



DOING BATTLE WITH FEELINGS OF URBAN IMPOTENCE

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A paradox that is most frustrating to a person committed to instructing people in ways of surviving in city space is the paradox of urban impotence. This is the sensation of being unable as an individual to exert appreciable influence in the flows of change and development in a city. It is paradoxical for the simple reason that the city is the most artificial (non natural) of all environments. It is the zenith of human capacity to transform a natural setting into a cultural environment. To look at such a scene and feel unable to play a significant role in that process of human transformation can be intensely frustrating.

It is just such a frustration that led to the creation of the UCLA Urban Environmental Education Project and an experiment in experiential education that has attempted to demonstrate a method for diminishing the anxieties of perceived urban impotence. At the same time, this Project has created avenues of continuing interaction between the university--one of the most likely forces in the design of future city space--and the inner city school populations--one of the most likely inhabitant groups of that city space. This article is given over to a commentary on the specific goals, the effectiveness, the institutionalization of the UCLA Project, while then addressing itself to the broader implications for the real-world outcomes of this curriculum innovation in other cities.¹

I. The Goals of the UCLA Urban Environmental Education Project

In the briefest form, the Project was focused upon a single goal: prove that UCLA could create an educational experience demonstrating university faculty, university undergraduates, Los Angeles school teachers and Los Angeles primary and secondary school students can still play a productive

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role in the design and creation of their urban setting. In short, use the city as a laboratory for learning and make the lessons practical as well as theoretical.

The need for such an effort has probably been sensed by most of the readers of this journal as you have experienced the pessimism of colleagues and students alike who claim that they can have no impact on their city; that they are "simply cogs in an inhuman machine." This is a particularly distressing attitude to hear from undergraduates who see no point of entry into the decision-making process that builds the environment around them. Such beliefs have the danger of becoming self-fulfilling prophesies as students lapse into constricting indifference toward control and modification of the urban setting.

The need for a program to dispute such impressions of urban impotence seemed particularly critical for me, as a practitioner of cultural geography, a discipline that is broadly dedicated to the concept that environments are largely society-made and humanly organized. To have the students' primary setting be, at once, both the most artificial of all settings AND one that they felt incapable of influencing appeared to be an academic and psychological contradiction that deserved to be challenged. It was in the context of such a challenge that the UCLA Urban Environmental Education Project (the Project) was conceived in 1976 and introduced into our curriculum in the summer of 1977.

The components of the Project are shown in Figure 1.

The resources tapped to dispell this perceived state of environmental urban impotence included the following:

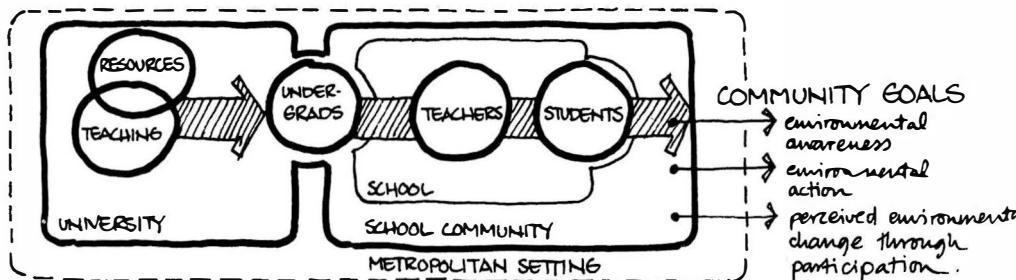


Figure 1 - The Components of the Project

1. The university faculty as a source of environmental knowledge, research and teaching capacity;
2. University undergraduates who were to benefit from the lessons of environmental modification;

3. Los Angeles public school teachers and students who were to provide an academic and community setting for the lessons from and about the landscape;
4. The Los Angeles environment as a superb setting for the observation and analysis of the human processes of landscape creation.

To link these components into a productive unit, the Project brought together secondary school teachers from the Los Angeles inner-city schools and UCLA undergraduates for a Summer Institute in Urban Environmental Education in 1977. The Inner-city focus was determined by the terms of a supportive grant the Project obtained from the Office of Education. We felt that bringing lessons of environmental and community awareness to southcentral Los Angeles and other low-income communities would not only be consonant with the Project's goals of teaching methods of environmental change, but such a setting would also involve UCLA in areas of the city in which our university has been little present. It also seemed appropriate to devise ways in which inner-city settings could be studied in order to tap the human resources that were there, both for the improvement of local environments and for enhancement of community pride.

