

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES IN DELIVERING COMMUNITY ENGAGED LEARNING FOR PLANNING STUDENTS IN THIRD-LEVEL EDUCATION (1142)

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Abstract. Community-Engaged Learning (CEL) provides real-world experiences where students can grapple with the complexities of the world while developing their planning skills and competencies, before pursuing their professional careers.

For the teacher, CEL is time consuming, involves liaison with many stakeholders, and requires preparation and planning. Students can be daunted by the prospect of interacting with stakeholders and engaging in a professional manner with community groups. No longer an intellectual exercise in the comfort of the classroom; the student must embody the attributes of a planner in a real-world setting.

Despite the challenges, CEL can be a significant but rewarding undertaking for students, teachers and communities, which can result in impactful rewards for all.

Keywords: Planning Pedagogy, Community-Engaged Learning, Civic Engagement, Collaboration.

1. Introduction: Embedding CEL in urban planning education

‘Planners need to demonstrate their ability to transform understanding into practical and achievable outcomes... Employers want to see more than credentials; they want to see people demonstrating competence. One’s ability to do a job depends on knowledge, skills and qualities.’

(Reeves, 2009, p.29)

In striving for excellence in the graduate planners’ skillset, a number of competencies need rigorous real-world applications; an integral skill is working in meaningful partnership with communities and civic groups. This is a study of and reflection on the challenges and learnings from five Community-Engaged Learning (CEL) projects with over 80 postgraduate students as part of their education and professional training on the Masters in Planning and Sustainable Development (MPlan) in University College Cork (UCC), Ireland, over a five-year period.

Including real-world projects as part of the planner's postgraduate education is valuable and impactful. Each project is located in a different place, context, and timeframe and with different community members sharing their individual and collective views of their place. The students develop an understanding of the locality of each project from the outset, which is then enhanced by hearing about lived experiences. McCarthy *et al.* (2010) discuss the value of using real-world problems in the classroom:

'The richer the course is in such illustrations, the more likely students are able to identify with the discipline and see themselves as practitioners who will be able to transfer their knowledge and understanding from the university to the world of employment and the community as a whole'

(McCarthy et al, 2010, p.7)

The Irish Planning Institute Education Guidelines (2019) sets out that *'in accordance with the ethical principles of the profession, planning education is carried out with an awareness of the need for proper planning principles to be understood by the general public, a commitment to citizen participation in planning and an inclusive approach to diversity and equality of opportunity.'* (IPI, 2019, p.5) CEL projects with local communities centred on planning and place issues embodies this overarching purpose to the requirements of the profession.

Each of the partnering communities are unique, therefore each students learning about the complexity of those places and the opinions of the people within them is individual and responsive to this.

The MPlan programme has dual accreditation with the Irish Planning Institute and the Royal Town Planning Institute. This results in a full curricula of competencies, knowledge and skills for students to attain. As CEL is time-consuming, its value must be evident and impactful otherwise it would be easier for academics not to engage in CEL and instead, describe case studies of engagement and best practice scenarios in the classroom. However, learning through doing brings students' skill development and knowledge to a deeper level, albeit, it takes time, commitment, partnerships and skills. Brew and Mantai (2017) assess students' research experiences in Australian third level institutions, they quote a participant who said *'students are so engaged when they're doing their own research they're just on fire and interested in a way that they aren't when they're just reading about the research other people do. They're so interested and they learn more...'* (p.566)

This spark of fire is evident in the CEL projects undertaken as part of the MPlan. This paper includes an analysis of student reflections on the projects and it is evident that these experiences spark a fire in them and that they see themselves as professional planners.

The author reflected after the first CEL project, that the student's enthusiasm was evident and hearing them say 'I felt like a real planner', and 'that is what I want to do when I'm working' was uplifting and confirmed the efforts and challenges to undertaking the project was worthwhile.

This paper includes an overview of student planner CEL projects from 2019-2023, the challenges faced, strategies and lessons learnt to overcome these challenges and reflections on the process and future improvements. It is not intended as a 'how to' guide, as each CEL project, place and community is distinctive. These learnings from five years of collaboration with MPlan students – are formally through analysis of student's reflective assignments and interview with community partners and informally by the author's own observations on student's actions and discussions and reflections with students and various partners. The CEL projects are further investigated by analysis of feedback forms from the community and follow-up interviews with a community partner about the process and outcomes of the CEL projects.

