URBAN PERCEPTION: IMPACT OF COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

This paper delves into the merits of integrating community-based learning into urban design and planning studios, emphasizing the essential connection between academic learning and practical experiences within local communities. It promotes collaborative efforts among students, staff, and community members to address specific local challenges effectively. By actively engaging with these communities, participants gain profound insights into the social, cultural, economic, and environmental factors shaping them, enabling them to apply their disciplinary knowledge aptly to address community issues. Extended on-site durations further amplify the benefits, offering a deeper understanding of community needs, values, and perspectives. This fosters enduring collaborations and promotes social, economic, and environmental sustainability. Experiential learning activities during the experimental week, such as service-learning projects and community-based research, enhance critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills, while heightening awareness of social and cultural dynamics within the community. In conclusion, community-based learning proves invaluable in urban design and planning studios, fostering sustained collaboration and promoting holistic sustainability.

KEYWORDS: Community, learning strategies, urban design, teaching, and social perception

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الإدراك الحضري: تأثير التعلم القائم على المجتمع

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الملخص

هذه الورقة تستكشف مزايا دمج التعلم القائم على المجتمع في استوديوهات التصميم الحضري والتخطيط، مؤكدة الرابط المحوري بين التعلم الأكاديمي والتجارب العملية داخل المجتمعات المحلية. تشجع هذه النهج الجهود التعاونية بين الطلاب والموظفين وأعضاء المجتمع لتحديد ومعالجة التحديات المحلية المحددة. من خلال المشاركة الفعالة مع هذه المجتمعات، يكتسب المشاركون فهمًا عميقًا للعوامل الاجتماعية والثقافية والاقتصادية والبيئية التي تؤثر عليها. هذه الاتصالات تمكّنهم من تطبيق معرفتهم التخصصية بشكل فعّال للتعامل مع قضايا المجتمع.

يعزز المدة الممتدة التي يُقضى جزءًا منها في الموقع فوائد التعلم القائم على المجتمع. يوفر الانغماس في المجتمع، سواء من خلال العيش أو العمل هناك، فهمًا أعمق لاحتياجاته وقيمه وآرائه. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تعزز هذه التجربة العلاقات مع أعضاء المجتمع، مما يمهد الطريق للتعاون المستمر الذي يعزز الاستدامة الاجتماعية والاقتصادية والبيئية.

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خلال الأسبوع التجريبي، شارك الطلاب والموظفون في أنشطة تعلم تجريبية مثل مشاريع خدمة المجتمع والبحوث المبنية على المجتمع، مما يسهل تطبيق المعرفة التخصــصــية في ســياقات العالم الحقيقي، ويغذي التفكير النقدي وحل المشـكلات ومهارات الاتصــال، مع زيادة الوعي بالديناميات الاجتماعية والثقافية داخل المجتمع.

في الختام، يثبت التعلم القائم على المجتمع كأسلوب قيم في استوديوهات التصميم الحضري والتخطيط، ويعزز الفوائد الشـاملة، مما يوفر مسارًا للتعاون المستمر ويعزز الاستدامة الشاملة.

الكلمات المفتاحية : المجتمع، استراتيجيات التعلم، التصميم الحضري، التدريس، التصور الاجتماعي

1. INTRODUCTION

Community-based learning is an approach to education that emphasizes the importance of connecting academic learning to real-world experiences in local communities. This approach recognizes that learning is not just an individual endeavor, but is also embedded in social and cultural contexts. By engaging with local communities, students and staff can gain a better understanding of the social, cultural, economic, and environmental issues that impact these communities, and how their disciplinary knowledge can be applied to address these issues.

The community-based learning approach (CBL) encourages students and staff to work collaboratively with community members to identify and address local problems or issues. This approach often involves experiential learning activities such as service-learning projects, community-based research, or internships, which enable students and staff to apply their disciplinary knowledge in real-world contexts. By working with community partners, students and staff can gain a better understanding of the complexities of social issues and develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills.