The Summer Institute. The Summer Institute was a six-week course taught in the Department of Geography that concerned itself with: instruction in the major elements of urban ecosystems and; manifestations of those elements in Los Angeles and its specific communities. If, for example, we had a morning lecture, it would focus upon aspects of drainage, flooding, local water sources and public attitudes toward water in specific locales in Los Angeles. Such phenomena became particularly significant as we lectured on the components of the built environment such as housing, transportation, and commercial networks.

Since a major ambition in our engineering of the Project was to involve UCLA undergraduates in use of the city as a laboratory, extensive use was made of the field for study of the week's lecture components. This was done in part by the scheduling of regular Thursday full-day field trips that were designed to illustrate the ways in which theories from the classroom at UCLA had immediate and significant relationship to the local settings of Los Angeles.²

These field explorations also were instrumental in engendering a supportive working relationship between the UCLA undergraduate and the inner-city teachers. This meant that we had at least linked three of the four target components into a working force: UCLA faculty, undergraduates and Los Angeles city school teachers. That initial rapport was essential if we were to involve the fourth

component, and make this experiment something more than just another classroom excursion into possibilities, but not student-experienced realities. Moving this experience from environmental knowing into the realm of so-called "hands on" environmental modification required three follow-through steps. These took place during the academic year 1977-78.

The Follow-Through Year

Mini-courses. With the Project participants armed with a new knowledge of environmental theory and experience of field practice, we came to the school year with three goals. The UCLA undergraduates were to observe in classrooms in the eighteen secondary schools that had participated in the Summer Institute.

After ten weeks (one quarter) of observation--designed to involve some 4-6 hours a week in the classroom--each undergraduate was to present a mini-course in environmental education. The goal of the mini-course was to give the UCLA participant ten hours in front of a class, and to force the undergraduate to bring ecosystem theory to an immediate and understandable level. Themes of the short courses were to reflect local environmental realities as much as possible. At Westchester High School just north of the Los Angeles International Airport, for example, a Black student taught a mini-course on "Noise Pollution and Black Communities." This curriculum design took on an immediacy that made it good education and good preparation for civic involvement in the modification of an environmental ill. Another student prepared a water study for a school in the arid Santa Monica Mountains. Still another did a transportation unit for San Fernando High School in the east end of the San Fernando Valley, and she commuted the twelve miles between her classroom and UCLA by bicycle, perhaps not a necessarily practical pattern, but one that gave her particular credibility as she organized a bike-path project for her school community.

A benefit that quickly became apparent was the effectiveness the UCLA students had as role models for the high school populations. Since a third of our undergraduate participants were minority, we were able to bring a peer example of environmental concern, community awareness and undergraduate success to a number of schools by sending graduates back to their own high schools, or back to their own communities.

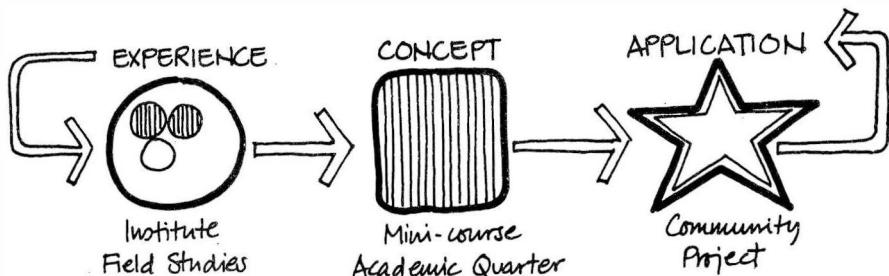


Figure 2 Linkages in the Project

UCLA "Themes in Urban Environmental Education." The structure for these mini-courses and effective interaction in the classrooms was given in part by a three-quarter follow-up course given in the UCLA Department of Geography. This course, "Themes in Urban Environmental Education," brought the UCLA participants together once a week. This gave us a forum for continued reading and discussion in the nature of the urban environment. It also provided a critical opportunity to talk about classroom and city experiences. Inasmuch as the goal of utilizing local landscape and community human resources was underscored in all facets of the Project, these sessions became charged with the responses of UCLA undergraduates to the city of Los Angeles. Students who had never experienced southcentral Los Angeles gained a new and vital sense of that part of the city and its population. Minority students at UCLA who had been outsiders to so many university groups suddenly began to speak as authorities when Anglos from Canoga Park or Woodland Hills asked questions about the minority communities of Audubon Junior High School or South Gate, California. A great deal of energetic learning went on during those sessions--and they provided a provocative discomfort to students and faculty alike who had previously confined their college education to the classroom.

