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The mobility of experiential learning pedagogy: Transferring ideas and practices from a large- to a small-campus setting

Abstract: Through this article, we examine the development of a new, experiential learning human geography and planning course at a smaller campus in Newfoundland, Canada. Our interest is two-fold: to consider how pedagogical approaches can be transferred between a large urban campus and a small-town location; and to examine the benefits and complications of such transfers through a reflective examination of the resulting experiential learning program. The article captures the experiences of students, faculty, and university engagement staff in the deployment of the course. Through these perspectives, we situate the decision to transfer an existing program across universities, the nuances of adapting such programs to the local context, and the challenge of meeting student desires for experiential learning amidst experimental pedagogical approaches. The paper concludes by suggesting that transferring pedagogical models across locations requires flexibility in terms of ensuring that new modules fit existing program constraints, and that such transfers have the potential to both challenge and positively transform experiential learning processes.

Key words: experiential learning, geography education, urban planning, pedagogical mobility, small campus.

Introduction:

Over the last two decades, experiential learning has become a well-established teaching method in geography and urban planning (Elwood, 2004; Balassiano, 2011; Senbel, 2012; Golubchikov, 2015; Cahuas & Levkoe, 2017). Defined as an experience-led model (Kolb, 1984) which uses reflection and peer evaluation as teaching techniques (Simm, 2005), experiential learning ensures that students build a deeper understanding of course topics through applied theory and problem-based learning (Senbel, 2012). Through this article, we seek to examine the development of a new, experiential-learning human geography course at the Grenfell Campus of Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada. Situated in rural western Newfoundland, Grenfell Campus provides students with small-classroom learning, while delivering a range of programs cross-listed with the main Memorial University campus, located several hours away. While building on many years of experiential learning modules at Grenfell Campus, the new course is unique in several ways. The course format and approach which we have initiated at Grenfell Campus is inspired by an existing urban planning program known as CityStudio, based in Vancouver, Canada (CityStudio, 2020). The pioneering Vancouver CityStudio program is an initiative supported by several universities and colleges in British Columbia, and as a franchised pedagogical model has been applied by member locations in Canada and internationally. The program sees students work with municipal and community actors to develop innovative, sustainable solutions to urban planning problems. Initiating a similar experiential learning program at Grenfell Campus has been a process of curriculum adaptation, experimentation, and reflection on how best to transfer ideas between large and small institutions. The process has prompted us to consider how the first two years of the Grenfell CityStudio program - in 2016 and 2017 - came together, and what lessons can be learned from the specific

experiences of students, the instructor, and the engagement officers supporting the program development.

Our aims in this article are two-fold. First, we will consider how pedagogical approaches can be transferred between a large urban campus and a small-town location. In view of Bednarz et al.'s (2008) comparative analysis of community engagement across global locations, and the geography literature on policy mobility (cf. Peck & Theodore, 2010; Temenos & McCann, 2012), the movement of pedagogical approaches between locations raises questions about the applicability of similar models in different settings (cf. Liu & Willis, 2021). While the pedagogical benefits of experiential learning have been well documented (Simm, 2005; Senbel, 2012), there has been less attention to differentiating the context-specific processes central to enacting such courses. Transferring the CityStudio format from a high-density urban location (Vancouver, British Columbia) to a campus in a small town set in a rural region (Corner Brook, Newfoundland), has nudged us to consider the benefits of adopting a program with pre-set parameters, and the challenges of doing so within different institutional contexts. Second, through a series of reflective sections, we will dig into the results of this transfer of ideas and consider the resulting experiential learning program. The reflections capture the challenge of meeting student desires for experiential learning as the nuances of the new Grenfell CityStudio program were developed, and the equal potential of the program to open avenues for applied, skills-based learning. Through the perspective of the instructor, the details of how the Vancouver CityStudio model was adapted and altered are outlined, and the importance of such experiential learning programs to Grenfell as an institution are captured through the perspectives of the Grenfell Office of Engagement. While we argue that experiential learning techniques are transferable between institutional and geographic settings, we nonetheless identify some limits to doing so, particularly in relation to structural challenges to establishing such programs and the complex student experience within this process. Through the reflections, we also identify different understanding of the pedagogical transfer process: while for institutional actors CityStudio presented a pre-set program that could be rolled out quickly, for the instructor CityStudio presented an opportunity for experimentation and adaptation that deviated from the original Vancouver model. While in tension, these two understanding of the transfer process - of direct application, and of continual experimentation - are the basis for a productive dialogue on the meaning of pedagogical transfer and mobility.

This article begins with a literature review of experiential learning pedagogy in human geography and urban planning, with particular attention to programs in rural areas. We then examine the local context and specificity of the City Studio approach, before considering how this program has been adapted and transformed to match Grenfell Campus requirements. To examine CityStudio's transferability, we present three perspectives. First, the experience of Grenfell's Office of Engagement, the driving force behind the establishment of the program in Corner Brook, who also negotiated with CityStudio Vancouver to establish a new variant of the program. We then consider instructor experiences, with attention to learning outcomes in a small-campus setting, and the nuances of developing community planning experiential learning courses in a rural setting. And finally, we turn to student experiences, with first-person reflections from students in Year 1 (2016) and Year 2 (2017) of the Grenfell City Studio program, who comment on the value of this program for their degree advancement and

professional readiness. The reflections are brought together in a discussion section, where our different roles and resulting experiences are highlighted, and the subsequent developments of the Grenfell CityStudio program outlined. The paper concludes by suggesting that transferring pedagogical models across locations requires flexibility in terms of ensuring that new modules fit existing program constraints, and that such transfers have the potential to both challenge and positively transform experiential learning processes.