2. Benefit of Community-Engaged Learning as part of postgraduate planning education

Engagement with communities as part of third level education is common in many disciplines. The UCC Civic and Community Engagement Plan reference The Carnegie Community Engagement Classification (2006) definition of community engagement as:

'the interaction with and collaboration between a University, its staff and students, with the wider community for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity. The purpose is to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; contribute to the public good; and make available cultural, recreational and other assets and contribute to the regeneration of neighbourhoods and community wellbeing.' (UCC, 2006, p.5)

There are many terms used to describe third-level student engagement in the community, such as, service-learning, community based learning and community service learning, this paper aligns with Brudney and Russell's suggestion that on balance community-engaged learning reflects *"the centrality of the community in the service learning"*. (Brudney and Russell, 2015, p.278)

Real-life projects such as these have long-lasting, impactful outcomes, and substantially increase the quality of student learning. Through co-creating knowledge with students, underpinned by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and creating connections with societal partners. Goggins and Hajdukiewicz consider that *'education and collaborative partnerships are central to the implementation of sustainable development.*

Quality education and Partnerships for the Goals form two of the SDGs (SDG 4 and 17).' (Goggins and Hajdukiewicz, 2022 p.2)

To perform the community engagement deepens the learning for the student and adding a reflection to this performance, deepens and extends the learning and understanding. McCarthy outlines that *'the learner comes gradually to understand by performing, doing or engaging in activities that are real within the world which is to be understood.'* (McCarthy, 2002, p.35)

Boyer's Scholarship of Application outlines that beyond volunteering and activities, scholarship is achieved if it is tied to the discipline: *"to be considered scholarship, service activities must be tied directly one's special field of knowledge and relate to, and flow directly out of, this professional activity. Such service is serious, demanding working, requiring the rigor – and the accountability – traditionally associated with research activities."* (Boyer,1990, p.22)

Brew (2012) suggests a community of practice of academic departments, networks of professionals, staff and students, disciplines where *'teaching which encourages active learning, critical creative thinkers and lifelong learning.'* (Brew, 2012, p.109-10)

Within the MPlan programme students examined the effectiveness of community and participatory planning, through examination of the writers such as Flyvbjerg, Healey, Arnstein, Innes, Forester, amongst others. The CEL project offers opportunity for the students to see theory in action and examine how these theories are applied to real-world situations. *"They learn to respond to social and political nuances and hidden complexities that classroom simulations are simply unable to replicate."* (Botchway and Umemoto, 2020, p.332)

This project was designed to enhance student's learning and understanding by doing and through their performance the students demonstrated an understanding of how to engage with a community.

Students *'direct engagement with the community for mutual benefit, as part of the overall aims and ethos of a programme of study, can provide excellent learning experiences as well as activities which are meaningful in their own right. Reflective analysis of the project and the student's role in it can form part of their summative assessment.'* (Fung, 2017, p.91)

In addition, their findings from the event will be shared with the community, thus reinforcing the 'why' of learning by highlighting the relevance of their work. These projects are an example of research-based teaching and learning. The information gathered by the students is valid data that the communities and societal partners can use in the future.

3. Overview of CEL Projects

The five CEL projects discussed occurred from 2019-23; this timeframe aligns with the authors' teaching of the *Information and Engagement Skills module* on the MPlan. Table one illustrates the CEL projects: when they occurred, who the civic and community partners were and the outputs of each project. The scale of project varies depending on the community's needs, project parameters and available resources.

The locations of the CEL projects are all within 12km of the planning school either within Cork City Council or Cork County Council's jurisdiction. While they are within the catchment of Cork City Centre each presented a different context, which varied from greenbelt village under growth, heritage town to city centre neighbourhoods.

There are similarities in the projects. Each one had a Community Engagement workshop using a variation of the Place Standard Tool. The Place Standard Tool is a '*framework to structure conversations about places and prompts for discussion between groups.*' (Guise and Webb, 2017, p.195) It can be adapted to each place and project. It was originally designed in Scotland and is an award winning methodology. The tool is framed by the overall question "What is good about this place?" with a series of themes and prompt questions to facilitate conversations. Students record the conversation points on post-it notes and facilitate a community rating of the question on a sliding scale, the rating is recorded on a circular compass.