Community Projects. The end goal of the Project was to have the UCLA undergraduate, in conjunction with the Summer Institute teacher and his or her Urban Ecology Class, become jointly involved in some tangible landscape modification project. If some places in the inner-city could be changed in a positive manner through this particular union, then the message of power over at least some dimension of the Los Angeles landscape would be evident to all of the people who had been touched by this experiment in Geography. This would help to diminish the paradox of urban impotence. Some of the changes included the undertaking

of a bi-lingual Human Resources Directory, causing local Hispanic and Anglo students of Highland Park to explore the community around their school as they had not done before. In the very core of downtown Los Angeles, an Anglo student who had been president of a fraternity and had never really seen the inner-city before led a Hispanic class in the design and completion of an urban mural project that covered an end of their bungalow classroom. At Lincoln High School, a slide-tape presentation on the history of the now-Hispanic community of north Broadway was engineered, designed, written and narrated by the urban environmental geography class through the cooperative efforts of the Summer Institute teacher and his two UCLA students. The UCLA undergraduates had been born in Holland and Costa Rica; the teacher was a native Angelino, and the class was nearly totally Hispanic. The slide-tape presentation that was created from this environmental effort so pleased the high school that it was featured at Open House and was later taken by the Principal to a district superintendants' meeting to illustrate the value of promoting community pride through class activities focused on the school neighborhood, geography and history.

Not all projects were successful. One UCLA student spent months attempting to organize a one-day campaign on environmental helath and innoculation in Compton, near Watts. Seventeen children came for the free shots. But this student, working with the Compton High School Urban Ecology class developed a unique sense of understanding about school neighborhoods and lines of communication between parents and the public schools.

In another case, a trio of undergraduates worked for the full school year to establish a vest pocket park in the Foshay Junior High School Area, just west of downtown Los Angeles. The effort took the three Anglo students through numerous interviews, community meetings, sidewalk surveys, classroom discussions and finally a meeting high in the Arco Towers, attempting to sell the Atlantic Richfield Oil Company on the concept of buying the land and helping to create the park. The school year ran out on the trio and its project, but considerable environmental learning had taken place at all junctures of this effort. At least positive encounters between UCLA undergraduate students, Foshay students and teachers, and residents of the school community had been stimulated by this effort at environmental change. Even the frustration that emerged from the project's ultimate discontinuance had a positive aspect in that the Foshay community realized how well-organized community support for a park has to

before land can be secured and vacant space can be transformed into recreational space. At least the experience highlighted the essential--and manageable--processes that must be engineered before such a landscape change could come about.

The reason that so much detail has been given here to the elaboration of the components and isolated experiences in this first section is that the Project's

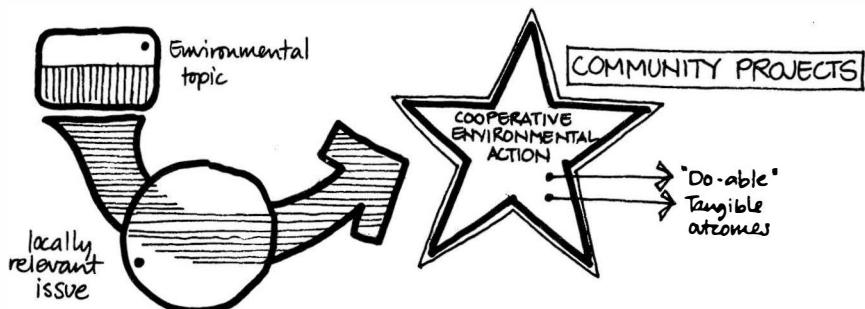


Figure 3 The Role of the Community Projects

venue was broad. In attempting to link research and teaching components of the university with the public school personnel and their local communities, common strands of civic and environmental interest were realized and stimulated where none had been before. Faculty and professionals, for example, were called in by the Los Angeles Unified School District to offer a model for urban environmental education and community research in support of new integration efforts. In sending students off campus to experience and evaluate environmental realities of communities that had existed before only in the vaguest of terms for many of our undergraduates, learning situations were created that were both exciting and alarming. The need to establish understanding of that potential for opportunity as well as the possibility for frustration is critical as we proceeded to our consideration of the effectiveness of this experiment.

II. The Effectiveness of the Project

Has there been a reduction in the students' fear of failing in the city?

To know that, it is necessary to recall the specific goals that we defined for ourselves at the outset of this effort at innovation in experiential education. They were:

- a. Provide an experimental academic program that would stimulate cooperation between UCLA faculty, students, and Los Angeles teachers and students;
- b. Expand concepts of the urban ecosystem and environmental education beyond the university classroom and into the learning field of the city itself;
- c. Demonstrate the capacity that interested citizens of virtually any age possess for having impact on the shaping of the urban environment; and
- d. Promote modification of the urban environment through the attainment of a, b, and c above.

