

5-2014

# Exploring Service Learning in Study Abroad: An Evaluation of The Umbra Institute's Urban Spaces Course

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**EXPLORING SERVICE LEARNING IN STUDY ABROAD:  
An Evaluation of The Umbra Institute's Urban Spaces Course**

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PIM '72

A Capstone Paper submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for a Masters of Arts in International Education  
at SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont, USA.

Capstone Seminar May 25, 2014

Advisor: Linda Gobbo

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## **DEDICATION / ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This academic endeavor would not have been possible without the support of numerous individuals.

I am indebted to my Reflective Practice Phase Advisor, Professor Linda Drake Gobbo for her guidance, encouragement and patience during this process. A special thank you also goes out to the members of my RPP cluster for their feedback, proof reading prowess, and sharing this RPP journey with me.

I am grateful to The Umbra Institute for welcoming me into the Umbra family, and allowing me the opportunity to work and learn in such a unique environment. It has helped me grow both professionally and personally. To the students and faculty of the Urban Spaces Course and Borgo Bello community members, this research would not have been possible without your assistance and input. Thank you for taking the time to be part of this study and providing such valuable insight.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family and friends around the world that supported and encouraged me throughout the entire SIT experience.

I dedicate this work to my mom, Mary Ann George. Thank you for giving me the best words of advice that I have ever received, and encouraging me to follow my dreams, no matter where they may lead.

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## ABSTRACT

Over the proceeding decades, service learning programs combining academic study with community service have been growing in popularity at U.S. institutions of higher education. This growth has been equated to service learning's ability to assist students with achieving personal and academic goals, as well as broader goals of civic engagement for communities. With these programs occurring in an increasingly interconnected world, that is also seeing growth in study abroad participation, it is only natural that students would seek out similar service learning opportunities in their international destinations.

Today more than 80% of students enrolled at The Umbra Institute in Perugia, Italy, participate in one or more of its service learning course offerings each semester. Participation in such offerings can lead to deeper understanding of course content, facilitate long lasting personal transformations, increase global awareness and intercultural understanding, and encourage the development of civic awareness and active citizenship. With higher education directing increased attention to assessment of these service learning outcomes this study proposed the following question: *In a global world, how can international service learning initiatives be better developed to capture the values and expectations of its stakeholders?*

To answer this question, The Umbra Institute's ESUS 310: Urban Spaces: Rebuilding Community in Perugia course was utilized as a case study. In this multidisciplinary study, research examined literature and studies on service learning, international service learning, civic education, global citizenship, and community relationships. Research findings based on observation and stakeholder interviews is presented and reviewed, followed by discussion on future implications to international service learning programs.

*Keywords:* Service Learning, International Service Learning, Community Engagement, Civic Education, Global Citizenship, Italy, The Umbra Institute

## Introduction

When one considers the concept of “place” various images may be conjured – a sprawling city, a quiet village, or a childhood bedroom; place holds a “relationship to humans and the human capacity to produce and consume meaning” (Creswell, 1994, p. 7). Place, as a filter, allows individuals to interpret and make sense of lived experiences and constructed knowledge. Interactions within a shared place can provide opportunities for personal and collective growth and learning. Service learning initiatives in particular can allow individuals to connect learned theory to hands-on or experiential learning.

While service learning initiatives can take many forms, the core of the idea is consistent: “an experiential learning program where students learn through engaging in service in partnership with a local community” (Annette, 2002, p. 83). In 2002, Campus Compact<sup>1</sup> reported that service learning programs that combined academic study with community service had been growing in popularity throughout the proceeding decade (Eyler, 2002, p. 517). In their 2012 Annual Member Survey, Campus Compact again echoed the same sentiment, reporting “student participation in service, service-learning and civic engagement activities continues to increase” (2012a, p. 5) with a rise from 30% student participation in 2008 to 44% “in some form of community engagement during the 2011-12 academic year”<sup>2</sup> (2012a, p.5). This growth is equated to service learning’s ability “to achieve both personal and academic goals for students and broader goals for civic engagement and social justice for communities” (Eyler, 2002, p. 517),

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<sup>1</sup> Founded in 1985, Campus Compact is a national coalition of more than 1,100 college and university presidents who are committed to fulfilling the civic purposes of higher education. [They are][...] the only national higher education association dedicated solely to campus-based civic engagement, [and] [...] promotes public and community service that develops students’ citizenship skills, helps campuses forge effective community partnerships, and provides resources and training for faculty seeking to integrate civic and community-based learning into the curriculum. (2014a)

<sup>2</sup> This number is based on survey responses from 557 participating campuses.

as well as the student's commitment to the community (Campus Compact, 2012). Additionally, scholars note that service learning opportunities can lead to a deeper understanding of course content, facilitate long lasting personal transformations, and encourage the development of civic awareness, responsibility and active citizenship (Annette, 2002; Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Brown 2012; Kiely, 2004).

