

Reflection Response 1
Community Economic Development

Name: Hodge factory visit

Date: Early September

Description:

It was during our first class trip to Springfield. One of our local contacts led a group of us on a tour of Brightwood, which included a walk down Plainfield. Whenever any of us would ask our guide about one of the factories on Plainfield, he would say something along the following lines:

'I don't really know what that factory makes / made. I don't know how many people work / worked there. I don't know anyone from the North End who works / worked there.'

We stopped in the driveway of the Hodge factory. We found out that the factory employed over 40 workers, and that a larger manufacturing firm had recently acquired the Hodge factory. One of the employees went in to the factory and brought us a catalogue of the products assembled on-site. The products did not seem remarkable in terms of quality of design; milled stainless steel from the Northeastern United States hammered into shape at this facility in Springfield. It was then that the factory's steel supplier said: *'you've gotta keep manufacturing in the Northeast.'*

Why this moment:

This incident gave me a sense of the expectations people had for us. What on earth was I doing in Springfield? I could not keep manufacturing in the Northeast. I don't even know what manufacturing wages are in the Southeast, or in China! But contrast what the steel supplier's representative said with what our guide had been saying all morning. If our class were to improve community economic opportunities for North End residents, then didn't we have an obligation to find them paths into manufacturing jobs? Wouldn't that mean joining a larger struggle to strengthen employee power in the Northeast? Was our class equipped to work with North End residents with that objective in mind? The one thing I was sure of: this class would help me better understand the extent to which local economic development can be linked to larger regional or national political organizing.

Community Economic Development

Name: Affirmative Action and Employee Power

Date: First / Second Class Meeting

Description:

In the course of our overview of the client, neighborhood, city, region and field at the very beginning of the semester, I suggested that it might be interesting to investigate affirmative action compliance and union membership as ways to develop programmatic and institutional recommendations that could assist North End residents. I found the conversations that ensued, not all of which were direct responses to my suggestions, very interesting: one professor said that the neighborhood had a relatively high proportion of skilled workers who could not find permanent employment in the trades. The other professor said that union membership was often a barrier to workforce entry, particularly for minorities. None of us were quite sure if the city of Springfield was a significant (public sector) employer, or how an investigation into affirmative action compliance would help our client.

Why this moment:

This discussion left me worried that our community economic development strategy would literally be too focused on the ‘community’. In other words, I was worried that we might only end up pursuing very insular strategies aimed at improving business, workforce, and / or real estate opportunities within the community itself, as opposed to finding ways to connect North End residents to residents in other majority-minority neighborhoods. It strikes me, in retrospect, that we did not push the envelope in our institutional approach to community economic development. For a city that is often colloquially thought of as a majority-minority city (the census figures suggest this is not strictly true), it is striking that Springfield still has an Anglo mayor. Having met Juan Gerena and tried to dig up a little on his career history, I cannot help but think that the city of Springfield is governed by a system in which neighborhoods are played off each other. Development is located at the level of individual neighborhoods, and each neighborhood has its own citizen’s council that provides turf for local political bosses to exert sectional interests while not disturbing the peace at the mayoral, gubernatorial and congressional level. One consequence of this system has been the designation of the

North End as the neighborhood for the poor, disabled and unemployable Puerto Rican population. Enterprising and successful Puerto Ricans leave the North End.

Low-Income and Minority Neighborhood

Name: Client Focus Group

Date: Early November

Description:

Our conversation, which turned out to be our first and only intimate group conversation with the client staff, covered a wide spectrum of subjects. I was particularly struck by the way in which one staff member's monologue, in English, about welfare / public assistance dependence in the North End crowded out everyone else's comments. Another student and I then engineered a way to bring other staff members back into the conversation in Spanish. It worked, and a very different portrait of the neighborhood tumbled out of one of the staff members' mouths.