In addition, there was an implicit interest in using the Project to illustrate the ways in which the city of Los Angeles could be effectively utilized as an academic laboratory for classes in the Geography and Social Sciences curriculum. It was hoped that success in this component would stimulate our colleagues in other social science disciplines to forge additional creative and cooperative links between our university and the community that we are mandated to serve.

Let us deal with each of those goals and their attainment in turn.

The Cooperative Link Between UCLA and the Los Angeles Community

There were both practical and philosophical reasons for the wish to link UCLA more actively with its metropolitan surroundings. Inasmuch as most of our student majors seek employment in this area, there are obvious benefits in providing them with more intimate exposure to the diversity and opportunity that Los Angeles as a city represents. Although the Project has included majors from more than a dozen departments, we wanted to have Geography play some institutional role in the establishment of a greater collaboration between campus and civic arenas. Because the field concept is so integral to our discipline, movement out into the community and educational frameworks of all parts of the metropolitan area came as a logical component in our design. The map (Figure 4) shows the locations of the schools from which we have gotten our teachers for training in the summer Institutes, and to which we sent our undergraduates after completion of their summer training.

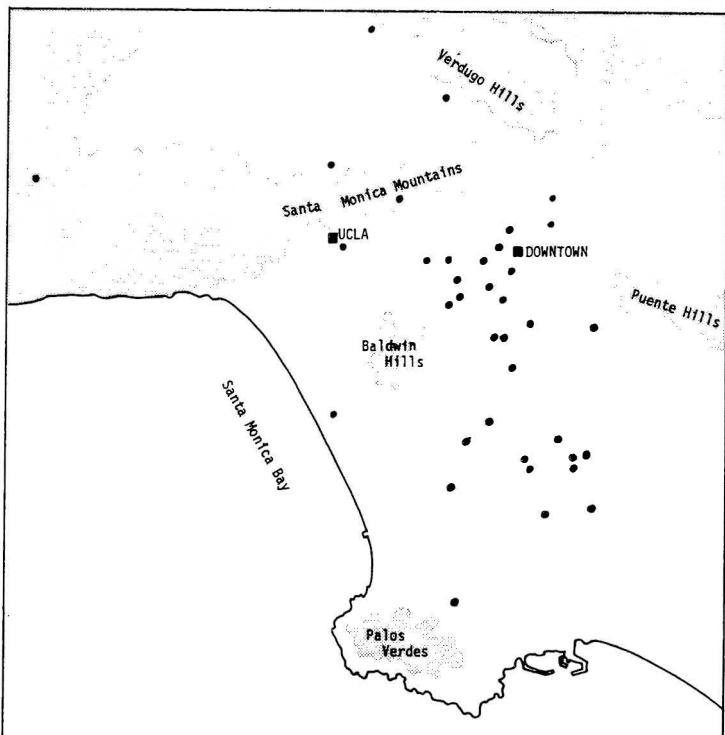


Figure 4 Sketch map of Participating Los Angeles City Schools, 1977-1980

The success of this union may be shown in part by excerpts from letters written by teachers and students who were involved in the UCLA Urban Environmental Education Project. Ms. Jane Hite, a fourth grade teacher from Graham Elementary School in southcentral Los Angeles, comments below on one of the outcomes of working with the Project and three UCLA undergraduates.

The fourth graders have mastered, utilized, and illustrated the meanings of 16 environmental terms. They have drawn beautiful illustrations of these terms, mapped their "beats," enlarged a community map and located their homes, created a collage of the meaning of "vegetation" and written poems about trees. The previously studied terminology came alive when the children went out on community expeditions to investigate the industrial and commercial areas of Graham community, trashy, overgrown vacant lots, graffiti on walls, and the architectural styles of single resident housing in the area. The students gathered and charted population census data, and held a mock city council election, dividing their community into four districts, and then wrote a General Plan for Graham community.³

These "expeditions" were led by UCLA undergraduates who had familiarized themselves with the Graham landscape on field trips as part of our summer training institute, and through their own wish to understand the neighborhood that they were going to be teaching in and learning from for their year-long involvement with the Project. The outcome of this undergraduate commitment in conjunction with Ms. Hite's own good teaching and class participation led to a linkage that was ideal in terms of the goals of our Project. Going on from Ms. Hite's letter

As a result of student enthusiasm and interest, a group of parents have joined the efforts of the students and their respective teachers to form a corporation called Cultural and Urban Environmental Studies, Incorporated Cues, Inc.). Our purpose in forming a nonprofit group is to actively involve more parents each year in carrying out community projects and activities, and to provide field study tours for the children who are recipients of our services.