Situating experiential learning within geography and planning:

The vocabulary of experiential learning was developed by David Kolb (1984), who argued that pedagogical approaches should draw on students' existing knowledge to develop wider understandings of the world. For Kolb this form of "experience-based learning" (1984, p. 3) involves four interlinked stages: a new experience, which forms the basis for individual learning through reflection, followed by the identification of theories to explain the experience, and finally experimentation to test out if the experience and theory can function in a new situation. The process leads to what Golubchikov (2015) has labelled as 'transformational' knowledge, with students becoming active agents in their own learning and developing a critical understanding of key social, economic, and political issues (Elwood, 2004). For Senbel (2012) experiential learning is valuable because it makes knowledge personal, with students becoming invested in course topics and learning how to work collaboratively across a range of viewpoints. According to Elwood (2004) effective experiential learning must leave the classroom, with students working with communities or completing course assignments that address local needs. The process recognizes that students already have considerable knowledge, and calls on instructors to develop courses that include problem solving, reflection, and a grading process which makes room to test out new ideas (Kolb, 1984; Simm, 2005).

Experiential learning thus presents an opportunity for students to develop applied skills, and translate theory into practice. Such pedagogic approaches can support democratic engagement (Cook & Nation, 2016), and encourage students to reflect on how social issues are dealt with beyond the campus (Cahuas & Levkoe, 2017). Yet, as Elwood (2004) reminds, experiential learning approaches can also be complex, with community interactions and outcomes sometimes challenging to predict, and students requiring considerable support as they learn. For Cook and Nation (2016), engagement with no discernable outcomes for communities – that is, a curriculum with pedagogical goals, yet little benefit to local partners – can lead to a destabilizing form of voyeurism that erodes trust, and makes further collaboration difficult (Elwood, 2004; Allahwala et al., 2013). Together, these points indicate that experiential learning techniques can lead to innovative and creative teaching approaches, but that developing such opportunities requires nuanced negotiation with community partners and room for instructors to experiment with course design.

Within geography and urban planning, experiential learning has been drawn on in response to the changing needs of university programs (Whalley et al., 2011; Baldwin & Rosier, 2017). For graduate urban planning courses, experiential learning provides an opportunity for students to become familiar with the power politics of decision making before encountering these dynamics in their professional practice (Balassiano, 2011). In

lower-level geography courses experiential learning prepares students for team-based work (Ives-Dewey, 2009), while for upper-year students it supports improved employability (Arrowsmith et al., 2011). Outlining an urban planning studio model, Senbel (2012) argues that experiential learning can develop spatial awareness and planning literacy more effectively than a traditional teaching model. Through the experiential course Senbel (2012) combines planning studio and architectural workshop elements, with weeks rotating between reading, critiques, and design sessions. The approach sees students work in groups with community organizations to address immediate planning and design issues – such as intensification, heritage protection, and development – by combining planning theory, design practice, and engagement techniques. The approach ensures that students understand the complexity of neighbourhood issues, and are nudged to consider a range of local perspectives. For Senbel (2012), this problem-based teaching approach creates room for student learning by integrating reflection and peer critique in the curriculum, and does so in an environment which allows students to learn from mistakes. Such teaching approaches provide a path for students to understand the social meaning of place, and through this develop their understanding of community dynamics and the potential impact of planning as a discipline (Elwood, 2004). For Golubchikov experiential learning is one way of “nurturing wider progressive imaginaries” (2015, p. 156), especially if social justice and critical analysis of urban processes are seen as potential course outcomes.

Collectively, these points indicate that experiential learning techniques are well developed within geography and urban planning disciplines, with potential for their application to a range of undergraduate and graduate courses. Experiential courses frequently combine theory and applied practice (Senbel, 2012) which provide students with opportunities to develop transferable skills and reflect on their positionality within urban communities (Golubchikov, 2015). Having opportunities to work directly with local organizations teaches students about the complexity of community and municipal interactions, and introduces them to the reality of political and social power dynamics (Elwood, 2004). For Senbel (2012) and Allahwala et al (2013), reflection and group work are important pedagogical techniques within experiential courses, and yet each also recognizes some potential challenges of such curriculum. As Allahwala et al. note, in instances where experiential learning sees students work closely with communities, such courses can become forms of “passive volunteerism” (2013, p. 43) which does not influence learning outcomes nor change society. It can be difficult to know if students are integrating critical analysis within their work because they are actually thinking through the issues, or simply because they believe that doing so will meet project requirements (Golubchikov, 2015). Semester-long experiential learning courses are sometimes too brief for students to effectively situate theory within practice (Allahwala et al., 2013), and at the same time such courses can be too time consuming for instructors in precarious positions to develop (Kotval, 2003). As Senbel (2012) notes, the integration of theory and practice often means that students cannot separate their own understanding of an issue from the academic analysis presented in class, making it more difficult to develop a theoretical understanding of urban systems. Experiential learning is thus both an important pedagogical tool and a powerful method for encouraging student engagement with real world problems, yet one that requires a careful curriculum design which recognizes the limits of such approaches.

While discussions on the efficacy of experiential learning techniques have been articulated by a range of studies (Ives-Dewey, 2009; Allahwala et al., 2013; Golubchikov, 2015) much of this work is urban focused. In most cases, the courses detailed involve students learning about planning in larger urban areas (Belassiano, 2011; Senbel, 2012; Golubchikov, 2015) or completing geography and planning programs at larger universities (Elwood, 2004; Cook & Nation, 2016). Yet, as our experience at Grenfell Campus has indicated, the wider context of experiential programs and the universities which host them can have considerable impacts on how such courses come together. The topic of an urban-rural difference has been raised in relation to secondary school programming (Page, 2006; Avery & Fortunato, 2016), and explored in terms of economic, social, and political differences (Woods, 2009; Lichter & Ziliak, 2017). Differences in the rates of university registration are also notable with Newbold and Brown indicating that while 44% of students based in Canadian urban areas attend university, only 32% of those in smaller towns and 29% of those in rural areas do so (2015, p. 594). As Frenette (2006) has argued, this difference in university attendance can in part be attributed to difference in income levels between rural and urban areas, but also to the greater distance rural students have to travel to campus which removes the ability to commute to class and save on accommodation fees. With university degrees linked to a range of positive employment outcomes, Friesen and Purc-Stephenson (2016) suggest that the lower rates of university registration may impact rural development and economic regeneration.