Community-based learning can also benefit communities by creating opportunities for local residents to engage with academic institutions and develop partnerships that can lead to long-term collaborations. By working together, academic institutions and local communities can create mutually beneficial relationships that promote social, economic, and environmental sustainability. Overall, community-based learning is an approach that recognizes the importance of connecting academic learning to real-world experiences in local communities. This approach can help students and staff develop a deeper understanding of the social, cultural, economic, and environmental issues that impact communities, and how their disciplinary knowledge can be applied to address these issues in a meaningful and effective way.

Community-based learning can be particularly useful in urban design and planning studios, where the focus is on understanding and addressing the complex social, economic, and environmental issues that shape urban communities. In this context, community-based learning can help students and staff gain a better understanding of the needs and perspectives of local communities, and how their disciplinary knowledge can be applied to address these needs. CBL can be useful in urban design and planning studios as; a) Engaging with local communities: Community-based learning encourages students and staff to engage with local communities to identify and address local problems or issues. This engagement can help students and staff gain a better understanding of the social and cultural dynamics of the community, and how their disciplinary knowledge can be applied to address the needs and concerns of local residents. b) Developing partnerships: Community-based learning can help to develop partnerships between academic institutions and local communities. These partnerships can lead to long-term collaborations that promote social, economic, and environmental sustainability in urban communities. c) Experiential learning: Community-based learning often involves experiential learning activities such as service-learning projects, community-based research, or internships. These activities enable students and staff to apply their disciplinary knowledge in real-world contexts and develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills. And d) Co-creation: Community-based learning

emphasizes the importance of co-creation, or working collaboratively with local communities to identify and address local problems or issues. This collaborative approach can lead to more effective and sustainable solutions that reflect the needs and perspectives of local residents.

In summary, community-based learning can be a valuable approach in urban design and planning studios, helping students and staff to gain a better understanding of the complex social, economic, and environmental issues that shape urban communities, and how their disciplinary knowledge can be applied to address these issues in a meaningful and effective way.

2. COMMUNITY BASED LEARNING (CBL) AS AN APPROACH

Undoubtedly, civil society plays a crucial role in balancing the heavily centralized, exam-driven educational system in developing nations like Egypt. The issue of Egyptian college graduates possessing academic expertise that does not align with practical concerns or job requirements necessitates scrutiny [1]. Conventionally, universities have prioritized instructivist teaching, which has been subject to critique from both theoretical and practical perspectives. We contend that socio-cultural theories of learning, coupled with the concepts of social capital and social creativity, offer a promising theoretical foundation for the repositioning of universities within the knowledge society [2].