Domestic service learning initiatives are "taking place in an increasingly interconnected, global world" (Battistoni, Longo, & Jayanandhan, 2009, p. 89) that is also seeing a rising interest in study abroad opportunities. According to the most recent Institute of International Education (IIE) Open Doors report, "283,332 U.S. students studied abroad for academic credit in 2011/12, an increase of 3.4% over the previous year" (2013). This number has continued to increase gradually over the past two decades, more than tripling since 1994. With growing numbers of participants taking part in service learning opportunities within U.S. higher education, and increasing numbers of students studying abroad, it is only natural that students would seek out similar service learning opportunities within international destinations.

Service learning combined with study abroad provides participants with the same benefits as service learning in a domestic setting, while also increasing global awareness, intercultural communication skills and understanding, developing values, and enhancing civic mindedness (Crabtree, 2008). Italy, as a leading international destination for U.S. study abroad students<sup>3</sup>, is still fairly unfamiliar with service learning. However, service learning has had a presence at The Umbra Institute in Perugia since its founding in 1999. Today, more than 80% of Umbra students participate each semester in one or more of its service learning academic course offerings,

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<sup>3</sup> While the number of students selecting Italy as their study abroad destination is down from 2010/11 (30,361 to 29,645 in 2011/12), they still represent 10.5% of the U.S. students studying abroad, second only after the United Kingdom (Institute of International Educators, 2013).

ranging from museum internships to conducting marketing research for local businesses (The Umbra Institute, 2013b).

With higher education directing “increased attention over the past decade to assessment and accountability, civic engagement and service learning, and internationalizing the curriculum and study abroad” (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011, p. 3) research focusing on service learning initiatives in an international setting is well timed. With this in mind, this study poses the following question: *In a global world, how can international service learning initiatives be better developed to capture the values and expectations of its stakeholders?* To answer this question, The Umbra Institute’s ESUS 310: Urban Spaces: Rebuilding Community in Perugia course will be utilized as a case study. I begin with a discussion of relevant bodies of literature, The Umbra Institute and its Urban Spaces course. Research findings based on personal observations and stakeholder interviews will be presented and reviewed, followed by discussion of future implications to international service learning initiatives.

### **Literature Review**

In this multidisciplinary study, I will be examining research from several scholarly areas, which include literature on service learning and service learning in an international context. Current studies on civic education, global citizenship, and community relationships will also be discussed. Conceptual frameworks situated within this research include John Dewey’s philosophy of education and democracy and David Kolb’s Model of Experiential Learning.

### **Defining Service Learning**

According to Bringle and Hatcher (1996), and utilized by many scholars, service learning can be defined as a

credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility. (p. 222)

It is important to highlight that service learning is academically focused, with defined learning objectives, as opposed to extracurricular voluntary service where learning objectives, typically, are undefined (Bringle et al., 1996; Zlotkowski, 2011).

Through service learning initiatives, community service projects are “used as a ‘text’ that is interpreted, analyzed, and related to the content of a course in a way that permits a formal evaluation of academic learning” (Thomson, Smith-Tolken, Naidoo, & Bringle, 2010, p. 224). Thus, in service learning “academic credit is not given for engaging in community service, rather, academic credit is based on the academic learning that occurs as a result of the community service” (2010, p. 224). It is an opportunity for institutions to incorporate hands-on and real world experience into academic curriculum, while engaging within local communities.

The Umbra Institute, often using community engagement<sup>4</sup> and service learning interchangeably, echoes this sentiment in their *Faculty Service Learning Handbook* (2014), defining it as a “form of experiential education characterized by student participation in an organized service activity connected to specific learning outcomes, meets identified community needs and provides structured time for student reflection and connection of the service experience to learning” (p. 2). It is such an important part of their curricular focus that Umbra

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<sup>4</sup> Umbra’s umbrella term ‘community engagement’ includes all of their community initiatives: service learning, community-based courses, academic internships, co-ops and volunteering. For the purposes of this research, service learning or community engagement will be used to refer to these initiatives, except volunteering opportunities.

has included it within their mission focus,<sup>5</sup> and they are currently working to expand service learning offerings to new community partnerships and inclusion in more courses.