Based on these contrasts in enrollment, alongside recognized differences in the structure of rural economies and community networks (Reimer, 2006; Sullivan et al, 2014), students based in cities and those in rural areas might arguably have varying expectations of and experiences with higher education. Although experiential learning is viewed as providing a more engaged, applied, and collaborative approach to education, the absence of a literature examining how such pedagogical approaches function in campuses along the full spread of the urban-rural continuum is notable. Research on experiential learning in rural high schools indicates that students benefit from courses which allow them to recognize and build on the distinctive identities of rural communities, and through this begin to envision their future in such locations (Bauch, 2001). Considering the role of service learning in rural communities Harris (2004) has argued that a different model and curriculum structure is needed, particularly in a context where students might have to travel greater distances to meet community members, and where volunteer-run agencies often have a limited number of staff to provide learning support. If experiential learning programs allow students to take ownership of their learning (Senbel, 2012) and use theory to problem-solve local issues (Elwood, 2004; Cook & Nation, 2016), then developing such programs with rural needs in mind would be of benefit to both students and communities. Through this article, we seek to engage with this question by examining how an experiential learning course has come together at Grenfell Campus, the types of learning opportunities it offers students, and the challenges of translating an established geography and urban planning program to a smaller, rural campus in Newfoundland, Canada.

Situating Corner Brook and the CityStudio approach:

Set within the Long Range Mountains, and perched above a deep-water harbour, the city of Corner Brook has a population of just under 20,000. The city is home to a regional hospital and functions as the centre of a larger agglomeration that encompasses surrounding towns with a population of 31,000 (Statistics Canada, 2017). Although Corner Brook matches the density criteria for an urban area, the larger geographic context is more complex. Almost 700km from the next largest city, Corner Brook is the service centre for a rural district that stretches 250km south to the Town of Port aux Basques (ferry link to mainland Canada) and 450km north to the Town of St. Anthony (ferry link to Labrador and north-eastern mainland Canada). While debates of what constitutes the rural are vibrant (Bell, 2007), we situate Corner Brook within the notation of remote rural (Dijkstra & Ruiz, 2010; Chi & Marcouiller, 2013) and the experience of resource towns undergoing economic and demographic transformation.

Founded as a pulp and paper mill town, Corner Brook's economy is still dependent on the mill, whose operations are being threatened by the global decline in print media and the introduction of newsprint tariffs by the USA, a key export market (CBC News, 2018). The town's economy benefits from the location of two higher-education venues – Grenfell Campus, Memorial University, with a student population of 1,400; and a campus of the College of the North Atlantic, with 800 full-time students – provincial and federal government offices, a fish processing plant, and an expanding tourism sector that has seen growth in the corridor between Corner Brook and Gros Morne National Park, a UNESCO Heritage Site. The Qalipu First Nation Band offices are located in Corner Brook, and with plans to establish an urban reserve and business park, will transform the economic geography of the city and the region (CBC News, 2019). Like many other areas of Newfoundland, over the last few decades Corner Brook has witnessed an overall population decline and a rapidly aging population (Roberts, 2017), creating demographic pressures and a desire for new policies that could buck the trend and retain younger people in the region.

Within this complex and often challenging context, Grenfell Campus plays an important role. With a range of programs covering resource management, environmental science, folklore and cultural studies, and fine arts, Grenfell Campus attracts students from across Newfoundland and Canada. While Grenfell Campus is part of the larger Memorial University network, the 700km distance between the main campus in St John's, Newfoundland (which has close to 16,000 students, and the main administrative and research facilities) and Grenfell Campus in Corner Brook, Newfoundland, means that Grenfell has a distinct, close-knit teaching and research dynamic. Faculty and students at Grenfell Campus frequently collaborate with regional NGOs, municipalities, and economic development agencies on research and policy agendas. They do so with the support of the Grenfell Office of Engagement, who have also been instrumental in the establishment of Grenfell's CityStudio program.

By transferring the CityStudio from Vancouver to Western Newfoundland, we hoped to benefit from the model's well-established pedagogical approaches, while seeking opportunities to alter the framework to suit local needs. Alongside this, we aimed to bring together town planners, faculty, students, and members of the community to co-create solutions for the specific economic, social, demographic, and infrastructure challenges faced by the City of Corner Brook. While CityStudio is now a franchised program with membership fees and a number of hubs across Canada and internationally (CityStudio, 2020), when Grenfell Campus first considered CityStudio in

2016 the program had yet to expand into a national network. The process of developing a Grenfell CityStudio began with an informal workshop held at the City of Corner Brook in Spring 2016, and in Year 1 and Year 2 of the program, included conversations with CityStudio Vancouver founders Duane Elverum and Janet Moore. As one of the first CityStudio initiatives beyond Vancouver, Grenfell's program pre-dates many of the now well-established hubs in Canada and Australia. While Grenfell's CityStudio has been inspired by the tenets of the Vancouver framework, the Grenfell program does not draw on the templates and founding documents of Vancouver's program. The process of adapting CityStudio to Grenfell's small-campus, and transferring ideas and approaches across contexts, was one of experimentation. In the pages that follow, we seek to critically reflect on this process through a range of first-person narratives.

Those narratives represent the voices of faculty and staff involved in course design and implementation, and students who have completed Grenfell's CityStudio course in Year 1 (2016) and Year 2 (2017) of the program. The student co-authors responded to a call for contributors sent to the full Year 1 cohort (15 students registered in the course in 2016) and Year 2 cohort (16 students registered in 2017). The one-semester geography course which served as the pilot CityStudio module is part of a Geography minor, itself embedded within an Environmental Studies program. Enrolled students have a background in resource management, environmental studies, environmental science, and humanities, and most students take the course in their 3rd or 4th year at Grenfell Campus.

Through a reflective methodological approach we seek to capture the nuances of the program, and allow ample room for an in-depth consideration of the benefits and complications which emerged as CityStudio took root in Corner Brook. The authors of each reflective section are identified, allowing for first-person writing, and ensuring that distinct viewpoints are recognized. The article concludes by combining these perspectives into a commentary on the challenges of transferring pedagogical models across locations, and the opportunities which are provided by smaller campuses.