Figure 1. MPlan students recording the participants rating using the Place Standard Tool

While a similar format used for each CEL, a distinctive bespoke methodology is created each time. The projects have a number of steps, which differ year-on-year:

- Approach by a community group or a Local Authority to undertake a CEL project with MPlan students

- Scoping meeting with the community group and any other partners to set out the expectations and agree outputs
- Introduce students to the community and their area
- Co-create the engagement event
- Practice through role play before the event
- Perform the event
- Report and reflect on the event including peer review of data

Some of these projects were less than four months in total and some had a two-year partnership.

It is important to create a useful output for the community groups, therefore the CEL projects conclude with a summary report including an overview of the process, findings of the engagement exercise and other data collected. The scale of report differs, some reports were solely a report of the engagement, and others included land use surveys, business owner surveys, and observations.

Table 1. MPlan CEL project outputs 2019-2023

Place	When	Partners	Outputs
Glounthaune <i>Village within greenbelt of Cork City</i>	2019	Glounthaune Community Association	Community Engagement workshop Summary report of findings
Blarney <i>Heritage Town north of Cork City</i>	2021-23	Heritage Council Cork City Council Community groups	Data collection – land use surveys, pedestrian counts, observations, business surveys Community Engagement online webinar Submission on Cork City Draft Development Plan review Collaborative Town Centre Health Check report

Tower & Cloghroe <i>Commuter Town and satellite village north of Cork City</i>	2021-23	Heritage Council Cork City Council Tower Tidy Towns	Data collection – land use surveys, pedestrian counts, observations, business surveys Community Engagement online webinar Submission on Cork City Draft Development Plan review Collaborative Town Centre Health Check report
Shandon <i>Historic inner city neighbourhood</i>	2022	Cork City Council	Data collection – land use surveys Community Engagement event Summary report of findings
Blackpool <i>Historic inner city neighbourhood</i>	2023	Cork City Council Blackpool Regeneration Group	Data collection – land use surveys Community Engagement event Place-making community mapping exercise Summary report of findings

The differences between the projects largely depended on the context or adaptations that were required. Blarney and Tower reports were online engagements due to Covid-19 restrictions and followed the Heritage Council’s Collaborative Town Centre Health Check methodology, so were more complex. Shandon engagement event involved students presenting to the whole community group together rather than smaller groups because we were not allowed to stick posters to newly painted walls. The Glounthaune project included debriefing in the classroom as it was during the semester, the other engagement events were post-semester. The differences were learning experiences for students and organisers.

4. Overcoming the challenges of incorporating CEL in planning education

Delivering CEL has its challenges: it is time consuming, involves liaison with many stakeholders, and requires preparation. Students can be daunted by the prospect of

engaging in a professional manner with community groups. No longer an abstract exercise in the comfort of the classroom, the student must embody the attributes of a planner in a real-world setting. As Botchwey and Umemoto (2020) outline:

“... community-engaged learning is not a straightforward or simple form of pedagogy. As an instructor of undergraduate or graduate students, one must manage many moving parts and foster a web of social relations. There are relationships between the instructor and the client, relationships between the client and the students, and relationships among students that affect their collective learning and experiences.”

(Botchwey and Umemoto, 2020, p.332)

In an already busy academic year, it can be a juggling act to include a complex project. The development of a robust and replicable CEL methodology, which is iteratively evolved and learnt from year-on-year, eases the workload and helps to establish trust with community partners. The challenges faced to date are discussed in the following paragraphs.

An overview of the student’s learning progression is evident through action and reflection. Each student undertook a reflective journal, which was a helpful pedagogical tool for the student to document and reflect on their learning and for the teacher to learn from their experience.

4.1. Challenge one: Establishment of a community partnership and setting expectations

Prior to undertaking an engagement exercise, and preferably early in the project timeline, the lecturer or school needs to partner with a community group. If a group approaches the school, sometimes it is because something is wrong or needed in their community or they are unhappy with the current situation or planning proposals within their locality.

Using the Place Standard Tool opens a positive open conversation rather than reactionary to any existing issues. Developing trust and partnership takes time, so, it is beneficial if there is an established relationship, reputation for impactful engagement or common connection. The three more recent partnerships were at the invitation of the local planning authority, Cork City Council. Established trust and a working relationship between the planning school and the Social Inclusion Office and Planning department of the City Council has enhanced the collaborations.