Why this moment:

I had read articles critiquing conservative narratives on 'welfare dependence' in Paul Osterman's class, but this diatribe was the first time I was treated to such talk at close quarters. I have always maintained that some of the client staff understand English very well, but are hesitant to speak in English (to students from MIT). Whether those staff were partly responding to the initial comments or simply expressing a seldom listened-to opinion on poverty in the North End, I cannot be sure. What I am sure of is that the different staff members were operating with the resources of two very different discourses, and were defining poverty in two very different ways. The first discourse more closely mirrored conventional explanations for poverty, according to which poverty is behavioral and public assistance gives the poor perverse incentives to stay poor. The second discourse more closely resembled the human-capability perspective that has won Amartya Sen the Nobel Prize for Economics. The second opinion spoke of a very different kind of poverty, which was not exclusively tied to income deprivation but thoughtfully engaged with the effects of health disabilities and incarceration. I was raised speaking two languages and I am always fascinated by the different discursive possibilities and outcomes of talking in two languages. From this conversation I not only

developed a deeper understanding of how the welfare dependence narrative hurts low-income and minority communities, but it also reminded me that outside the conventional discursive framework—which seems obsessed with the relative merits of ‘public’ versus ‘private’ solutions to the behavioral problem referred to as poverty—other narratives on poverty do exist and do inform community-level action.

Low-Income and Minority Neighborhood

Name: Brightwood Clinic visit

Date: Early November

Description:

I went out to Springfield to interview Campus Committee members with the hope of finding out more on the community’s history and relationship with Baystate. I waited in the Brightwood Clinic patient waiting area for no more than two minutes. It was perhaps the most informative two minutes I spent in Springfield. For the first time I was literally surrounded by North End residents...the people who were not our clients but certainly the reason why we had come out to Springfield on that and other days. It was only 10:30 in the morning, but there was no standing room in the patient waiting area. It was relatively easy to distinguish patients from their family caregivers who had brought them to the clinic. Patients were typically disabled, in need of assistance with their movement or breathing, while family members usually waited beside patients, often standing rather than sitting.

Why this moment:

I can scarcely remember seeing neighborhood residents during that first tour of Brightwood. Of course there were people on Main Street and elsewhere that I saw, but I never noticed any of them. Two minutes in the Brightwood Clinic changed that...for two minutes. It was the only time I caught a glimpse of the health problems that were so common in the North End, and the resources that had been deployed to combat them. Our clients were NEON and the North End Campus Committee – not the North End’s residential population. The commitment to a population-based approach to economic development was an emotionally charged and important one, but ultimately we sought to assist our client, not directly the people whom I saw for two minutes in the patient waiting area of the Brightwood Clinic.

Low-Income and Minority Neighborhood

Name: 'Employed' Persons Focus Group

Date: Mid November

Description:

A couple of students and I went out to Springfield to meet with the two focus groups. Two of us ended up with a focus group of one or maybe it was zero. The person who had turned up as the lone 'employed' North End resident was in fact a self-employed informal sector entrepreneur. He ran a door-to-door sales business in Springfield, Hartford and New York. He was not a man of much means but plenty of chutzpah. Out of politeness, perhaps, because his background did not fit the profile of our intended focus group, my partner and I asked him a battery of questions, mostly about his education. Our line of questioning at one point worried him: were we with a law enforcement agency? Is that why we were so curious about his unincorporated business?

Why this moment:

When our focus-group attendee got up to ask our client representative if we were with a US government agency, it struck me how poorly we had understood our client, and the residents and entrepreneurs of the North End. Our client barely understood the value of the focus group method, and God alone knows what this resident thought he was coming to when he agreed to turn up at the NEON office one Friday evening. The conversation between planning students, community health workers and small sector entrepreneurs is never symmetrical. I'll try and keep that in mind the next time I am assigned to work in a low-income or majority-minority neighborhood.

Reflections as a Wannabe Planning Professional

Name: The Threat of Gentrification

Date: Early September

Description:

The desire to change the external perception of the North End was a recurring theme of several of the conversations we had during our first visit to Springfield. A Campus Committee representative spoke about the need to get as many of the Baystate employees as possible to spend their disposable cash in the neighborhood. Some of them talked about developing land for mixed-income as well as single-family ownership housing. All this seemed to amount to ‘gentrification’—the dirtiest of all dirty words in the planning lexicon.