The goals of the corporation are: 1. Study of urban land use; 2. study of natural, built and political environments, which will include travel; 3. to broaden awareness of one's ability to affect the environment; 4. to develop appreciation of other natural, built and social environments; and 5. to enrich the classroom social studies curriculum.⁴

CUES, Inc., was so effective in the marshaling of community interest and support that Ms. Hite's class, its UCLA undergraduates and local people were able to raise a fund large enough to take the class and some parents to Sacramento, California so that the students could talk with legislators about environmental legislation. In this particular experience, then, several of our undergraduates who had never been to southcentral Los Angeles before the Project were able to develop a mini-course on political processes and associated environmental impacts, educate a classroom of minority fourth graders in some of the phenomena that relate to the process of civic involvement, and then create an experience that saw teachers, parents, and legislators all interact around the theme of community awareness and environmental education. The impact of this particular success reached all the way to the state legislature.

Additional examples of effective linkages being established between our campus and the broader urban setting include the sixth grade city planning commission roleplaying in which students had to state and defend specific development strategies for their community in Sunland in the San Fernando Valley; the establishment of an Ecology Club in Fremont High School in which a Fremont graduate--now at UCLA--was able to return to her own school as an effective role model, instructing

the student members not only in the basics of environmental literacy, but in the importance of learning discipline in order to be able to stand a chance to succeed at UCLA or other demanding schools; and the organization of a class project at Audubon Junior High School that saw a class take the first steps in the design and production of a booklet promoting the benefits of being included in--responsive to--the 1980 census process.

This was initiated after a field trip to the Census Office and interaction with local, community census materials prepared by the Project.

In the thirty-seven schools that have participated in the Project, all have had some experiences that have made them and their students more aware of the social involvement UCLA does feel with Los Angeles. At the same time, each of the eighty-four undergraduates who had enrolled in the Summer Institutes and the classes in the Department of Geography that are part of the Project has explored new landscapes and new social situations in our metropolitan area.

The essence of this interaction is suggested by this excerpt from a UCLA undergraduate's journal of his experience in the Project. He had grown up in a wealthy area of west Los Angeles.

This has been an experience that has been well worth my time. My perceptions of Southcentral Los Angeles have changed completely. That is due to the fact that at one point I was looking at the area from an ignorant standpoint and now I look at it with a sense of familiarity. It is unfortunate that other people can't experience the other communities in their city. It is something that I believe is important, for the survival of mankind...I would just like to repeat that this has been a tremendous experience for me.⁵

Expand Environmental Education Beyond the Campus and into the City Itself

Learning from the landscape is fundamental to geography. One of the requisite skills in the discipline is the skill of observation. What are the components of the scene that you find in a walk to a theater; a drive to the Social Security Office in the Federal Building; in a stroll from school to the neighborhood Ma and Pa store? If the morphology of these mundane and local vistas can be comprehended, then two ends are served: The observer better understands the forces that shape his or her own environment, and, in so doing, personal environmental preferences and perceptions are appreciated. In a glib sense, the concept of "Know Thy Landscape; Know Thyself" was operative in the design of the UCLA Environmental Education Project. If we could take students (at any age) out into the urban scene and have them view it as a setting for the study of natural

built and social environments, then we could promote more interested learning in our classrooms. As this readership especially knows, discussions of, for example, a Central Business District (CBD) take on new and productive vitality after a class has walked near Skid Row or open market in any urban downtown.

In pursuit of our Project's goal of knowing Los Angeles, the Summer Institutes had one quarter of their time given over to field study. Each of the schools that we worked with promoted additional community walks with associated interviewing, survey taking, landscape analysis, sketch mapping, and exploration. Classes in some schools went up into the Santa Monica Mountains to study the contrasts between natural vegetation and the plants that were present in their school community. Others went into the local neighborhoods and did surveys of vacant lots, searching for clues to the past history of land use in these areas now abandoned.

One UCLA undergraduate's letter recalling a project done by Audubon Junior High School in the clearing of a vacant lot next to the historic old Dunbar Hotel--the first Black hotel in Los Angeles--on Central Avenue points out another use of the primary experiences gained only in the field and not in the classroom.

When the Environmental Education Project first began I had some reservations about being a participant. I gave the program a chance and I was thoroughly impressed by the faculty and students' skills and deep motivation.