As this practice moves to an established annual engagement project, other communities are keen to collaborate with some contacting the planning school directly. In 2022, a community member from Blackpool attended the Shandon event and asked if Blackpool

could be the next CEL project, this community representative, emailed feedback on how they thought the event would be improved. This collaboration and co-design enhanced the subsequent event.

The projects undertaken to date have varied in scale, from an engagement event with follow-on report to large collaborative projects using the Heritage Council's Collaborative Town Centre Health Check programme. The scale of each project has varying demands on the time of lecturers and students. The partners' expectations of the outputs may be unrealistic, as they generally need to sit within the timeframe of an academic year and align with semesters and assignment deadlines.

A scoping discussion between academic staff, community partners, including the local authority, can help set the scene and decide the parameters of the study. For instance, in Blackpool, the community were keen to undertake a large scale collaborative town centre health check (CTCHC). The two previous CTCHCs took almost two years to complete and were more complex than other consultations. The CTCHCs larger workload was also funded by 'Town and Village Grant' as part of Project Ireland 2040 and students received payment for their time working on it. After a discussion with the community as to what they wanted for their community, agreement was reached that a land use and vacancy survey and an engagement evening would satisfy their needs and be completed in a short-timeframe. This evolved to include a small placemaking exercise within the event. It is important to agree at this stage what the community's role is as often it is a group of volunteers.

In projects to date, this preparatory engagement happens without student involvement, as it can be time-consuming and to keep projects in scope. Some students have reflected they would like to be involved at this stage.

4.2 Challenge two: Preparing the students

To ensure a genuine engagement with the community it is important that the students are well prepared; including familiarity with the area, understand the area's planning policy and demography, be mindful of potential issues that may arise and have the necessary skillset to engage meaningfully. Firstly, the students' knowledge of engagement, power dynamics, and participation in planning within the theoretical planning framework occurs in a concurrent module, the students recognise the link between theory and practice; for instance, within student reflections it was noted:

'... was a success and it was beyond my expectations how much I learnt from it. It was extremely helpful to get some real life context for the skills lectures. Additionally, even though the community engagement event was part of the skills module, what we learned was also helpful for other modules, for example Planning Theory.' (2019, Student

3)

"I feel that the module, as it unfolded, provided a really good framework under which this participation event could happen and allowed for a firm understanding of the conceptual and theoretical principles underpinning the engagement while also developing communication and time management skills that proved vital on the night." (2023, Student 6)

The preparation in the classroom and in the community took different forms, there were information sessions, lectures, talks, and meetings. Time was spent on developing a bespoke Place Standard tool to be used for each community group, after visiting the place and meeting the community, students were paired up, allocated a theme, given background material to review and asked to run the Place Standard Tool with their classmates and teacher acting as the community. The group would ask tricky questions that might occur at a real event and after each pair's presentation the group reflected what to do next time. This exercise was informal and unmarked, yet on the night of the event it was evident having a role play experience of the event made a significant difference to the calmness and confidence of the students.

Students reflected that nerves were lessened due to the practice, expectations were clear, the practiced how to deal with tricky situations. The perception that the practice sessions in the classroom were worthwhile is represented by these student quotes from across the five years:

"...This time offered an opportunity to relax my nerves about public speaking by practising in front of my classmates..." (2022, Student 4)

"...Preparing in class allowed me to understand the aim of the event and learn how to properly facilitate without leading questions or introducing bias..." (GOM: Shandon)

"It is quite amazing what practice does and I felt quite calm when presenting which created a firm base for the real engagement. Through this practice run although, it was casual and fun but simultaneously very informative. I was able to pick up on useful tricks such as creating a positive image using body language, giving the recorder time to write by asking the residents follow up questions further including them in the process, and coming up with prompts to kick start certain questions if residents find it difficult to openly express their views and much more." (2022, Student 11)

"Conducting a rehearsal event in the studio was particularly beneficial as it allowed me to understand the process from the community's perspective. Furthermore, the practice session helped me to gain insight from my peers regarding the best way to ask follow-up questions for a deeper understanding." (2022, Student 9)

'Because I was never involved in facilitating a public consultation previously, having the preparation in studio before the consultation was invaluable. It really set us up for the

night of the consultation. It also orientated us in how we were to facilitate the consultation using the place standard tool and helped to showcase the consultation in a competent way.’ (2019, Student 4)