Why this moment:

At the end of Gateway in our first semester at DUSP, our professor required us to take a final, which included a section on Planning Ethics. One of the more irritating questions on the final concerned what I (as a planner) would do if my client wished to undertake a project or initiative that was against my own ethics. I dismissed the questions as absurd in the way it was framed, and answered accordingly. Cut to September 2005, and I recognized the similarity of the ‘dilemma’ our class faced to the one posed by that professor. The reason I think of this moment as critical is that I realized then more than in any other moment how ill-prepared I was to function as a private consultant. I am still not convinced that a less argumentative approach to that question would have helped me, but I have been humbled by this early experience in Springfield.

Reflections as a Wannabe Planning Professional

Name: Management Consulting Style Report

Date: Early December

Description:

When assembling our research and recommendations into a final report, I suggested that it was not essential that our report look like a management consulting report. We were students and there were components of our work that more closely resembled applied research than cookie-cutter produced management solutions (or at least I would like to think so). My suggestion, which was not one I was married to at all, was met with a good deal of hostility. I was told that this would portray an inaccurate picture; we had worked together throughout the semester and delivering a report that consisted of distinctive chapters bound together by an introduction (stage setting + summary recommendations) and a conclusions (summary recommendations + next steps) was not appropriate. I was not wedded to my suggestion, and I said nothing in response.

Why this moment:

I have very little respect for certain top-tier management consulting firms, particularly after I spent some time looking at the final work products on urban development in India. It did not seem essential to me that we flattened the research and intellectual content of our semester-long engagement with the client staff and other stakeholders just for the sake of producing what would look like a neat *professional* report. What the moment taught was that I was comfortable with coming across as tentative; I still wonder if it really helps clients for a planner to be authoritative in all his or her recommendations. That approach seems to deny the fact that recommendations are arrived at after considerable deliberation. If cookie-cutter responses worked, then why even hire planners. Hire cookie-cutters.

Reflections as a Wannabe Planning Professional

Name: Baystate Medical Center Community Benefits Report

Date: Early December

Description:

One of the last significant pieces of research that I undertook was on the Baystate Health System's Community Benefits program. This included reading Baystate Medical Center's Community Benefits reports for 2002, 2003, and 2004. What I found out from reading these documents gave me more insight on the politics of planning in a low-income community than any other single article I had read previously. Baystate ran a multitude of programs through different North End, Springfield and Western Massachusetts agencies, quietly addressing the needs and aspirations of these different organizations.

Why this moment:

What I was most struck by was the extent to which Baystate was a successful planner. It met its productivity and profit margins, precisely by building local support, cooperation and even dependence into its strategic business plan. Its senior executive management had come to understand the political system that governed Springfield and leveraged it to the hilt. It confirmed for me that successful planners needed to hone in on their political analysis skills; it encouraged me to be more of bloodhound, than a consensus-builder or an activist-planner.

Reflection Response 2
Springfield Reflection Exercise

Moments that shaped my understanding of community economic development

1. Seeing how a community leader defines “economic development”

First site visit - Early September

After seeing the community, I had some ideas of what some perceived community needs might be (housing, concern about drug abuse, youth programs, jobs), and I was confused when one community leader asked us first off, “What are you going to do about these vacant lots?” I was surprised at the limitation of his definition of economic development to physical redevelopment of property.

2. Learning how little of the story numbers can tell.

In class, Late September

As part-time work, I do lots of number crunching to create baseline data for the creation of economic development strategies – for middle-income communities or whole cities – I am always pretty surprised by the stories that numbers can tell (who is unemployed, who is not, where pockets of poverty are, where the jobs are, what businesses would do well, etc.). When we all showed up in class with our data about this community, however, it didn’t seem to come together well. This is partially because of the small size of the area, but the data gave us little clue as to, for example, when so many jobs existed nearby, why even young people were not employed. We really had to talk to people to figure out what the major issues were.

3. What is a neighborhood?

Interview, Early November

When talking to one teacher, when I asked if she knew if any of her students were from the North End, she said she didn’t know, but then asked if I really wanted to know whether any of her students were Puerto Rican or not. This came up a few times – especially because some community workers didn’t live in the community but were clearly part of it. Is the North End a geographic distinction? Or, were we really planning for the Puerto Rican community, and what’s the difference? I still haven’t answered these questions for myself.