Perspective – institutional: (Ken Carter and Marilyn Forward)

Memorial University launched a public engagement framework in 2012 and a teaching and learning framework in 2011 to further relationships with the public that are based on mutual respect, mutual benefit and mutual contribution and that provide community engaged learning opportunities for Memorial students (Memorial University, 2012). Grenfell's Office of Engagement was established in 2015 and has given added capacity to support engaged teaching and learning and research with community partners.

Grenfell Campus chose CityStudio after learning about the model at a Community University Expo (CUEXpo) conference in Ottawa in 2015. The newly established Office of Engagement was looking for a new flagship experiential learning program to highlight and strengthen the close connections of Grenfell Campus to community. That initial introduction to the CityStudio concept in Ottawa led to Grenfell seeking out CityStudio co-founders Duane Elverum and Janet Moore. Through numerous meetings over the following year, Elverum and Moore mentored and generously supported the process of establishing the program in Corner Brook. The CityStudio model is a good fit with Memorial's frameworks and the Office of

Engagement. Part of the attraction of CityStudio included its perceived ability to build a culture of collaboration between Grenfell Campus, the City of Corner Brook and the wider community. Another attraction was the ability of the program to provide an established and proven framework of experiential learning to a small engagement office with limited resources.

Since its implementation, the CityStudio module has enabled Grenfell's Office of Engagement to meet Memorial's engagement goals by building strong relationships with community groups and business stakeholders as well as cultivating opportunities to conduct dialogue and public presentations highlighting faculty and student engagement in City issues. Through this collaboration, Grenfell's students, faculty and staff have emphasized the importance of strong, sustained partnerships with members of the university's key audiences in the region.

A previous attempt at engaging the City of Corner Brook, known as City Campus Connects, was intended to bring together multiple post-secondary institutions to strengthen recruitment and deal with issues related to living in a smaller city (e.g., poor transportation and limited social opportunities for students). The initiative provided some improvements for student life in Corner Brook but ran out of steam after limited success. CityStudio was designed to present learning and professional development opportunities where students could, through their course work, have opportunities to apply what they learned in the classroom in tangible ways at City Hall. CityStudio provided an engaged learning model that challenged students to co-create solutions to municipal problems in conjunction with city officials.

The process of transferring an existing program from the large urban setting of Vancouver to a small city in Corner Brook was less difficult than expected. Grenfell as a small campus in a small city was able to run a scaled down version of the program that started as one course per year and has been built to a multicourse two semester program. The program benefited from the ability to more easily build relationships with powerful positions in smaller communities. Getting a meeting with the mayor in a larger city can be difficult, but this was not an issue in Corner Brook through two administrations. The program also had early and lasting support from three vice-presidents for Grenfell Campus, ensuring that the normal obstacles to institutional change, which were compounded by the cliquishness of a smaller city, did not scuttle such an innovative initiative.

Implementing the model did, however, present a range of challenges. These included negotiating with sometimes skeptical city officials who saw the university as an ivory tower not connected to city life. This challenge was slowly overcome through the passion of faculty and students directly tackling strategic planning objectives of the City and presenting new ways of looking at old problems. It is also a challenge to ensure initiatives are relevant to the community while at the same time ensuring academic rigor. This was a careful negotiation between faculty and City officials where respect for the nuances of academic requirements had to be balanced with the City's need to implement solutions to strategic issues. Another challenge for this new experiential program was to have a positive impact on City-defined issues while at the same time having meaningfully engaged learning experiences for students. One of the successes of the program has been the end of term presentations of student projects to the entire City Council that have highlighted the strong engagement of both students and City elected leaders and officials.

Providing community engaged experiential learning opportunities at City Hall has enabled Grenfell Campus to show value on engaged faculty and students to the City of Corner Brook. The research, teaching, and learning capacity of a university are powerful tools for tackling complex social problems. When this capacity is coupled with civic professionals, new ways of looking at these problems can lead to novel solutions. The initiative was an early success for the new Office of Engagement and showed committing resources in this way could positively impact how the university was perceived in the wider community. The initiative was also seen as a broader Memorial University's success that strengthened the commitment of Newfoundland and Labrador's only university to the people of the province by engaging directly in municipal level governance.

CityStudio provides opportunities to strengthen the collaboration between Grenfell and the City. The program encourages greater engagement of the City staff with Grenfell faculty, students and staff through community-engaged research and experiential learning opportunities. The relationships formed have been lasting ones that provide new avenues for more and deeper collaboration. Examples include the mayor currently sitting on Grenfell's VP Advisory Committee, a financial commitment to a Grenfell led Centre for Research and Innovation in downtown Corner Brook and collaboration on building a community swimming pool at Grenfell Campus. These new collaborative initiatives benefitted from the relationship building through CityStudio.

Perspective – instructor: (Roza Tchoukaleyska)

At Grenfell Campus, the first iteration of the CityStudio program has been the establishment of a stand-alone experiential learning geography course, with a thematic focus on community planning and regional development. The decision to begin with a single course has been informed by both pedagogical and structure constraints, and a desire to slowly build on existing community partnerships. In this section, I will consider the challenges of developing this course over the first two years of the program, and reflect on the benefits of a slow-growth approach in a small-campus context.

While Grenfell's CityStudio version borrows many elements from Vancouver's pedagogical model, the structure and duration of the program has been purposefully amended. Vancouver's CityStudio is a semester-long program where students spend 40 hours/week developing, researching, fundraising for, and implementing urban projects (CityStudio, 2020). Vancouver CityStudio students are based in a dedicated downtown space, have regular interaction with city planners and staff, and benefit from mentoring by academic advisors. Through Vancouver's program student teams pitch ideas for small-scale urban engagement or redevelopment projects, such as: mapping unused space in Vancouver; creating a senior-youth mentorship program linked to Vancouver's healthy cities directive; creating a pop-up bike repair kit for the Downtown Eastside, amongst others (CityStudio, 2020). The Vancouver program also brings together students from several higher-education institutions, and aims to serve as an innovation hub that trains students in urban planning, and does so with a view to ensuring that this learning process results in benefits for the wider community.