4.3 Challenge three: unfamiliarity with the place

On a couple of occasions there has been a student from that town or neighbourhood, typically most students are unfamiliar with that area or may have a particular mind-set, bias or opinion about that area. To avoid the pitfall of helicoptering in students to talk with and listen to communities, but who may not know the local street-names or landmarks, a variety of preparations were undertaken. Some approaches worked better than others. Malone sets out that for positive ongoing dialogue with a community, there are two prerequisites:

- 1. ‘A Willingness to listen and learn from them*
- 2. A meaningful understanding of the site context’ (Malone, p.65)*

For the projects with no Covid-19 travel restrictions, a walking tour was undertaken either by community representatives or civic partners. This increased the students’ awareness of the place and a connection developed between the students and the community. The community were the experts on these outings. Walking around the places and listening to our guides appealed to students’ learning in various ways; through observation while walking, through speaking with and listening to community members and appreciating the landscape and context from a different vantage point. The students gained familiarity with the place before meeting the public formally at the event.

“This is where the community led walk was truly beneficial, as it gave me both a sense of what topics were contentious for the local people, and allowed me to better visualise what people were talking about during the engagement.” (2023, Student 4)

“The informal meeting with the council and a representative of the community during our land use survey gave us a flavour of what to expect and what some of the potential issues may be.”(2022, Student 2)

“The community walk prior to the main event was essential in my opinion. It allowed us to establish a rapport with some of the key community event organisers and gave us a snapshot of what general opinions and topics people were likely to be discussed in the main event. ... The first set of people I talked to on the day were a couple who were very eager to talk about their specific lane. The fact I knew which lane it was and a little bit about it thanks to the community walk seemed to be very much appreciated and led to a get conversation. I personally feel it’s very important to be at least moderately acquainted with the area under discussion as it displays sincerity and far greater insight

can be gleaned.” (2023, Student 5)

In some CEL projects, the students undertook land use and observational studies in advance of the engagement, using ArcGIS Online, which was an additional output. This provided a rich data resource for the community and council and also led to student’s familiarity with the streets, layout, topography, vacancy, etc.

An additional benefit to students collecting data on the ground was highlighted when interviewing the City Council Social Inclusion officer; he said:

“When communities see students on the ground recording data, even for a few days, they experience people engaging with their place. They feel the students are there to listen and are on the community’s side. Due to the student’s involvement different people were engaged in these projects compared to the usual people who are involved. It attracted new voices.”

In Blackpool the land use study was undertaken after the engagement event, it was interesting to read how this impacted student learning as shown in this reflection:

“It was interesting, having heard what people found difficult about moving around the area, to experience it first hand while doing the land use survey ... and I could clearly see where the community was coming from. I feel as though a full picture was painted for me of Blackpool and its issues, because of the structure of the community led walk, followed by the engagement event, rounded up with the mindful day spent surveying the area.” (2023, Student 6)

Presentations and discussions about the place in the classroom from academic staff, heritage officers, social inclusion officer, housing experts, and others also helped to familiarise students with the area and they learned from the perspectives of various other disciplines who work closely with the planning profession.

4.4 Challenge Four: Learning to listen

One of the consistent reflections students make is their realisation how well and how much the community know about their place. Kitchen (2007) maintains that:

“local people often have a great deal of knowledge about and ‘feel’ for their area, much more so than an individual planner could develop other than through protracted study, and thus quite apart from arguments about people’s rights in a democratic society there is a clear pragmatic argument for planning services to try to find ways of tapping into

this base of knowledge and concern.” (Kitchen, 2007, p.72)

Understanding the importance of the local voice through the experience of listening to communities is a clear benefit of these projects. To ensure students do listen, time is spent at the role play and in the skills module learning the skills of listening. Any preconceived ideas or biases also challenged in advanced. It is important the students are open to listening and learning.

Learning that the community were an important source of knowledge about their own place and that their views should be valued.