Brown (2012) writes that service learning has two main goals: “student learning and service to the community; the success of the program is measured not only by what the student learns but also by the usefulness of the student’s work” (p. 59) within the community. It is characterized as a collaborative partnership, focused on real-world tasks, between students and community members and should be a reciprocal relationship (Brown, 2012; Crabtree, 2008; Parker & Dautoff, 2007; Zlotkowski, 2011). Participation in such initiatives requires utilization of strengths and skills, such as problem identification and processing, and can intensify the student’s role as a producer of their own knowledge, as in these environments participants derive academic lessons from the intersection of theory and practice (Bringle, Phillips, & Hudson, 2010; Zlotkowski, 2011). This pedagogy is compatible “with other pedagogical trends in education, such as collaborative learning, problem-based learning, and diversity education” (2010, p. 5).

**Service Learning Outcomes.** Properly designed and delivered service learning initiatives can provide “a means for students to practice and develop skills, relate their activities to appropriate academic content, and develop motives to sustain their community involvement” (Astin and Sax, as cited in Thomson et al., 2010, p. 226). These initiatives are focused not only on delivering knowledge to participants, but also transforming and continuing the learning beyond the service experience as participants gain a sense of personal responsibility to the community and develop a commitment to community service (Hatcher & Bringle, 1997; Zlotkowski, 2011). While enhancing academic learning during participation, service learning

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<sup>5</sup> Umbra’s mission focus “is to afford every Umbra student a safe and rewarding academic program supported by co-curricular experiential learning and community engagement opportunities” (The Umbra Institute, 2013c).

also “directly supports the acquisition of broader life skills needed for effectively transitioning into adult roles and responsibilities” (Campus Compact, 2010, p. 10) following university years.

Scholars have found that service learning has a positive effect on “personal, attitudinal, moral, social and cognitive outcomes” (Bringle et al., 1996, p. 222), civic learning outcomes and can impact student perceptions and behaviors toward diversity (Bringle & Hatcher, 2009; Saltmarsh, 2005; Thomson et al., 2010). Service learning is effective in assisting participants in the development of student leadership (Annette, 2002; Zlotkowski, 2011) and “socially responsive knowledge, as well as facilitating learning in the more traditional domains of content and skills, such as the capacity to view phenomena from multiple perspectives and to apply knowledge developed in one setting to other settings” (Bringle et al., 2010, p. 5).

Faculty involvement is critical within service learning because in its most basic form it “is a course-driven feature of the curriculum” (Bringle et al., 1996, p. 227); though as student learning is enhanced through service learning initiatives, faculty members also reap the benefits of involvement. Hatcher and Bringle (1997), found that as faculty become more comfortable facilitating courses with service learning components their teaching becomes “dynamic and interactive” (p. 157). With continued experience they shift from the role of the instructor to the facilitator of learning, while creating more connected and transformative student/faculty relationships (Bringle et al., 2010; Crabtree, 2008). Beyond the development of student relationships, service learning initiatives offer opportunities for collaboration between service learning instructors and integration across disciplines (Zlotkowski, 2011).

### **Service Learning in an International Context**

International service learning, at its most basic form, is a combination of service learning initiatives and study abroad opportunities. In this context, study abroad can refer to a variety of

experiences, “common within U.S. higher education today: faculty/staff-led co-curricular ‘mission’ and service trips, academic courses with international immersion that include serve experience, study abroad programs with service components and international programs with formal service-learning curricula” (Crabtree, 2008, p. 18). However, as noted by Plater (2011), for study abroad to transition into international service learning, the service needs to be the “mode of communication and interaction with the community. Study abroad is *of* the community (and maybe some of it is even *in* the community) while international service learning is *through* and *with* the community” (p. 38, original emphasis). In an international service learning context, students are doing more than just studying in a new cultural context, they are engaged in learning vis-à-vis service within a community or organization abroad.