I remember a warm day on Central Avenue in the Los Angeles inner-city. My UCLA professor was with a group of students holding a shovel, somewhat drenched with perspiration and hoeing weeds.⁶

That energy and optimism derived in part from working with the reality of people in their own landscape. While the messages in that experience were far from unanimous in their positive nature, the participants in the Project found again and again that when genuine interest was shown in understanding how a neighborhood functioned; how it was built, changed, rebuilt and lived in, people became responsive to the process of analysis. We found "teachers" in our fourth graders who knew secret histories of empty houses or vacant lots; in senior citizens who had witnessed wholesale change of their neighborhood in just two decades; and in store owners who generally welcomed interviews from high schoolers, UCLA undergraduates, and school children alike if they were asked in reference to the owner's store and its relationship to the local community.

All of the theory of these lessons from the urban setting of Los Angeles is already contained in the texts of the students. Learning from the primary experience, however, seems to have given these elements of cultural geography a greater significance. One student, upon completion of a community walk, made this observation on the productive effects of field study with his students.

I went home this day with a good feeling, of satisfaction. The students had learned more about their environment, even better, they are using their community as a tool for understanding the environment. They realize that there are problems in the community and many have ideas of how they could alleviate those problems...I think that a sense of place was experienced by many students today.⁷

Demonstrate the Capacity for Urbanites to Shape Environment

This is one of the most difficult components of the Project to assess. It would be very satisfying to be able to list block after block of modified landscape in association with smiling civic groups. But it would be somewhat inaccurate. Murals did get painted; Ecology Clubs did get formed and did organize campus clean-up campaigns; trees did get planted; vacant lots did get cleaned up...and in conjunction with all of these realizations of this particular goal, additional plans and stratagems were set in motion.

The real change in local landscapes, however, has proved to be tied in to a longer process than the one-year life of each UCLA undergraduate's involvement with the Project. For example, a UCLA student placed in Westchester High School spent most of her year attempting to gain access to land adjacent to the Los Angeles International airport for a class garden. Even with numerous interviews at LAX, at City Hall and with parents of her school students, she was not able to clear away restrictions before her year ran out and she had to leave for a summer abroad. Even with the park unrealized, however, we cannot say that there was not environmental learning. Everyone involved felt more optimistic about the possibilities of the environmental reality of such a garden.

In another project, our student at South Gate High School spent a full year attempting to gain adequate permits for access to a Department of Water and Power right-of-way so that his class of students could do an environmental analysis of the land under the power lines, and plant a garden. In the final stages, it became apparent that the school district was going to disallow the plan because of potential liability responsibilities. There was, then no garden

but there was greatly enhanced understanding of the path to authority and, consequently, to change. Frustration was also found on this path, but there is a lesson in that as well. Although the Project would have preferred simple success, it did add an instructive realism to the experience.

The strength of these efforts and their learning and civic benefit is shown in the excerpt from a letter by one of the Project undergraduates working at Loren Miller Elementary School in inner-city Los Angeles.

The Project provides a mechanism by which UCLA can extend its arms into the community, potentially impacting positively in its community relations. Increased awareness of the environment, how it impacts on people and how people impact on it, is attained. To achieve this level of understanding and then share it further through teaching, for example, is very important to the future of our cities, if they are to remain habitable.⁸

The Promotion of Urban Environmental Modification Through the Combined Aspects of the Project: Changes in Landscape and Attitudes.

A writer for the Los Angeles Times, Art Seidenbaum, saw the Project and its associated activities as "real digs in the real field." In this excerpt from his "New Roots at Manual Arts" he illustrates the scope of environmental education as he perceived it.

The underside of inner-city, down where the bedrock problems are, sprouts new stems and buds and hopes. There's a heap of earth renewal happening at Manual Arts High School, working on the hard ground in this city...Mrs. Barrie Gyllenswan was talking about the big bed of osteospermum (African daisies) to be planted at the southern border of the campus for the big spring fair April 29. Mrs. Gyllenswan leads an urban environmental education class that combines downtown tours, Los Angeles problems research and real digs in the real field. She and UCLA student Barbara Azeka combined forces at Manual after teaming in an environmental program at the Westwood campus last summer, a program designed by Chris Salter and William Lloyd to help teachers reroot inner city awareness.⁹

Another journalist, in the San Fernando Valley News, saw the Project as bringing together forces to "fight community blight."