At Grenfell Campus, where academic programs are smaller and required courses are offered once per teaching cycle, expecting students to dedicate full-time studies to CityStudio was deemed unfeasible: academic programs would suffer a notable decline in

enrolment if students were pulled away for semester-long modules; at the same time, students were unlikely to enrol in CityStudio if it meant adding a full year of tuition fees and coursework so as to complete degree requirements. Instead, Grenfell's CityStudio program is embedded within existing academic programs, with students taking stand-alone one-credit courses – courses that are already part of their program timetable – which adhere to the overall CityStudio mandate. In practice, this means restructuring long-standing courses through the insertion of experiential learning pedagogical techniques (reflections, team-based learning, peer-review), aligning course themes with municipal and community priorities, and working closely with municipal staff to fulfil the applied component of the CityStudio model.

For many students who register for the course, CityStudio is their first introduction to urban processes and the discipline of community planning. While Vancouver CityStudio encourages students to pick their own projects and topics, for our Grenfell version we determined that it would be more effective to create thematic frameworks. This decision recognizes a key challenge of establishing experiential learning courses in a small-town setting: local agencies have fewer staff, and redirecting staff time to course support would have visible impacts on other municipal projects (cf. Senbel, 2012). The City of Corner Brook has one full-time community planner and one full-time planning technician and – unlike Vancouver, with their extensive municipal planning staff – sees the planner and technician simultaneously working on land-use decisions, commercial redevelopment, and residential planning. Setting a course theme has allowed municipal staff to prepare their CityStudio contributions ahead of time – especially useful during busy times in the municipal calendar – and collate resources on a limited number of topics.

With this in mind, for both Year 1 (2016) and Year 2 (2017) of the course, the Grenfell engagement office (Marilyn Forward) organized a brainstorming session with myself and municipal staff to identify city priorities. At each of these sessions, we identified a range of possible project themes, and considered which municipal staff would be available to support the program, how proposed themes linked with my research background as instructor, and what topics may resonate with current community interests. I then matched these priorities to teaching objectives, and defined a theme for each semester of the course. The theme for Year 1 was set as 'downtown public space animation', and for Year 2 we focused on 'sustainable waterfront redevelopment'. Students were informed of the theme at the start of the course, with assignments scaffolded from an introductory photo journal (Year 1 students defined 'public space' and identified potential sites in Corner Brook) to a practice project pitch with a community audience (Year 2 students presented to an audience of a dozen individuals from local NGOs, local businesses representatives, and municipal staff), and finally a full project presentation to city council and staff.

The pilot CityStudio course involved traditional in-class lectures on urban theory and planning practice, alongside an equal number of in-course workshops at the City of Corner Brook which included studio critique days guided by the municipal planner and technician and presentations from community groups. Students alternated attending class on campus and at the City of Corner Brook, with the Grenfell Office of Engagement providing support for transportation. This approach – of applied sessions, and off-campus classes – differed significantly from previous iterations of the course, which were taught by other instructors as a lecture-based course. As I adapted the course, I

introduced several elements: peer-review sessions, where students present their initial findings, and receive comments and suggestions from the class; reflective assignments following key junctures in the course (the initial class presentations; the community presentations); and a presentation to City Council and Mayor, ahead of which students received coaching from the Grenfell Office of Engagement (Authors B and D). Course assignments were assessed based on process (how students applied what they had learned) and content (the conclusions and recommendations reached). The first iteration of the CityStudio course was also my first semester at Grenfell Campus, and conversations with municipal staff were supportive, but also frank in terms of the potential and limits of the course (producing comprehensive planning documents or fundraising for a project, as is done at Vancouver's CityStudio, was unlikely to happen in a one-semester course), and the range of topics that would be acceptable for a third-year geography module.

The resulting Grenfell CityStudio program both mirrors the structure established in Vancouver, and amends this to match smaller-campus constraints. Like their Vancouver counterparts, Grenfell students work in teams, research and develop ideas to improve liveability in Corner Brook, and learn urban theory through applied practice. However, Grenfell's version recognizes the enrolment constraints of a smaller campus, and has established a CityStudio model that allows for experimentation and flexibility where instructors and students can test out CityStudio without having to restructure degree programs, all the while ensuring that the approach is underpinned by a shared interest in connecting students and faculty with municipal staff and the many projects at play in the City of Corner Brook.

Perspective – students, Year 1: (Andrew King and Christopher Ratcliffe)

As students, the adaptation of CityStudio at Grenfell offered us first and foremost a different and intriguing learning environment. Having been enrolled in the first ever iteration of the course, we felt motivated to capitalize on the new teaching structure, and prove that experiential learning would work well for both Grenfell and the wider community. As students in year one of the course, our general topic focused on the revitalization of public space. We identified multiple underused and underdeveloped public spaces in Corner Brook, and proposed innovative ways to give them new life. Our class proposed three specific projects: (1) a phased development of the waterfront near the quasi-industrial port, (2) the resurgence of Smithville - another quasi-industrial and underused block in the downtown core - through partnerships to promote street art, and (3) a winter outdoor skating loop on a large lawn in the heart of downtown. Reflecting on our projects, we can identify definite benefits of the CityStudio model in Corner Brook's setting, and also areas for improvement considering the challenges of introducing the course.

The CityStudio project offered invaluable real-world experience in contrast to the bulk of pre-existing courses offered at the university level. As students, the transition from a classroom setting to the professional environment is daunting. Real world experience is essential to ensure a smooth transition from an academic setting into the working world; often, coursework does not provide adequate insights into often variable professional work settings and situations. CityStudio directly bridged this gap by allowing students to work alongside city planners, industry experts, and other

professionals. We learned how to work directly with budget restraints, stakeholder feedback, and public uptake. CityStudio offered us the opportunity to gain experience in dealing with these variables by applying typical coursework formats (assignments, evaluations) into what essentially became our workplace for a semester. Specifically, each hands-on activity delivered during the course was followed by a reflective essay where we would demonstrate how theoretical teachings in the classroom component of the course informed our work. These assignments provided a means to think critically about our understanding of the city, and propose ideas which reach towards academically-accepted best approaches. Though they benefited our projects, the reflections were only used to evaluate individual understanding and were never shared with city planners for input.