‘I was taken back by just how involved the community were in the discussion and how willing they were to engage in comprehensive conversation about the various themes that we had in the different groups on the night.’ (2019, Student 1)

The reflections highlight how much of the learning comes from the experience:

“As planners, we must trust in the community’s capacity to advocate effectively on behalf of its own wellbeing—to not do so would risk falling into the pitfalls of the top-down planning ... What I hadn’t realized was just how easy that pitfall is to fall into—all it takes is thinking that you know better than those we are working on behalf of, and while in terms of technical knowledge we do know a bit more about the planning process and the theory behind it, we simply cannot match the lived experience and wisdom of the communities we interact with, learn from, and work for.” (2022, Student 3)

“I expected there to be a level of negativity to the conversation that evening, that people would use the event as a platform to express their anger at issues. However, the group members added to the discussions in a productive manner, explaining their issue, offering a solution but also listening to other members inputs and views on the issue they had presented.” (2022, Student 11)

‘The night was also good because it helped me to empathise with people more and understand that some people can feel strongly about what could be considered small issues. It was interested how to see people engaged with planning issues and how passionate they were about the issues.’ (2019, Student 9)

Developing this understanding helps form planners of the future who will listen to the communities. It is transformative and echoes best practice in both planning and sustainable development. It moves the experience from an individual exercise to a collective understanding of the needs of others, a social responsibility.

4.5 Challenge Five: Student ownership of the process and performance

In early iterations of the engagement session, the students presented what they were

asked to by the lecturer. In subsequent years, the students made minor changes to wording. More recently students have worked through the questions in studio time in the classroom, made amendments after the role play session and sought feedback from the community partners in advance. Each year it is a learning experience, communities questioned what particular questions meant or the wording didn't suit. As the format of the event involves asking the questions to small groups, they could change it as they progressed through the evening.

The students demonstrated adaptability, slotting into roles that were not prescribed such as welcoming attendees and cleaning up afterwards, adapted to the change of format without drama when needed, changing questions slightly if something was not working mid event. These adaptations demonstrated ownership of the process and confidence that they were doing the correct thing.

One student noted:

I also had the opportunity to sit down with my fellow presenter and rewrite some of the questions in a way that I felt would best create discussion amongst the community. This really did help to put me at ease as I felt prepared when I arrived at the venue.” (2022, Student 4)

Many students also critically reflected on how the process could be better, such as:

‘Not all sectors of the community were well represented at the evening. The majority of the attendees were elderly people, some middle-aged and only one young person. It is difficult to get a fair representation of each group at meetings like these and this was clear from the night. As a result we may have missed out on issues that only affect certain groups that were not represented at the meeting.’ (2019, Student 15)

“Something I noticed about the event was how almost all of the community that joined us were a similar age and ethnicity. It is clear from what everyone had told us that Blackpool is a very diverse area, and I would like to find ways to reach the entire community so that this diversity could be represented in the attendance at the consultation.” (2023, Student 6)

No process or project plan is perfect, and the best way to learn by doing, and reflecting and this applies to teachers and students. Undertaking this review highlighted that the debrief after the event in Glounthaune was very successful and should be reintroduced in future projects. That day all the students were very eager to present their feedback, share their experiences and learn from each other by asking questions, when sometimes they are reluctant to stand up and speak in class.

4.6 Challenge Six: Making sure the community benefits

It is difficult to measure the value of CEL projects for the community. Brudney and Russell (2015) suggest one method is a market-based monetary estimate of the value of the final product. Their research notes that placing monetary value on CEL may fail to account the multiple impacts the projects may result in direct and indirect benefits. To measure the impact of the MPlan CEL projects three methods were used. A survey of participants on the night of the engagement, post project interviews with community partners and measuring the impacts against some of the societal impacts listed in *Engaged Research Society and Higher Education: Addressing Grand Societal Challenges* (Campus Engage, 2017).

4.6.1 Survey of Participants

In Glounthaune in 2019 and Blackpool in 2023 participants were given a similar short feedback form on their experience of the event. Not all participants filled out a form. At both events, all but one person who filled out the feedback form found the event ‘very easy’ or ‘easy’ to participate in.

In 2020-2022 events were online due to Covid-19 or had social distancing and feedback forms were not undertaken.

When the community were asked on their perceptions of the positive and negative aspects of the event.

Table 2. What participants liked most and liked least about the events

	Glounthaune (2019)	Blackpool (2023)
Liked most	Interactive Event Students listened to us I could give my viewpoint Enjoyed listening to other people’s opinions Had an opportunity to think It was engaging and friendly	Enjoyed speaking about their area Hearing what other residents said Their voices were heard The students were excellent Questions were good and relevant It was interesting. Small discussion groups helpful in contributing their thoughts.
Liked least	The room was noisy It was difficult to hear One person may dominate the conversation Would like more time to debate Some overlap in the questions Needed a bigger room	Room was too noisy Would like more time to discuss topics Differing opinions They were repeating things Would like a bigger venue to reduce noise Some students were very quiet / shy and hard to hear.