Around eleven or twelve years ago, when teachers initially started discussing and writing about the possibilities of this approach, they mainly spoke in hypothetical terms. However, since then, they have gained knowledge through researching, studying, and even contributing to the creation or restructuring of educational institutions. These teaching institutions have seen teachers breaking down the traditional barriers that exist between classrooms and the broader school grounds and communities that surround them. Previously, the approach taken by students and teachers at Young Achievers School would have been a rarity, but now they represent a growing group of innovative educators and students who have found an effective way to merge formal learning with life beyond the classroom [3]. Despite its increased popularity and well-established theoretical foundation, the literature on Community-Based Learning (CBL) displays a certain level of conceptual ambiguity. Definitions of service learning are varied and range from broad and inclusive, such as "academically-based service," to narrowly focused definitions that exclude many types of service learning. The label of "service learning" is often incorrectly applied to other forms of CBL due to its recent popularity, adding to the ongoing debate on its definition. However, the diversity in definitions and programs provides the necessary components for synthesizing current thinking on the subject [4]. Researchers identified numerous factors that either encouraged or discouraged their involvement and participation in CBL, as outlined in the following figure [1]:
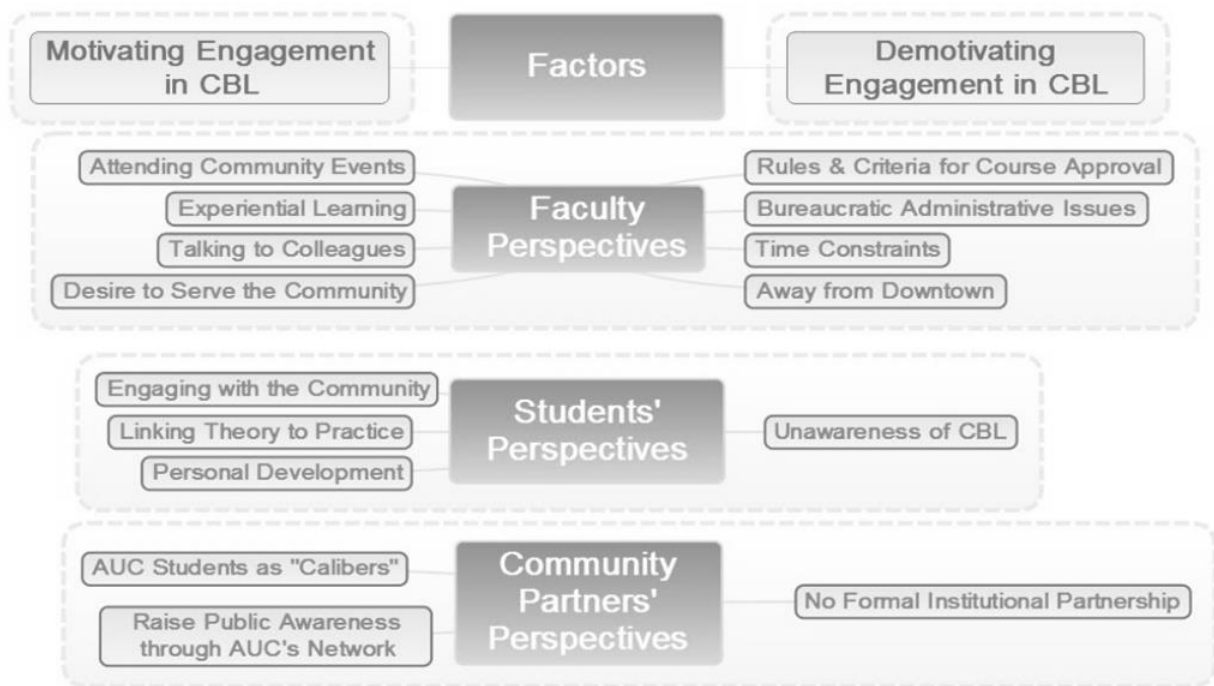
Fig. 1: Map of Factors Motivating and Demotivating Engagement in CBL
Sources: Megahed, N., Purinton, et al.

3. URBAN STUDIOS WITHIN THE CBL APPROACH

In urban communities, the hierarchical approach to reforming schools has raised doubts among educators, students, parents, and citizens about how we should hold public schools responsible for student learning and achievement. The field of education research, encompassing various disciplinary perspectives like history, sociology, political science, and public policy, as well as interdisciplinary fields like leadership studies and program evaluation, has significantly enhanced our comprehension of the role of schools, neighborhoods, and communities in urban education reform. While research and policy discussions examining and contrasting the advantages and disadvantages of top-down or grassroots reforms are not new, our knowledge regarding how such initiatives should occur, who should be responsible for them, and their long-term viability remains inadequate [5]. The majority of future urbanization growth is anticipated to be driven by small and medium-sized cities in low and middle-income nations across Asia and Africa [6]. The profession of urban design and planning requires the education of practical urbanists who possess experience in community development, citizen participation modules, and conflict resolution skills. The inclusion of community outreach in curricula offers essential exposure to practical applications of theoretical concepts and facilitates an understanding of group dynamics, community clients, and complex problems. The need for practical training in any planning curriculum is typically met through community outreach-based courses such as planning studios, practicum, or integrated lectures in seminar courses. These courses typically involve teams of students working with a specific community on a planning-related project, but they also present significant teaching and