The course was also delivered through a plethora of hands-on activities, including: studio days working alongside city staff, an in-person consultation session, and physical tours of city hall and of downtown public space. The change in physical environment certainly helped to spark a sense of creativity and thinking outside the box for us. Theoretical lessons and academic concepts no longer seemed like such foreign applications, as we were challenged to apply them directly to our city projects. By breaking the bounds of the traditional classroom, we feel the course opened our perspectives on what impact an undergraduate student's work might actually be able to deliver.

In the context of Corner Brook, this meant challenging us to propose projects which fit the scale and budget of a smaller community, and consider things like demographic trends and municipal goals. In some senses, the smaller rural setting of Corner Brook was a benefit, as there were not a huge number of other projects or initiatives to compete with. However, it did lead to some challenges in the process. For instance, in the first year of the course we received less public participation and community feedback for our projects than we would have liked. While the projects seemed to spark lots of public interest and enthusiasm, our feedback and engagement event had a disappointing turnout. We wonder whether this would be the case in larger urban centres, where projects are more likely to have public champions.

Further, bolstering a sense of community connection through engagement with members of the public, the project created access to potential long-lasting working relationships through networking and collaboration between students and professionals on a peer level. The professional connections we made during the course - some years ago - are still beneficial today as we enter the professional world as alumni. I (Andrew King) can provide direct testimony to this as my experience and connections in the course have helped transition into a job as a Sustainable Development Technician with the City of Corner Brook. My experience working with municipal professionals provided insight which I was able to refer to time and time again while competing for the position. We continue to believe that weaving academic, professional, and civic enthusiasm towards forwards-thinking problem solving can only lead to more resilient communities.

Another challenge we feel that our iteration of the course experienced was the lack of curriculum regarding public follow-up. Once the public was initially engaged, and then our projects proposed, the curriculum ended. There was no mandate for follow-up or monitoring the uptake of our projects once we submitted them to city council and the public. In the context of maximizing shared benefits of the CityStudio

course, this is a curriculum guideline which would translate to more tangible project outcomes from the course.

Implementing a curriculum guideline for project follow-up would also help relieve another large issue we face: tokenism. Municipal partners were willing to participate and facilitate meetings, but offered no long-term initiatives to see projects through. This rendered efforts in project development fruitless, and diminished the potential for long lasting community benefits occurring from the course. Indeed, a goal for the course in the future could be to increase project buy-in, especially at the level of the public and City Council.

To summarize, on a personal level, the CityStudio course in the setting of the smaller City of Corner Brook was incredibly beneficial to students. It functions as an excellent bridging course, and allows students to network themselves as they solidify concrete professional experience. The potential for community, stakeholders, and other shared benefits we feel is also high. Some challenges exist in translating these potential benefits into tangible results. Student's projects and ideas were left without momentum and uptake. More could be done to bring public and council backing into the projects, which would also increase the momentum garnered by each project. We need to be realistic in accepting our setting and restraints, but by doing so we believe that CityStudio in Corner Brook will only continue to grow and solidify the resilience of this community.

Perspective – students, Year 2: (Emily Dluginski and Olivia LeBlanc)

The CityStudio course was innovative, designed to effectively provide a unique experience where students were exposed to real life community planning, a subject we would not otherwise be exposed to if not for this opportunity. As a post-secondary student, it is easy to slip into the academic routine, becoming so preoccupied with campus lifestyle it can be daunting to network and expose oneself to the real-world, where building relationships with community partners and other individuals is crucial. As such, the course gave us the opportunity to connect with community partners integral to the city; although in most cases we did not stay connected, the experience of meeting and presenting to these people was dignifying and helped build confidence in our work.

The course provided useful insight into the realistic complexities of attempting improvement or development within municipalities and communities. Speaking from experience, moving from a controlled small-scale University environment to the complex real world can be an intimidating exploit; for this reason, the experiential learning based CityStudio course is a tangible way for students to translate the desire to share in-class learning in the real world. In this way, valuable skills can be developed from learning about community planning and how this has shaped modern city landscapes. CityStudio was an ideal transitional course where confidence, creativity and open lines of communication were encouraged, fostering positive growth.

In the second year the course was offered, there was still a fair amount of uncertainty in what was expected of the group. As such, the final note of the course felt unfinished since all participants continued business as usual upon completion. Especially with regard to the student group I, (Emily Dluginski), was part of that was similar to a project already being worked on by community partners in Corner Brook.

The Year 2 CityStudio theme was sustainable waterfront redevelopment. The student group Emily Dluginski was a member of, pitched a sustainable redevelopment project that would combine access to information and rentable space for tourists, small businesses, and the college and university community. A concept similar to this had been in the works by members of Memorial University's Grenfell Campus and the College of the North Atlantic as an amalgamated creation hub for students of both institutions. As such, our group had been communicating with the team from both the University and the College, discussing the future of the project, providing insight from a student's perspective and from experienced professionals. Following the completion of the course, regardless of the great rapport developed, communication ceased due to the semesters ending and other responsibilities taking precedence and there was no further development with the projects (i.e., no uptake by community partners, no feedback regarding potential of projects from community members, etc.). Although frustrating, collecting knowledge and experience are essential for growth beyond one's career as a student.

One thing I (Olivia LeBlanc) believe was extremely beneficial to the overall cohesion of the course, both on its own and within the broader context of the Environment and Sustainability Programs within which CityStudio was embedded was the inclusion of the various outings, walking tours, and guest speakers throughout the semester. Personally, prior to enrolment in the CityStudio course, I had not spent much time in the waterfront area of Corner Brook, as I had broadly assumed that there was not much to be seen, and did not feel it necessary to explore the potential of the area further. Hands-on aspects of the course included the photo journal assignment (students were asked to take photos of various areas along the waterfront in town that seemed to have the capacity to be developed or promoted to the general public) and walking tours of the Corner Brook Port Authority and Pulp and Paper Mill. Through the participation in these course requirements, I was able to situate the waterfront within the historical context of the area, and was able to better understand the challenges facing its development; furthermore, these hands-on course provisions allowed me to identify opportunities for growth in the area, making it more hospitable for locals and tourists alike, all while drawing attention to the natural beauty of the wider Bay of Islands region surrounding Corner Brook.