Many of the things respondents did not like were linked to the noise and logistics of the event. They were very animated and busy as shown in figure 2 below. The attendance numbers were not known until the evening of the events.

All respondents would recommend this type of workshop to other communities.



Figure 3. Many discussions in action in Blackpool

4.6.2 Post project interviews with civic and community partners

The Shandon findings were presented to the City Council CEO and senior members of staff by staff and students. The impact of this was outlined by the Social Inclusion officer that the findings were taken on board for future project planning and *“it was an added resource containing the community’s voice that CCC were able to use and direct future work. The community group has a copy of the report.”*

He added that one of the benefits of the Blarney study was that *“a local group was formed because of the health check project to get it over the line and a lot of synergies were created and connections with Council staff the report helped direct Town & Village funding spend within the area and the community leaders were happy and reassured that their planned projects were what the local wanted. It informed funding allocation in the area.”*

The Glounthaune community partner described the CEL project as *“a 'ballast' in a pretty uncertain time for the village. It gave us a solid foundation and helped us consider what we want in our village, how we want it go change and grow. To have such great interest in the village from an outside group, at a time where we were floundering to try to come to terms with the sudden changes occurring in Glounthaune, brought a sense of hope. The consultation event, held by a third party who handled it with great diligence and*

impartially, and produced a fantastic document, really crystallised the 'community opinion.' Now we have a much better idea of what is important to this community.”

4.6.3 Wider impacts of the CEL Projects

Table 4. Societal Impacts from the CEL projects 2019-2023

Adapted from Campus Engage (2017)	Impact of the CEL projects
New Knowledge Production	Land use studies in Blarney, Tower, Shandon & Blackpool Publication of the summary reports of the engagement events & data collection Community mapping in Blackpool Presentation to local and international conferences
Environmental Impacts	Stimulating public debate Reports used as submissions on planning policy
Policy & planning impacts	Findings submitted to planning policy review – evidence informed Used for funding by communities for future projects Presentation to senior City Council CEO/
Public Service Impact	Improved community and civic engagement
Social and Cultural Impacts	Stimulation of public debate and interest Greater awareness of public’s role in contribution to policy Discussion Increase public’s role and responsibility in contributing to social challenges / solutions

Spin off Projects

Thinking about Tower: urban design
and mobility report
Glounthaune: submissions for funding

5. Conclusion

Table three highlights the variety of direct outputs for the community groups that have resulted from these CEL projects. There will be many indirect outputs. The students and graduates may replicate this experience in their careers. The engagement with communities in the Cork region led to students' discovering the community's values and aspirations.

Personal reflection was embedded in the process: students considered their professional skills along with personal skills such as how to work with communities; how to listen actively and to think creatively and adapt to situations. Through collaborating with the local communities, the students, learned the value of joint working in analysing the context of a place and collecting data. It also helped to reinforce the importance of the local voice in planning.

Seeing the student's enthusiasm was a delight; students said afterwards that 'I felt like a real planner', and 'that is what I want to do when I'm working'.

In conclusion, CEL allows the practice of planning to be relevant to the student's lives, in particular those students who have had a couple of years' learning online due to Covid 19. The application of theory through engagement, meeting communities and on the ground work results in motivation and appetite for collaborative planning and reflects Boyer's (1995) concept of scholarship. The students' now know they can engage effectively with the community, they achieved this with the scaffold slowly being dismantled throughout the process.

'Overall the whole experience was a really positive way to learn about the place standard tool and how it can be used to engage and communicate with a community when dealing with planning issues and development plans. It was my first time having to apply the knowledge I learned in class to a real-life situation and it was very rewarding how it turned out.' (2019, Student 10)

The students develop their ability to investigate, collaborate and understand the theories and best practice they learn in the classroom and take this beyond their college experience. CEL is a pedagogy that naturally prompts students to be problem solvers, excellent communicators, reflective practitioners and to understand the processes and efforts involved in reaching consensus when working with members of the public. These hard-earned skills and competencies will stand to graduates as they

pursue their professional careers.

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