UCLA has declared war on community blight, enlisting the aid of hundreds of junior and high school students from throughout the Greater Los Angeles area and San Fernando Valley. More properly known as the UCLA Urban Environmental Education Project, the program is designed to enable students to observe problems first hand. Classroom study will be supplemented with the actual planning and carrying out of improvements in their own neighborhoods.¹⁰

In our own assessment, we feel that we initiated civic awareness and pointed out the process of environmental change in all of our schools, while the actual modifications vary widely from school to school and community to community. Attitudes, however, were changed and charting that process was one of the positive aspects of the Project. One of the most difficult aspects of a teaching life is the determination of what impact a specific class, experience, or professor has had on a student or a class. We can determine overall class response by comparative examinations across time, but that tells us little about individual students and whether or not they benefitted from the situations we have created for them on campus. In one sense, we have to wait a decade and hope that one out of five hundred returns to say something about successful role modeling or provocative lines of thought, or creative assignments. The wait is long indeed, and the fruits of such a wait are never without ambiguity.

As we have attempted to chronicle this Project--not for purposes of just this article, but because of our own needs to know if the time commitment made has been justified academically and experientially--we have come up with formal and informal instruments of assessment. We have been tapping these resources in the writing of I and II above, and will include the materials in our records. The one comment we are inclined to introduce into the paper proper came from radio reporter Christopher Ames of KNX-FM, a popular CBS affiliate in Los Angeles. At the outset of a half-hour interview Ames gave me on "Inside Out," he opened with the comment:

As unlikely as it may seem, my guest tonight is a professor of geography at UCLA who believes that some teaching should be done in the city as well as the classroom. What we are going to try to find out is why a professor or a student would leave the security of the campus to try to right environmental wrongs in the city of Los Angeles...

The fact that the Project can look back on the reality of 84 undergraduates, 47 teachers, 37 schools and nearly 2,000 school children engaging in urban exploration and education, guided by UCLA in its concern for demanding education and a role in the development of Los Angeles is refreshing evidence that potentially effective experiential education has been launched in this experiment.

III. *The Institutionalization of the Project into the University Curriculum: Is There Life After the Pioneering Effort?*

The combination of external grants, broad community support, and energetic undergraduate response all led to a sensation of easy initiation of the Project in

its first years. Since that point, however, the grants have terminated, the expansion of the number of students involved has made administration of the Project a significant chore, and the elaboration of friendships and responsibilities in each of the school situations had forced a decision to be made about the permanent nature of this outreach effort at urban environmental and experiential education. In the Fall of 1979, it was decided that there would not be any further institutes, nor would additional schools be brought into the network of primary and secondary school sites that UCLA was servicing in the Project. The schools that had been the most supportive of the placement and the community analysis mini-courses of the university undergraduates were made part of an established community of concern between the campus and the public school system.

In our curriculum at the university level, I have introduced a new course in cultural geography, "Reading the Cultural Landscape." This highly visual course is an effort to give method to the way in which mundane and pedestrian landscapes can be observed and analyzed. One component of the course requirements is the reading of a landscape of some Los Angeles community both through the field analysis of its natural, built and social environment, and through research on its community development as obtained from primary sources on campus and in the community itself. This study in what I call "intimate sensing" has now institutionalized a considerable portion of the field work, study in local sources and interaction with street people and civic leaders. There is a lesson in such an approach for both the university student and the non-university personnel who have too long felt that our students lacked adequate concern for the city that surrounds their university campus in its splendid isolation and insulation.

From this class, it is easy to select undergraduates who might benefit from and welcome the opportunity to formalize such community analysis by working in one of our Project network schools. Teachers are still very interested in such students and the training in the Reading the Cultural Landscape class gives them adequate preparation for observation and class participation in accommodating schools. Such a mechanism has scaled down the size of the experiment so that it can be dealt with as part of a regular academic class and that, in all probability, is the key to appropriate institutionalization of this effort to increase a university student's sense of creative participation in the process of seeing and shaping the nature of city space.

IV. Conclusions and the Transferability of this Project to Other Schools and Other Cities

The UCLA Environmental Education Project began with a simple goal:

Create an academic program that would bond environmental theory with environmental practice and have this education occur in our city as well as on our campus.

Toward that end, the Department of Geography, in conjunction with the Office of Experimental Educational Programs of UCLA has devised a program that ran three years, creating a vehicle for instruction in environmental concepts on campus and experience in making such concepts relate to community awareness and analysis in inner-city Los Angeles. Undergraduates from more than a dozen majors linked with teachers and students from fourth to twelfth grade in the city's public schools to promote the essential urban process of environmental knowing and doing.

Outcomes range from flashy murals to quiet concern; from newly found pride in community to newly expressed anger at student indifference to community; from UCLA undergraduates lauding the variety of Los Angeles landscapes, to the same undergraduates bemoaning the fact that they lived twenty years in our city before seeing the downtown in any knowledgeable way. We like to think of the impact from such a varied experiment to be positive and provocative. These two quotes that seem to reflect such an assessment of the Project by people who have participated in it. The first is from a teacher in the Project; the second from a UCLA undergraduate.