learning challenges [7]. Researchers are both trained in design and planning and work closely with urban communities. They believe that design and planning are inherently connected in any project. However, they have noticed that few scholars have effectively combined these disciplines. This is unfortunate because they believe that there are significant contributions to be made in terms of methodology, theory, and community-based relationships, particularly in the current socio-political conditions [8].
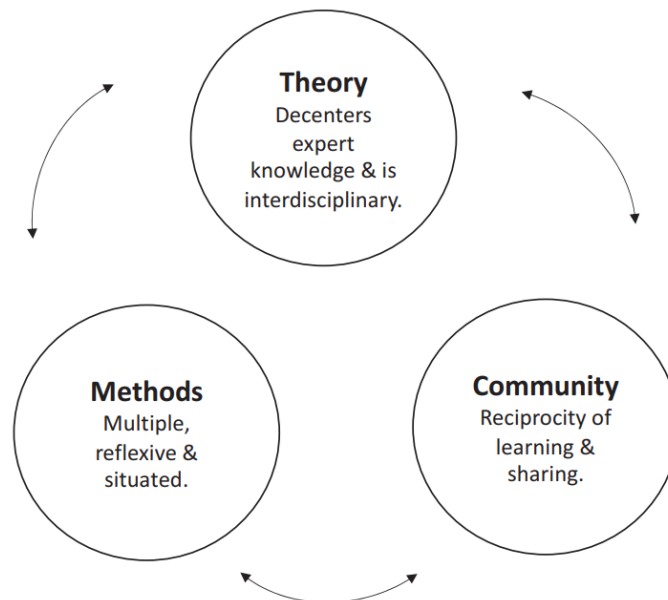

Fig. 2: Effective combined relation
Sources: Vasudevan, R. and Novoa E, M., 2022

4. EXPERIMENTAL IMPLEMENTATION

The existing gap between social levels in Egypt presents a critical societal challenge. Despite being a privileged institution, the university may have a limited impact on the broader community than it desires. As a result, there is a need for more intentional efforts to fulfill its mission in this regard. The proposed approach aims to address these concerns and strengthen the institutional capacity to contribute actively to community change. This will be accomplished by producing civic-minded graduates who are enthusiastic about collaborating with individuals who may have different backgrounds and by continuing to support and create an impact in society after graduation.

To tackle these issues, the researcher is dedicated to assess the effectiveness of Community-Based Learning (CBL) in promoting intended learning perception of urban studios for students. The purpose of the research is to investigate the CBL experience at university students, document its best practices, highlight the extent to which it promotes the development of civic-minded graduates, and recommend a multifaceted university-community framework for curricular civic engagement. In doing so, it aims to address the following research question: [1]   Is the CBL approach successful in intended learning outcomes for students as civic-minded graduates?

To address these questions, the CBL took place at a far site away from students' home. It was in the western desert, and the students spent a whole week together and on daily basis with the new introduced community.

4.1. About the site

The CBL took place in Bahariya oasis Its Capital is El-Bawiti Village, located in Giza Governorate, 370 km away from Cairo and covers an area of about 12000 km² (500.000 Acres). The valley is surrounded by mountains with black hills and has numerous springs. The main economic sectors are agriculture, iron or mining, and tourism, and the main agriculture products are dates, and olives. the Bawiti has an architecture of Bedouin style with some domes that balance the temperature inside the rooms.