International service learning attempts to provide the same benefits as domestic service learning, while also exposing “students in deep, transformative ways to cultures and nations other than their own, resulting in a much richer understanding of the context in which a life of engaged citizenship must be carried out” (Brown, 2012, p. 57). These opportunities are cross-cultural, multinational, enhance student learning, and can transform student perspectives to a wider, global view (Bolk, 2010; Brown, 2012; Crabtree, 2008; Kiely, 2004; Parker et al., 2007). Bringle and Hatcher (2011) expanded upon their original definition of service learning to define international service learning as

*A structured academic experience in another country in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that addresses identified community needs; (b) learn from direct interaction and cross-cultural dialogue with others; and (c) reflect on the experience in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a deeper understanding of global and intercultural issues, a broader appreciation of the host*

*country* and the discipline, and an enhanced sense of their own responsibilities as citizen, locally and *globally*.<sup>6</sup> (p. 19)

As within service learning in a domestic context, the key elements within this definition are that international service learning initiatives should be academic in nature, continually take community needs into consideration, have regular interaction within the community, and include reflective activities that connect the service activity to academic goals and objectives. It also highlights that practitioners and researchers should “consider a diverse set of global outcomes that expand upon the design and goals of domestic service learning programs and courses” (Longo & Saltmarsh, 2011, p. 71).

**International Service Learning Outcomes.** The development of international service learning in U.S. higher education has provided opportunities for students “to engage in student exchange and service learning with students from different cultural, social, political and economic contexts” (Annette, 2002, p. 90). This expansion has assisted in student “understanding of globalization and an intercultural understanding of community development across national and regional boundaries” (Tonkin, 2011, p. 91), while providing a richer knowledge of the host culture and community, and the skills for navigating within these contexts.

International and domestic service learning programs provide similar learning outcomes, but service learning abroad increases “students’ intercultural competence, language skills, appreciation of cultural difference, tolerance for ambiguity, and experiential understanding of complex global problems related to their academic program of study” (Kiely, 2004, p. 5).

International service learning initiatives allow for content-based learning including personal growth, critical thinking, self-awareness, problem-solving, and group decision-making while

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<sup>6</sup> Italicized words and concepts are those that were added by the authors, based on their “analysis of service learning benefits from being integrated into study abroad and international education” (Bingle et al., 2011, p. 19).

tending to be more intense and transformative than service learning participation in a domestic setting (Bolk, 2010; Parker et al., 2007; Plater, 2011; Tonkin, 2011).

Plater (2011) expresses that international service learning opportunities provide students with first-hand awareness of internationalization, and allow for “immediate feedback, reinforcing the value of adapting learning through service” (p. 43). He continues, “the experience and the learning offers students a direct measure of satisfaction (even when shrouded in frustration) that is simply unavailable in learning *about* the world instead of *in* it” (2011, p. 43, original emphasis). To reach this sense of awareness and understanding of the service experience, as well as to bridge existing knowledge and personal beliefs with future application, reflective activities should be worked into program curriculum. Recent researchers also make note and echo Plater’s sentiments of the importance of reflection in service learning contexts, both domestically and internationally (Bolk, 2010; Bringle et al., 2011; Brown, 2011; Longo et al., 2011; Zlotkowski, 2011).

### **Best Practices in Service Learning**

Whether domestically or internationally implemented, service learning aims to provide students with rich, hands on learning opportunities, while serving a local community. To achieve these basic goals, at the same time as meeting the individualist or collective goals and expectations of involved stakeholders, practitioners should carefully consider how their service learning initiatives are designed and implemented. Kupiec (1993) observed that, “developing service learning at the institutional level has been characterized as a cycle that includes awareness, planning, prototype, support expansion, and evaluation” (as cited in Bringle et al., 1996, p. 223). Expanding upon this cycle, the Comprehensive Action Plan for Service Learning

(CAPSL)<sup>7</sup> was developed by Campus Compact as a tool for practitioners to consider all stakeholders during program development. Adding to Kupiec's cycle, CAPSL takes into account resources, expansion, recognition, monitoring, research, and institutionalization, and identifies four groups of service learning stakeholders that programs need to focus on: the academic institution, faculty, students and the community (1996). While CAPSL will not be discussed in depth here, it serves as a reference point for best practices in service learning, still being discussed within recent literature.

Through their own research, Thomson, Naidoo, and Bringle (2011) found that the successful design of service learning initiatives will: identify key stakeholders, jointly analyze the context in which the service learning is to take place, and jointly determine the specific program objectives. By following this design process, all stakeholders are involved in the planning, development and delivery of the service learning project; allowing for true reciprocity and relationship development. As noted by Plater (2011), "the key to the most successful international service learning is based on trust built carefully over several years" (p. 44).