As a result of the UCLA Urban Environmental Education Project, the students in my class and their parents developed a really positive feeling about the worth of group effort in the community--the local school community, the university community, and the city.¹¹

The second quote comes from a student who has lived his last six years in south-central Los Angeles.

Today I truly appreciate the environment in which I live. The ghettos are no longer the disgusting places which I previously tried to avoid and ignore. I now have a more analytical attitude toward them. I channel my energies and ideas into discovering the possible causes of such degradation and what I can do to help revitalize these areas.¹²

In outcomes such as these, the gist of the response does not derive from a particularly Los Angeles reference. The learning has not been city-specific. The experiences that have led to these reactions (and we have accumulated

many like them as participants have commented on their involvement during the Project's three years) are the products of two necessary conditions:

1. There must be an intellectual commitment to the belief that lessons can be learned from the landscape in any setting. The mosaic of the natural, built and social environment is visible for all to observe whether from atop a 60 story building or on the stoop of a Ma and Pa store. Observation, process speculation, and field analysis operate at all scales.¹⁶
2. There must be willingness on the part of at least one faculty member to forsake the haven of the university campus in order to create initial linkages between community and college. This can take shape through cooperation between public or private schools, service organizations, governmental agencies or private firms, but it does require faculty commitment to the union between these various sources of urban design, urban utility and urban frustration. The beauty in playing this role is that the signals you get from all sides largely welcome the articulation of university interest in the environment and the community in which its campus is nested.

The lessons, then, that can be derived from this experiment in the amelioration of student anxiety over urban impotence are several. To the students can come a sense of understanding of the landscape and the dynamic forces that shape it in their local community. To the school and community populations who are witness to an "entrepreneurial" role of the university undergraduate who is attempting to spark community awareness, there comes a sign of immediate university concern for pre-collegiate school populations and their environment.

And to the faculty who undertake the creation of this network of varied peoples with diverse perspectives and personal goals, there comes the realization that cities grow and change, prosper and suffer because of the skills, power and ideas of just such diverse populations. Such understanding can add significant dimensions of reality to any instruction in the nature of the design, creation, maintenance and utility of cultural landscape. It is experiential education in its most useful and stimulating form.



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NOTES

1. The initial goal of the Project was to design a program that would speak both to Los Angeles and to additional urban centers. As the Institute and curricular materials took shape, however, it was seen that there was merit in first creating a mechanism that had a strong chance of success in our home city. The first two items below are focused on Los Angeles, while the subsequent references are to useful efforts by other authors that deal with cities in general. Salter, Christopher et al, Scoring Los Angeles Landscapes: Environmental Education in an Urban Setting, (Los Angeles, U.C.L.A. Urban Environmental Education Project, 1978). Salter, Christopher L., "New Views of Space: The Los Angeleno Use of Landscape as Therapy," South Dakota Review, Volume 18, No. 1-2 (Spring/Summer, 1981), pp. 68-81. Alanen, Arnold R., "Form, Function, and the Vernacular Landscape: A Geographic Perspective," CELA Forum, Volume 1, No. 1 (Spring 1980), pp. 2-7; Clay, Grady, Close-up: How to Read the American City. (New York: Praeger, 1973); Knep, Edward C., "Theoretical Perspectives on Community Process and Form," The Social Science Journal, Volume 13, No. 2 (April, 1976) pp. 103-118.
2. A useful guidebook for the blending of theory and field practice is Farbstein, Jay and Min Kantrowitz, People in Places: Experiencing, Using and Changing the Built Environment, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, 1978). A text dealing with the same problem of having the city serve as classroom is George, Carl J. and Daniel McKinley, Urban Ecology, In Search of an Asphalt Rose, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974).
3. All of the quotations are taken from the Final Report, UCLA Urban Environmental Education Project, Department of Geography, UCLA, Fall 1979. The Hite quote is in Final Report, Appendix B, p. 25.

4. Final Report, Appendix B., pp. 25-26.
5. Op. Cit., pp. 27-78 .
6. Op. Cit., p. 19.
7. Final Report, Appendix C., p. 5.
8. Final Report, Appendix B., p. 21.
9. Seidenbaum, Art, "New Roots at Manual Arts," Los Angeles Times, April 21, 1978, p. 14.
10. "UCLA Fights Community Blight," Valley News, August 4, 1977, p. 18.
11. Final Report, Appendix B., p. 25.
12. Op. Cit., p. 3.