Moments that shaped my understanding of working with a low-income and minority neighborhood.

1. Déjà vu of my Peace Corps experience

First site visit – Early September

I was a Peace Corps volunteer for two years in the Caribbean, and my first trip to the community was almost just like my first trip to the middle-class community in a developing country where we were trained at the beginning of our services. I was surprised that I had the same feelings of strangeness and of hospitality that I found in another country in my own country.

2. Recognizing the issue of dependence on public assistance.

Focus Group, Mid October

From one of our focus groups, several comments came about a perception that many members of the community were not interested in a job because of their dependence upon public assistance. Some people in the community seem to be living on disability or social security not because of any clear medical issue, but because it was the best way for them to get by and take care of their family. It also seemed that in the community, people were actually encouraged sometimes to utilize these programs when they were not sick.

Because I support these types of programs, thinking of them as possibly creating dependence makes me uncomfortable – who am I to say who should or should not get certain benefits, if they qualify for them? However, I personally believe that being able to support one's family is an important source of personal pride for a lot of people, and I did wonder whether the social service agency focus on getting people signed up for such programs was kind of sabotaging the next generation in the community.

3. Thinking through how hard it is to learn a new language.

Writing the final report, Late November

When reflecting on my notes from my interviews with several workforce development practitioners, especially those teaching ESL, I started thinking about what it would be like to be in your 30s, have no English, two kids, and be trying to learn English well enough to function in a job. I did a few thought experiments based on seeing students progress during my own past as an ESL teacher, as to how long it would take, what your options would be, and it made me realize how amazingly hard it would be to start with almost no English and get a meaningful job in the North End.

Moments that shaped my view of myself as a planning professional

1. Interviewing a local practitioner

Mid-October

When interviewing, we of course always had to explain the class we were taking and what “urban planning” is. I always have a hard time with this question, but, by about the fourth or fifth time, I felt better able to represent my what I'm doing at school than I've ever been able to before.

2. Team Meltdown

Team Meeting, Mid-November

Our team had a lot of problems settling on particular economic development strategies because we all had different ideas on what that would look like. Whenever I had worked in a team before, either the problem was so straightforward that it was easy to frame, or, as it was in my previous workplace, people approached the problem from such a similar stance that there was general agreement on how to proceed. This was extremely frustrating. Also, I was realizing I was making decisions not based on the merits of people's ideas, but on how much work they had done to get to them, and how engaged

they were as people in the process at all. Looking back, we should have come up with some clear goals early in the process, and then always gone back to them as a guide.

1. Final Presentation

Early December

I usually hate public speaking, especially in class presentations, because I often don't feel confident that I know what I'm talking about – especially when working on a hypothetical case that I don't have all the information about. However, having communicated with many people in the community both through my own interviews and those of teammates, I felt confident that, at least for a few small issues, I did know something. It made me realize that this type of confidence comes from talking to so many people that you feel that you know the community.

Reflection Response 3

Community Economic Development

1. Name of Critical Moment: **Resources are enormous**

Date (timeframe): **Early November**

Short Description: **I was talking to a representative from a CDC outside of the North End when she started telling me about possible sources of funding for CDCs. It was only then that I thought for a moment and realized how numerous resources could be and how diversified they should be. You have to knock on many doors, they are there. But you have to discover them first.**

Why this moment was critical for you: **I always understood unconsciously that there are many funding resources, but I never connected them together to realize the momentum they could create in the economic development for any community.**

2. Name of Critical Moment: **Love-hate relation with Baystate**

Date (timeframe): **Late November (meeting with the Steering Committee)**

Short Description: **One steering-committee member from Baystate was very supportive of a population-based approach to community development. He talked utopian. It was in conflict with what I expected from a Baystate representative.**

Why this moment was critical for you: **Large companies are not necessarily bad as neighbors even though they are usually perceived negatively.**