In my experience (Emily Dluginski), the reflections following each presentation provided an opportunity to think critically about the proposals put forth by each group. I recall enjoying using critical thinking to constructively criticize the other groups to help patch any weakness in their projects. It helped exercise the skill required to look at a plan and determine the efficacy of each facet to ensure full efficiency: the real world application allowed for a new perspective and insight into what it takes to communicate with stakeholders to showcase our ideas. The walking tours provided an excellent introduction to the operations within the context of Corner Brook's waterfront. Not having grown up in Corner Brook, the mill town's famous landmark was a mystery and it was fascinating to have been given the opportunity to see how it functions on a day to day basis. Seeing how the combination of history, industry and tourism combined to make up the waterfront for Corner Brook was an excellent icebreaker that gave context to the CityStudio Year 2 course, and speaking with the members that help operate these sites was encouraging. Meeting the people that work so diligently to keep the facilities

on the waterfront operating smoothly helped install purpose and inspiration, further adding to the excitement at the beginning of the course.

Building on what the students in Year 1 mentioned, another aspect of the course that felt challenging to overcome, both during and after its completion, was the risk of the tokenization of the work that was taking place. Throughout the semester, each of the working groups put in countless hours of research, development, communication with community partners, and creative planning, all within only a few months. In hindsight this condensation of a course that could realistically span over an entire academic year feels somewhat frustrating, as the plans developed by each of the groups were thoughtful, well-planned, and had community support, as has already been mentioned. The City, and in our case, the town's waterfront, could have tangibly benefitted from any of the projects developed by the class. The City Council was also very receptive to our ideas, but unfortunately due to the aforementioned time and budget constraints associated with the development and implementation of this experiential learning course, the follow-through was lacking. While it is undeniable we learned and developed many skills pertaining to community outreach, collaboration, communication, and plan development, it would have been nice to see any of the ideas take hold with City Council, or continue on in any way upon completion of the course.

As previously mentioned, the CityStudio course is a unique opportunity for post-secondary students to build invaluable experiences outside the sheltered university world, transferring basic in-class skills beyond their typical classroom settings. The chance to cultivate pride, and seeing the potential for change in the community, can extend into further education and employment beyond the CityStudio course. The idea that the class contributed to the community (although projects were not realized, the concepts were supported), coupled with the confidence gained from communicating with partners and sharing ideas in a constructive environment has elicited pride and forecast the potential of the present to the future. Undergraduate students often blend into the background having not made grand impacts in their respective disciplines: the CityStudio course has the potential to inspire undergraduates to visualize change in the future as a result.

Discussion:

Reflecting on the first two years of the newly established Grenfell Campus CityStudio program has both affirmed the value of transferring pedagogical tools across locations, and revealed some limits to doing so. In this section, we first summarize the process of transferring and adapting the CityStudio model, then draw on student reflections to consider the impact of this transfer, and comment on how the course has developed at Grenfell Campus since 2017.

As outlined by Authors B and D in their reflection on the institutional aspects of Grenfell's CityStudio program, the decision to apply the CityStudio model grew from a conference presentation in 2015, and was selected for the ease of transferability: with pre-set program frameworks, CityStudio represented a viable experiential learning model for the newly established Grenfell Office of Engagement to enact in Corner Brook. Once the program was established, the first CityStudio course was designed by Roza Tchoukaleyska, and developed as a stand-alone, one-semester experiential learning program for Geography students. The table below summarizes the CityStudio Vancouver

framework, and how those elements were transferred and adapted at Grenfell Campus in 2016.

CityStudio Vancouver	Grenfell CityStudio Program
Vision: Engage students in co-creating innovative design solutions for their communities	Vision: Engage students in municipal planning as they develop creative solutions for Corner Brook
Organizational structure: Dedicated CityStudio courses bringing together students from six Vancouver area institutions	Organizational structure: Supported by the Grenfell Office of Engagement, with individual courses drawn from academic units at Grenfell Campus
Course format: A dedicated semester of course work, work with and at Vancouver City Hall, and respond to urban challenges	Course format: Theme-based single-course, one-semester modules, with Grenfell Campus students moving between campus and City Hall
Expected outcomes: Students fundraise to launch their projects, develop ideas with City staff and community partners, and actualize their projects	Expected outcomes: Students pitch their project to City Council, gaining skills in collaborative work with the municipality, and developing planning literacy

Table 1: Transferring the 2016 version of the CityStudio Vancouver model to Grenfell Campus, Corner Brook. See: CityStudio (2015) for an overview of Vancouver’s model as it was in 2016 when the approach was transferred to Grenfell Campus.

As presented in Table 1, while the vision and expected outcomes for the CityStudio program at Grenfell Campus closely match those of Vancouver, the organizational structure of the program and the course format have been adapted and significantly altered. As a result, the Grenfell CityStudio program process in 2017 (and which has held since then) operates as follows:

- **Course match:** An instructor decides to convert a course to the CityStudio method, and approaches the Grenfell Office of Engagement
- **Setting parameters:** In collaboration with the City of Corner Brook, a parameter is set for the teaching collaboration, which may include a theme
- **Syllabus roll-out:** Amendments to the lecture, assignment, and workshop components of the course are made
- **Launch student projects:** In teams, students develop solutions to the theme or problematic agreed
- **Presentation to City Council:** In teams, students present their ideas to the City of Corner Brook
- **Debrief:** The instructor, Grenfell Office of Engagement staff, and City of Corner Brook staff meet to debrief and draw lessons from the course

This transfer of pedagogy and models from Vancouver to Corner Brook has led to complex outcomes. As noted in the student reflections, the opportunity to work with the City of Corner Brook, gain applied experience, and get a sense of the complexity of planning decision making has been beneficial. For Olivia LeBlanc, the hands-on components of the course, along with the guest lecture, proved particularly useful, while Emily Dluginski valued the enthusiasm of community members at meetings and presentations. Christopher Ratcliffe notes that for students who are not from the region, the CityStudio may pique their interest in community development, and foster a desire to stay in the area.