The village Ain- el wadi. It's a village Located in the Bahariya oasis and is part of the Bawiti and affiliated to the Al-Hara center. The village was called by this name in relation to the spring in which it is located, which is the eye of the valley.
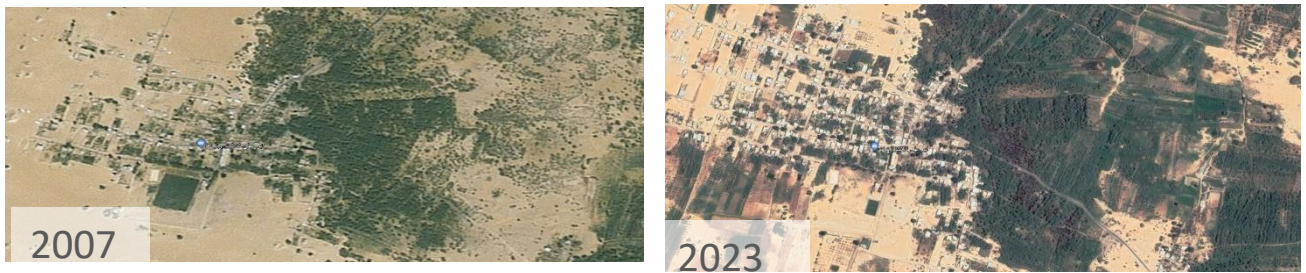

Fig. 3: Recent and past of Ain El-Wadi villages
Sources: Google maps

4.2 Perceiving community elements

Before going to the field the facilitator explains that A community is formed by individuals who have varying attributes, but are connected by social bonds, hold similar viewpoints, collaborate towards a common goal in physical spaces or contexts, and frequently share a cultural and historical background. Besides, the facilitator recommended to the students how to deal with residents of the village and not to violate privacy or force anyone dialogue without their desire and to deal in a decent and tactful manner.

And to recognize and analyze the diversity and complexity of settlements it was recommended to identified communities' elements as per Ekistics elements [9] as shown in table (1).

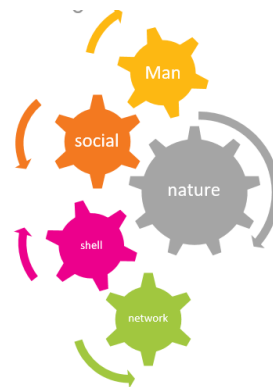**Fig. 4: Bahariya Oasis location**
Sources: Google map, 2023

Fig. 5: Human settlement components
Sources: Derived after; Doxiadis, C. A. (1968)

Table 1: Bahariya Oasis EKISTIC's elements
Sources: Researcher, 2023

ELEMENT	PHOTO	COMMENT
Nature		the texture of the soil in Aien El-Wadi village was sandy texture. Wahat is famous for the cultivation of date palms. There are many underground water sources in this village. The existing wells and springs are one kilometer below the surface of the earth. The water inside the wells is transferred to basins and from the basins to pathways to deliver water to the village. The lack of understanding by the people of the oasis of the wells operating systems from the Ministry of Irrigation and the philosophy of not operating some wells despite their readiness for operation
Man		During the Third Intermediate Period, Libyans became more powerful in Egypt During Dynasty XXVI, the oasis became a critical trade location and had local governors ruling the territory. There are a lot of tombs close to Bawiti which contain the bodies of many prominent governors, including provincial governor Amenhotep Huy from Dynasty XIX and many regional governors from Dynasty XXVI It was found that women there are very precious were Married woman wear veil Single women did not wear veil

Shell		Outside walls (not including drywall), core walls, and elevator lobby areas completed to building standard condition for public areas. Unfinished concrete floors throughout the Premises, broom clean. Building standard 110 volt 220 amp. power supplied to the Building Core along with 277/480 volt fluorescent lighting power supplied to the Building Core. Men's and ladies' restroom facilities with building standard finished located on each floor on which the Premises are located.
Social		The population is 30,500 thousand people distributed over the city of Bawiti and the villages of Mandisha - Al-Zabo - Al-Hayz - Al-Qasr - Al-Hara - Al-Qabbalah and Al-Agouz. People in this area really love each other and help each other, so they told us they don't call or need the police because most of the time they don't have problems and if there is a problem they solve it themselves. A lot of people work in agriculture and they mostly farm dates and the yearly produce 1 million and 700 tons of it yearly. Their weddings lasted for 3 consecutive days, and this is usually one of the habits that were found and continued for them until now
Networks		Entrances to the village It is possible to reach the village of Ain Al-Wadi, which is affiliated with the Al-Hara Center, through the entrance to the Al-Hara Fajjah. The transportation methods for the people of the village are semi-transportation cars and also motorcycles to reach the neighboring villages.