3. Name of Critical Moment: **The restaurant menu**

Date (timeframe): **Early November**

Short Description: **Client staff reproducing a hand-written menu for one of the restaurants in Main Street**

Why this moment was critical for you: **God is in detail. Such a small detail had a great effect on the performance of this business in particular, and on the incremental success of Main Street in general. However, detail alone does not work.**

4. Name of Critical Moment: **The NE has 131 vacant land parcels**

Date (timeframe): **Early October**

Short Description: **When categorizing the GIS database, I realized that the neighborhood has that huge number of vacant parcels, but they are not all assets.**

Why this moment was critical for you: **Many “assets” could act as a challenge for economic development if not used wisely.**

5. Name of Critical Moment: **50% high school completion rate in the NE**

Date (timeframe): **Late September**

Short Description: **We were discussing in class the NE characteristics when we discussed this fact**

Why this moment was critical for you: **How can we do population-based development without having the human infrastructure?**

Low-income Minorities

1. Name of Critical Moment: **Minority majority is hard**

Date (timeframe): **Early November**

Short Description: **Meeting with community members. A lady has been living in the US for more than 17 years, and she is hardly able to communicate in English**

Why this moment was critical for you: **How should we deal with racial comfort zones? They are segregating.**

2. Name of Critical Moment: **Alienated in every moment, even when the meeting is about solving alienation**

Date (timeframe): **Late October and again in December 8th**

Short Description: **Client staff sits either in the back row of the Campus Committee meeting, or they are totally absent**

Why this moment was critical for you: **They should have asked: can we even be given a credit for our ability to manage ourselves (especially with all the amazing and hard work that we do)?**

3. Name of Critical Moment: **Fake employment**

Date (timeframe): **October**

Short Description: **Census saying that unemployment is 0% in the NE, while it is more than 33% for two-parent families, and 44% for single-parent families**

Why this moment was critical for you: **Read statistics actively**

4. Name of Critical Moment: **Primary resources really count**

Date (timeframe): **Late November**

Short Description: **Focus group with informal businesses. There was a flood of information gained from them**

Why this moment was critical for you: **Basic research is essential, but it is only one step. We need to go further and rely on data from the community in the second step**

Planning Profession

1. Name of Critical Moment: **Client representative's skepticism of our work**

Date (timeframe): **Late November (committee with steering committee)**

Short Description: **Rep said: we don't need more meetings, we need an action plan**

Why this moment was critical for you: **Meetings are great, but they are useless for development if action does not follow**

2. Name of Critical Moment: **Lunch for our interim meeting with the Campus Committee**

Date (timeframe): **October 18th**

Short Description: **Interaction between our team and the Campus Committee**

Why this moment was critical for you: **It was my first meeting with a client. I realized it is a real project**

3. Name of Critical Moment: **Silence among the Campus Committee**

Date (timeframe): **December 8th**

Short Description: **Campus Committee members were relatively silent after the presentation**

Why this moment was critical for you: **The client is convinced and our argument was well narrated, he does not care, or he does not understand. We need follow up questions to understand the real situation.**

4. Name of Critical Moment: **Meeting with one of the stakeholders that never happened**

Date (timeframe): **October and November**

Short Description: **Many attempts to get hold of one of the stakeholders with no success**

Why this moment was critical for you: **You have to insist on getting what you want from stakeholders and other parties. If you don't, you are missing something**

5. Name of Critical Moment: **Believe your eyes, not those of others**

Date (timeframe): **October and first half of November**

Short Description: **A Campus Committee member insisted that the Main Street is very safe. We saw a police raid ourselves. Whom should we believe?**

Why this moment was critical for you: **Be critical of whatever you hear, no matter what the resource is**

Reflection Response 4

Community Economic Development

1) Moment: Anger of business owner

Date: 12/2/05

Description: During an interview with the owner of a Main Street store, I felt for the first time what we had been talking about for a while—a palpable anger against those in the North End working against community interests.

Meaning: It is one thing to say you understand a community's dynamics, but until talking to the real people affected, I didn't have a full appreciation of what that meant.