Benefits aside, student co-authors have also identified significant challenges with the course. Key amongst these is the question of 'what next' for their project proposals. As Olivia LeBlanc notes, students felt optimistic and invested in the projects they had painstakingly developed, and the loss of momentum and sense of ideas fizzling out at the end of the course was disheartening, an experience identified by all student co-authors. For Christopher Ratcliffe, the projects may have been too ambitious in scope, a point also noted by Andrew King who felt that more realistic criteria for the projects may have made them more feasible for the City of Corner Brook to implement. Modifying the Vancouver CityStudio model has introduced questions about tokenism in the course, and deviates from Senbel (2012) and Allahwala et al.'s (2013) recommendations. As instructor, Roza Tchoukaleyska wholeheartedly agrees with the challenges identified by student co-authors, and has sought approaches to address this point.

In Vancouver's CityStudio model, students do actualize their work, and on this point, some of the challenges of transferring an experiential learning program can be noted: local contexts create specific constraints, including the one-course, one-semester format of Grenfell's CityStudio program which hems in the ability of students to fully pursue their ideas. With these parameters in mind, Roza Tchoukaleyska, has altered several components of the geography course. First, from Year 3 (2018) onwards, the instructions given to students changed, and placed a focus on building conversations with decision makers, increasing planning literacy to empower students to engage with city building processes, and pitching project-based solutions on the course theme for that year. In this, the Vancouver CityStudio model is further adapted, and the idea of co-creating solutions is replaced by an interest in co-creating ideas and potential avenues to solve challenges. Making this shift is based on continual experimentation.

For instance, in Year 3 (2018), while setting the parameters for the course, the instructor and municipal staff agreed that proposed projects should not exceed a potential value of \$10,000 for that year's theme of 'winter cities', and city staff provided a mocked-up request for proposals matching this criteria. In subsequent years, the geographic scope of the theme has been further narrowed (focusing on a single street in the downtown area, for instance) and more emphasis has been placed on applied studio days with municipal staff, and reflections on the complexity of planning decision making. Students still conclude the course with presentations to City Council, though the presentations are now framed as starting a conversation on a potential project, rather than as a full pitch for that project to be enacted. A continual challenge is also the length of time it takes to adopt ideas, and how this can be communicated to past students. For instance, community gardens have been pitched by CityStudio teams on

several occasions, and in 2020 the City of Corner Brook initiated three new gardens (Crocker, 2020). While this is not a direct cause-and-effect - CityStudio was one of many entities pitching community gardens - the development of these amenities speaks to the long-term impact of the course, and its synergies with the initiatives of other local organizations.

As the Grenfell CityStudio program has developed since its inception in 2016, the university context in which it is set has changed significantly. The development of a pan-Memorial University public engagement framework in 2012 - which encompasses Grenfell Campus - has placed engaged research and teaching as central to the University's mandate (Memorial University, 2012). This has been matched with the development of dedicated engagement offices, including at Grenfell Campus, and funding for a range of engagement activities. At Grenfell Campus, this has included the expansion of experiential learning in courses across all disciplines, with fine arts courses situating students within local communities and science courses including citizen science components. Within this wealth of engagement, experiential, and community-based learning, Grenfell's CityStudio has continued to distinguish itself as a municipal-university partnership focused on municipal policy, planning, and decision making, and which now includes a graduate-level module on environmental policy. In equal measure, Vancouver's CityStudio model has grown substantially since 2016, developing into a franchised and trademarked pedagogical process, with a membership network that stretches across Canada, and into Australia and Norway (CityStudio, 2020).

Conclusion:

Through this paper we have examined the process of adapting an urban planning experiential learning course from a large to a small campus, and across urban and rural contexts. Our focus has been on the adaptation of Vancouver's CityStudio program to the Grenfell Campus of Memorial University, in Corner Brook, Newfoundland. The aim of the paper has been to: examine how pedagogical approaches are transferred between locations; and reflect on the nuanced outcomes of such mobility for experiential learning outcomes. Through four reflections, we outlined the elements which were retained, and those which were altered, from Vancouver's 2016 version of the CityStudio program. The resulting program has provided experiential learning opportunities for students, including engagement with community groups and municipal staff, applied planning activities, and a presentation to the City Council. The context of this pedagogical adaptation has also left students frustrated with not being able to actualize their projects, as students in Vancouver's CityStudio do, leading to continual efforts to find re-adapt the course, and find approaches that both match experiential learning goals, student desires, and constraints of a single-course approach.

This transfer of a pedagogical approach across campuses and urban-rural locations leads to some lessons on adapting experiential learning models. First, from the institutional perspective, the coherence of Vancouver's CityStudio program made it very easy to pick up, and test out, in Corner Brook. Coming on the heels of the establishment of the new Grenfell Office of Engagement, this meant that an experiential learning program could be quickly rolled out, and opportunities for experiential teaching enacted. Second, for the instructor, the existence of a pre-set framework eased the process of developing a new experiential learning program, and alongside the support of

the Grenfell Office of Engagement, significantly smoothed the process of establishing a planning-focused module. However, the adaptation of the course removed a key benefit of Vancouver's model - the fundraising and actualization of projects - and as noted in the student reflections, this has led to frustration about what happens to student ideas once the course is concluded. This leads to the third point: while the establishment of the program was rapid, the fine-tuning of Grenfell's CityStudio to match local capacity and contexts is an ongoing, long-term process, which simultaneously involves adoption of CityStudio frameworks and experimentation and augmentation of these same pedagogical approaches. While at times challenging and frequently messy, this process of fine-tuning has also led to more extensive conversations with municipal staff, frequent and detailed discussions about our goals, and a commitment of all partners to experiment with new approaches. Our conclusions are that transferring pedagogical models between locations is a beneficial activity. It can ease the development of new experiential learning models, spur new partnerships that can create lasting networks focused, and create new opportunities for student learning. Within this, however, place matters: the real challenge of adapting experiential learning to new locations is amending expectations, matching program visions with local needs, and committing to an extensive process of fine tuning.

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