4.3 Documenting CBL feedback from the students

Community-based learning (CBL) is an increasingly popular approach to education that involves students working with local organizations and community members to apply their learning in real-world settings. While CBL can be incredibly rewarding for students and the communities they work with, it is also important to ensure that it is effective and meeting the needs of all parties involved. One way to do this is by documenting feedback from students and their reflections on their experiences. By hearing directly from the students about their experiences and what they have learned, we can better understand the impact of CBL and work to improve it. It is also essential to see their vision as students are often able to offer unique insights and perspectives on their experiences that can help us shape future CBL programs and initiatives. In this way, as shown in the following paragraph, documenting CBL feedback from students and their reflections is a crucial component of creating meaningful and impactful community-based learning experiences.

Rana Abdelfattah mentioned "This trip has showed a lot of disappearance of mine, understanding and giving a chance to myself to get its lost, besides the scientific part of this trip which add a huge value to my architecture knowledge from caring of nature to comfort of occupants, it provides me with more awareness of people, nature and needs. managing, developing and patience is some of skills that I have Acquire. I'm so happy of getting to this chance and I hope recurring like", while Alaa Abdelazim mentioned; "I really enjoyed this field trip, so I got to know people with me, I used to see them all the time in the university without knowing them or even saying hello to them. This trip was a renewal of my soul and my energy. I am so relieved with myself and my decisions now because of this week as well", and "I learned a lot on this trip, I saw a new society, another life and new culture for different people. I saw many beautiful landmarks of Bahariya Oasis, it was wonderful. I saw the simplicity and contentment in the lives of the people there. They are beautiful people and their lives are simple and beautiful, and I saw how well they are people who can make good use of their resources", was Emtethal ahmed's words.

It's fantastic to hear that students found community-based learning to be a valuable experience for gaining a deeper perception of users' needs and learning how to justify them. Community-based learning often provides students with a real-world context, allowing them to apply theoretical knowledge to practical situations.

Fig. 6: Community collage
Sources: CBL students, 2023

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the mentioned experience of Community-Based Learning (CBL) and their reflection on understanding community for the urban and planning studios, here are some conclusions and recommendations for getting the most out of your CBL experiences in these contexts:

- Build strong relationships with community partners: Community partnerships are a cornerstone of CBL. Take the time to get to know the community partners you will be working with, and build a strong relationship based on mutual respect and trust. This will help ensure that your CBL projects are successful and impactful.
- Listen to the needs of the community: Before beginning a CBL project, take the time to listen to the needs of the community you will be working with. This will help you design a project that is relevant and meaningful to the community and that addresses their specific concerns and challenges.
- Engage in critical reflection: CBL can be a transformative experience, but it's important to engage in critical reflection throughout the process. This means taking the time to reflect on your own biases and assumptions, as well as the impact of your CBL project on the community. Use this reflection to inform future CBL projects and to continually improve your practice.
- Embrace creativity and innovation: Urban and planning studios offer a unique opportunity to think creatively and innovatively about community-based solutions. Don't be afraid to think outside the box and explore new approaches to urban and planning challenges.
- Use data and evidence-based approaches: While creativity and innovation are important, it's also essential to use data and evidence-based approaches to inform your CBL projects. This will help ensure that your projects are effective and impactful, and that they have a measurable impact on the community.

By following these recommendations, we are now clearly answering the research question and reflecting on the CBL approach success in intended learning outcomes for students as civic-minded graduates, as well you can help ensure that your CBL experiences in urban and planning studios are meaningful, impactful, and transformative.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors have no financial interest to declare in relation to the content of this article.

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