2) Moment: Impact of property vacancies

Date: 9/16/05

Description: During our first walk through the North End, I was struck by the impact that all of the property vacancies had on the feeling of the neighborhood.

Meaning: Community control of property is crucial to development; otherwise, absentee landlordism can have such a damaging effect.

3) Moment: Discussion of pushcart program

Date: 11/17/05

Description: After an hour-long discussion with a CDC program manager who had implemented a "model" pushcart program, I asked him whether he thought it had a real impact on economic development in his neighborhood—and he answered "not really."

Meaning: Though our team and client still thought the pushcart program was a good idea, it was a reality check to hear that a fully developed, successful program still only managed to have a minimal impact.

4) Moment: Realization of institutional needs

Date: 11/10/05

Description: Following a meeting with client staff, the students were talking about neighborhood challenges and we realized, more completely than previously, that the success of all programs depends on a new institutional capacity in the community.

Meaning: Though I appreciated how integral capacity building was to our project, the realization that an entirely new organization was probably required was definitely daunting.

Low-Income and Minority Neighborhood

1) Moment: First night visit

Date: 9/15/05

Description: My home-stay our first night in Springfield was with a family member of one of the client staff, and I walked into her home as a complete outsider and stranger, and it felt more unfamiliar than many experiences I've had in foreign countries.

Meaning: The home was a stereotypical scene, but our conversation really cut through preconceptions and was incredibly interesting and helpful in understanding how people live in Springfield.

- 2) Moment: Campus Committee Representative and Colleague
Date: 11/3/05
Description: During our second meeting with this representative she introduced us to a colleague working on economic development in the North End, but her pronunciation Anglicized his name.
Meaning: Previously, this representative had come across as a relatively enlightened, progressive figure, but the fact that she Anglicized her colleague's name suggested to me that perhaps he was a "token" Puerto Rican in the office who gave legitimacy for their work in the neighborhood—this was very disappointing and frustrating.
- 3) Moment: Story of a Main Street store owner
Date: 12/2/05
Description: During an interview with the owner of a new store on Main Street, we learned about his "initiation" to the North End, which involved his store being robbed twice and him being held at knife-point.
Meaning: The matter-of-fact manner in which he told the story was really striking—he basically accepted that this is how things work in the North End.
- 4) Moment: Visit to bodega
Date: 12/2/05
Description: We were trying to interview the owner of a bodega, but couldn't get to him because his store was too full of children buying after-school snacks.
Meaning: We had spent a lot of time looking at the Campus as a community center, when in reality, the bodega was a locus of activity as much as anywhere.

Planning

- 1) Moment: Client staff excluded from final presentation
Date: 12/8/05
Description: Before leaving the Client's staff office to give our final presentation, several of the staff members were there saying goodbye, and not coming with us.
Meaning: It was very unfortunate and striking that the very people around which we had built our plan were excluded from our presentation—and emblematic of the North End hierarchy that maybe we could have done a better job of cutting through.
- 2) Moment: Meeting with Client staff
Date: 11/3/05
Description: We held a small meeting with 3 staff members to discuss our initial ideas for business development, and I got a much better understanding of them as employees and people than previously.
Meaning: I think I started to understand the dynamics within our client organization at this point, and that our earlier work definitely would have benefited from this understanding.
- 4) Moment: Failed attempts to reach neighborhood stakeholder
Date: 9-11/05

Description: Approximately 7-8 times during the semester I tried to reach an important neighborhood politician and stakeholder, but my voicemails all went unreturned.

Meaning: I was really hoping to form my own opinion on this stakeholder's influence on the North End by talking to him directly, but unfortunately he wouldn't respond, so all we had to go on were other people's accounts.

5) Moment: Silence following final presentation

Date: 12/8/05

Description: During the question and answer section of our final presentation, there were long periods of silence that were difficult to interpret—confusion, displeasure, weariness about forming a new organization, etc.

Meaning: Silence really can be as important as words, and though I don't think we fully knew how to interpret it, the unresponsiveness definitely seemed to mean that people were processing what we'd said.

Springfield Studio
Critical Moments
Reflection Response 5

1. Those moments that shaped your understanding of
community economic development

Name of Critical Moment:

Dynamic leader doesn't have all the answers.

