youth." *Applied Developmental Science* 7, no. 3 (2003), 156-164.

Constant. "Another City for Another Life." In *Situationist International Anthology: Revised and Expanded Edition*, edited and translated by Ken Knabb, 71-73. Oakland, California: PM Press, 2024.

Center for Urban Pedagogy. "Brick by Brick." 2024.

<https://welcometocup.org/projects/brick-by-brick>.

Center for Urban Pedagogy. "Designing for Climate Change." 2022.

<https://welcometocup.org/projects/designing-for-climate-change>.

Center for Urban Pedagogy. "Displaced From This Place?." 2017.

<https://welcometocup.org/projects/displaced-from-this-place>.

Center for Urban Pedagogy. "Green Spaces for Everyone." 2024.

<https://welcometocup.org/projects/green-spaces-for-everyone>.

Center for Urban Pedagogy. "Liberty and Food for All." 2023.

<https://welcometocup.org/projects/liberty-and-food-for-all>.

Center for Urban Pedagogy. "Safe Space?." 2019. <https://welcometocup.org/projects/safe-space>.

Center for Urban Pedagogy. "Take Care of Indoor Air." 2022.

<https://welcometocup.org/projects/take-care-of-indoor-air>.

Center for Urban Pedagogy. "Who Decides Where the Bus Goes?." 2023.

- <https://welcometocup.org/projects/who-decides-where-the-bus-goes>.
- Demarest, Amy B. *Place-based Curriculum Design: Exceeding Standards through Local Investigations*. New York: Routledge, 2015.
- Dewey, John. *The School and Society*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1956.
- Dixon, Timothy J. and Mark Tewdwr-Jones. *Urban Futures: Planning for City Foresight and City Visions*. Bristol: Policy Press, 2021.
- Fitzgerald, Des. *The City of Today is a Dying Thing: In Search of the Cities of Tomorrow*. London: Faber & Faber Limited, 2024.
- Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of Indignation*. Colorado: Paradigm Publishers, 2004.
- Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2000.
- Ginwright, Shawn and Julio Cammarota. “Youth activism in the urban community: learning critical civic praxis within community organizations.” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 20, no. 6 (2007): 693-710.
- Gruenewald, David A., and Gregory A. Smith, eds.. *Place-Based Education in the Global Age: Local Diversity*. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- Hayden, Dolores. *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1995.
- “Homepage.” *Center for Urban Pedagogy*. <https://welcometocup.org/>.
- hooks, bell. *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*. New York: Routledge, 2003.
- hooks, bell. *Teaching to Transgress*. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- “Internal Faculty Manual.” *Service Learning Project*. Brooklyn, NY: last modified 2024.
- Jacobs, Jane. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. New York: Random House, 1961.
- Kaigle, Anna. “The Poughkeepsie Underwear Factory.” *A People’s Guide to the Hudson Valley*.



December 8, 2023.

<https://peoplesgeographyofthehudsonvalley.vassarspaces.net/poughkeepsie/the-poughkeepsie-underwear-factory/>.

Leslie, Clare Walker, John Tallmadge, and Tom Wessels. *Into the Field: A Guide to Locally Focused Teaching*. Great Barrington, Massachusetts: The Orion Society, 1999.

London, Peter. *Step Outside: Community-Based Art Education*. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1994.

Lulko, Maciej. *Untitled Photo of Leszczynski Antoniny Manor Intervention*. ArchDaily. February 5, 2016. Photograph. <https://www.archdaily.com/781567/leszczynski-antoniny-manor-intervention-na-no-wo-architekci>.

Massey, Doreen. "Power-geometry and a progressive sense of place." In *Mapping the Futures: Local cultures, global change*, edited by Jon Bird, Barry Curtis, Tim Putnam, George Robertson, and Lisa Tickner, 59-69. London: Routledge, 1993.

Miglietta, Anton, Antonio López, David Stovall, and Emily Williams. *Urban Renewal or Urban Removal? A Grassroots Look at Chicago's Landgrabs and the Struggle for Home and Community*. Chicago, Illinois: Chicago Grassroots Curriculum Taskforce, 2012.

Mitchell, Tania D. "Using a Critical Service-Learning Approach to Facilitate Civic Identity Development." *Theory Into Practice* 54, no. 1 (2015): 20–28.

Morris, David and Karl Hess. *Neighborhood Power: The New Localism*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1975.

O'Rourke, Karen. "Psychogeography: A Purposeful Drift Through the City." The MIT Press Reader. July 16, 2021. <https://thereader.mitpress.mit.edu/psychogeography-a-purposeful-drift-through-the-city/>.

“Our Mission,” *Service Learning Project*, accessed April 20, 2025,

<https://servicelearningnyc.org/mission/>.

“Pegasus Garden.” Creative Placemaking Project. *Center for Community Progress*.

<https://communityprogress.org/resources/creative-placemaking/projects/pegasus-garden/>.

“Poughkeepsie City School District Enrollment (2023-24).” *New York State Education Department (NYSED) Data*. 2024.

<https://data.nysed.gov/enrollment.php?year=2024&instid=800000053351>.

Smith, Gregory A., and David Sobel. *Place-and community-based education in schools*. New York: Routledge, 2010.

Smith, Gregory A. and Dilafruz R. Williams, eds.. *Ecological Education in Action: On Weaving Education, Culture, and the Environment*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1999.

Sobel, David. *Place-Based Education: Connecting Classrooms & Communities*. Massachusetts: The Orion Society, 2004.

Solnit, Rebecca. *Storming the Gates of Paradise: Landscapes for Politics*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2007.

“South of Penn Community Lot.” Creative Placemaking Project. *Center for Community Progress*. <https://communityprogress.org/resources/creative-placemaking/projects/south-of-penn/>.

Souzis, A.E. “Momentary Ambiances: Psychogeography in Action.” *Cultural Geographies* 22, no. 1 (2015): 193–201. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26168633>.

Steinkopf-Frank, Hannah. “Walkers in the City—and Everywhere.” *JSTOR Daily*. October 4, 2023. <https://daily.jstor.org/walkers-in-the-city-and-everywhere/>.

“Steps at Main.” Creative Placemaking Project. *Center for Community Progress*.

<https://communityprogress.org/resources/creative-placemaking/projects/steps-at-main/>.

Sucato, Sabrina. “Poughkeepsie Revitalization Efforts Put Community and Housing on the Rise,” *Hudson Valley*. Hudson Valley Magazine, October 17, 2018.

<https://hvmag.com/life-style/michael-nam-sung-cho-md/>.

“Tired-A-Lot Studio.” Creative Placemaking Project. *Center for Community Progress*.

<https://communityprogress.org/resources/creative-placemaking/projects/tired-a-lot-studio>.

Tomlinson, Carol Ann and Jay McTighe. *Integrating Differentiated Instruction & Understanding by Design: Connecting Content and Kids*. Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2006.

“WINNER: The Poughkeepsie Underwear Factory,” New York Housing Conference, accessed March 10, 2025, <https://thenyhcn.org/projects/the-poughkeepsie-underwear-factory/>.

---

<sup>i</sup> Gregory A. Smith and David Sobel, *Place-and community-based education in schools* (New York: Routledge, 2010), x.