Date (timeframe):

**Dec. 1 (Pre-presentation meeting with community
leaders)**

Short Description:

**At the meeting with the community leaders before our
final presentation, one of them began to talk about his
idea for a PCA co-op. I remembered the first team I had
heard this speech, it sounded off-the-cuff, like the
idea had just come to him. This was the third time
that I had heard this speech, however, and so it became
clear that it was a stock item, not off-the-cuff at
all.**

Why this moment was critical for you:

**It made me realize that, although this leader was
dynamic with a million truly great ideas, he didn't
have all the answers. No one does.**

Name of Critical Moment:

I wished for a structure to plan.

Date (timeframe):

October

Short Description:

**At some point, it seemed like no one knew how to move
forward. I wished that we had had a structure in place
to report progress, note problems, and resolves
disputes.**

Why this moment was critical for you:

**When I worked for a developer over the summer, weekly
meetings were held in which the architects always had
an agenda for each meeting with unresolved items from
last week and specific people to check in with. I think
that sort of thing is really necessary in planning, as
well.**

Name of Critical Moment:

The approach may determine the result

Date (timeframe):

Sept.

Short Description:

In doing the readings for class, I was struck by how different methods of analyzing economic problems seemed to reflect different assumptions about what constitutes economic development.

Why this moment was critical for you:

It seemed to me that how you choose to analyze the problem may very well determine how you will choose a solution.

2. Those moments that shaped your understanding of working with a low-income and minority neighborhood•

Name of Critical Moment:

Planners' assumptions are not all the same.

Date (timeframe):

First Campus Committee meeting

Short Description:

A city planner for the city discussed some ideas for revitalizing the community, one of which was bringing in a bigger developer to build large tracts of single-family homes. I found myself shocked that this would come from a city planner.

Why this moment was critical for you:

The idea of building higher-income, single-family housing to spur economic development seemed not just counter to my instincts, but in total opposition to what I have learned in planning school makes equitable—or even effective—policy. That the idea came from a fellow planner, someone whom I would have imagined would have had a similar education to my own, made me realize that I shouldn't assume that I know someone else's assumptions, and that I should be explicit—at least to myself—about my own.

Name of Critical Moment:

Negotiations take place among planners as well as among stakeholders.

Date (timeframe):

October (midway through process)

Short Description:

At some point, our workgroup reached almost a standstill as differences of opinion as to how to move forward could not be resolved.

Why this moment was critical for you:

Going into the project, it seemed like the hardest thing to do would be to get the various stakeholders on

board to one plan, but it turned out to be just as hard—maybe harder—to get the team on board with one recommendation. I think that in the future it would be helpful to have some sort of mechanism in place to resolve disputes and check on progress ahead of time.

Name of Critical Moment:

Reflection is valuable.

Date (timeframe):

Dec 21 (post presentation)

Short Description:

During our last class, we took time to reflect on critical moments of the planning process.

Why this moment was critical for you:

I had thought it was going to be a waste of time, but was surprised to find that the time to reflect allowed me to really take in some lessons I didn't know I had learned along the way. I almost wish the practicum had a journal requirement.

3. Those moments that shaped your view of yourself as a planning professional

Name of Critical Moment:

I felt comfortable.

Date (timeframe):

Sept. 15 (first trip out)

Short Description:

I met with the client staff, spoke Spanish with one of them, and had normal-type conversations with people.

Why this moment was critical for you:

I was surprised to find that I felt very comfortable in this neighborhood. I don't know that I would feel as comfortable in all low-income, minority neighborhoods. I am, after all, pretty wealthy and white, but I had a strong cultural connection with these people, and I found that it made it very easy to communicate with them.

Name of Critical Moment:

All the leaders were white men.

Date (timeframe):

Sept 16, first trip out

Short Description:

After meeting with several community leaders, I noticed that all the most vocal community leaders seemed to be white men, including the head of the Spanish American Union!

Why this moment was critical for you:

It seemed a little odd. It made me wonder how deep a revitalization scheme would need to go to bring our leadership from within the community.

Name of Critical Moment:

Who's being represented here?

Date (timeframe):

First Campus Committee meeting

Short Description:

At the first meeting, exactly one member of the community who was not representing an institution was present. Client staff, who mostly lived in the community, were literally not at the table.

Why this moment was critical for you:

I thought that it was proof that you have to always be aware of who you are serving, who you are involving in the planning process.

Critical Reflection Response 6
Springfield Studio

Reflections:

1. Those moments that shaped my understanding of community economic development.

Critical Moment # 1: Analysis of the secondary data on sales gap

Time Line: Early October

Short description: The initial analysis of the secondary research showed that there was a demand in the restaurant business. I felt that people in the North End needed real help, and it seems apparent a restaurant business could not really meet the needs of the people in the North End.

Importance: It was important for me because I felt we sometimes depend too much on statistics than we actually should. Our plan could only have more meaning for people if we stepped beyond secondary data and really engaged people in the community perhaps much earlier than we did.

Critical Moment # 2: Lectures by Karl on economic development

Timeline: Late September-Early October

Short description: the concept of economic development that I had been accustomed to in Africa involved mainly setting up businesses or providing loans. It never really crossed my mind that things like real estate development and workforce development could get into the mix as well

It was important for me because it broadened my understanding of the issues we were grappling with in Springfield.

Critical Moment # 3: First client meeting

Time line: October 21, 2005

Description: Listening to the various stakeholders and their ideas, it occurred to be that Economic development can become a contested arena for big ideas, some of which may have little to do with the people we are trying to help.

This was important for me because it helped to remind me that the goal of working in a community is to impact the lives of people.

2. ***Those moments that shaped your understanding of working with a low-income and minority neighborhood.***

Critical Moment: #1: Meeting with client staff

Time line: Mid-to late November-

Description: In our meeting with the client staff, it occurred to me that staff members, who work in their communities, sometimes have their own vision of what they perceived the actual needs in community to be.

This is important because I think it makes sense to give room to the expression of such ideas and to evaluate if those ideas can be implemented.

Critical Moment # 2 Collecting data working staff member

Time: Early October

Description: It was a rainy Saturday but the staff member was willing to work through the rain to help me with the task of collecting information. This person came across as someone who was deeply excited about the role she was playing and how she loves doing GIS stuff.

This was important for me because it convinced me that people, particularly passionate people, are one of the key ingredients in working with low-income community,

Critical Moment # 3: Little representation from the neighborhood

Time line: First and Second client meetings, October 21, 2005 & December 8, 2005

Description: During our meetings with the campus committee, I noticed that there has been so little representation of the neighborhood residents on the Campus Committee and that even the client staff seem to be hanging at the margin.

I think this is important because if we claim to work on behalf of people but do not include them or those who work with them daily in dialogues and conversations that affect their lives, then something must be wrong somewhere.

3. ***Those moments that shaped my view of myself as a planning professional***

Critical Moment # 1: What to recommend

Time: Late November

Description: we had a lot of struggle in coming up with what to recommend in my group. The struggles we had represented for me what professional planners face, when there is disagreement in what advice to give. The important lessons there for me was learning to make wise compromises.

Critical Moment # 2: Conflicting agenda among stakeholders

Time: December 8, Last meeting with the clients

Description: Conflicting agenda among stakeholders was one of the big issues we faced at the last client meeting. In a sense this is to be expected, but I think the lesson it provides is one that says when stakeholders' interests are at risk, the ultimate losers are beneficiaries, who get short change or nothing at all.

Critical Moment # 3: Implementation is very critical

Time: Last meeting, December 8, 2005

Description: I felt discouraged about the response we got at the end of the presentation and I have the feeling that other people did have similar same feelings as well. What we really wanted to see in the end were big smiling faces and an enthusiastic campus committee that would be fired up to start implementation the next day. That didn't happen. What it taught me was that planning is never really an apolitical process as much as planners may want to believe it should be. I think we could have gotten our intended response had we been a bit more aggressive with our political game plan that probably should have included every member of the campus committee. Implementation is a key part to any plan and it involves managing the political temperature.