**Criticisms of Service Learning.** While much literature discusses the positive outcomes for stakeholders involved in service learning initiatives, criticisms of such initiatives exist. Bringle and Hatcher (2009) found that service learning assessment was typically dependent on student self report evaluations, completed at the end of the semester and tailored to student satisfaction or service learning focused. Boyer (1996) noted that limited information is available on how service learning is responding to "community priorities or pressing social issues" (cited in Bringle et al., 2009, p. 41). Research by Tryon and Stoecker (2008) found that short-term service learning programs, lasting a full semester or less, caused difficulties for some

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<sup>7</sup> This three-year study was a Campus Compact Project, based on input from 44 institutions. The study was later expanded with input from additional scholars and further examination of service learning programs nationally (Bringle et al., 1996).

partnerships noting that “the amount of service provided by students may not produce enough benefits for either the student or the community to justify the effort; short-term service-learning also seems to generate less commitment on the part of the student” (p. 51).

Participation in service learning raises ethical issues, with students and universities often benefitting more than the communities in which the service is taking place (Crabtree, 2008; Zlotkowski, 2011). It also presents the question, “what justification is there for American college and universities to send their students to international destinations to be involved in someone else’s community and the personal lives of residents of those communities?” (Bringle et al., 2011, p. 20). Bringle and Hatcher (2011) go on to note that in poorly developed service learning programs, such as when community service is merely added as a complement to a study abroad program, more shortcomings can surface. These can include a failure to consider the effects of the service learning on all stakeholders, not integrating reflection into course design and assessment, and a lack of understanding of the importance of reciprocal relationships within the community where the service learning is taking place. When international service learning initiatives are ill conceived, poorly implemented or unsupervised it “can be harmful to the communities where the failures occur, and occasionally disastrous since the innocence or good intentions of the American foreigners can quickly become insults and incidents in unfamiliar settings that magnify similar domestic shortcomings” (Plater, 2011, p. 41). For Umbra, working in a small city, incidents such as these could threaten the trust that the institution has built within the community, and create an inability to design and deliver future service learning initiatives.

### **Theoretical Frameworks of Service Learning**

**John Dewey (1916).** While John Dewey’s writings never addressed service learning or international service learning directly, his philosophies have contributed greatly to its pedagogy

(Bolk, 2010; Crabtree, 2008; Hironimus-Wendt & Lovell-Troy, 1999; Saltmarsh, 1996, 2008).

According to Campus Compact (2010), Dewey is “perhaps the best-known early educator who argued that the academy must be connected to the community for learning to have individual and collective relevance” (p. 6). His “writings inform service-learning through a philosophy of education, a theory of inquiry, a conception of community and democratic life, and a means for individual engagement in society toward to the end of social transformation” (Saltmarsh, 1996, p. 13). Particularly relevant to service learning is Dewey’s analysis of the connections of education to hands-on experience, reflective inquiry, education for social transformation and the democratic communities (1996).

To Dewey, education provided “the basis for a pedagogy connecting practice and theory” (1996, p.15), as “learning occurs through an interaction between the learner and the environment” (Hironimus-Wendt et al., 1999, p. 364). In this sense, learning is an active pursuit with the learner creating their own knowledge through interaction within the community. By connecting classroom theory to hands-on experience, Dewey believed that a “renewed interest in citizenship and civic education” (Bolk, 2010, p. 2) would be initiated. He argued that, “democracy is not an alternative to other principles of associated life. It is the idea of community life itself” (as cited in Saltmarsh, 1996, p. 16). This view is connected to the process of participation, face-to-face interaction and cooperative experiences (Giles & Eyler, 1994; Saltmarsh, 2008). In connection to reflective inquiry, Dewey believed by reflecting and processing experiences, participants are able to distinguish between theory and practice, their own attitudes, ideas and responsibilities. As experiences build upon one another, reflection allows participants to be directed towards learning outcomes, skills and capabilities, personal growth and development, while gaining a greater awareness of civic responsibility and active citizenship (Annette, 2002; Giles et al., 1994).

Service learning and its experiential qualities reflect “Dewey’s view that experiential education is not an add-on, but an intrinsic part of education” (Steinberg, 2002, p. 211). By incorporating hands-on learning into academic curriculum students become “active participants in education that is grounded in community-based public problem-solving, they are educated to become knowledge producers instead of knowledge consumers” (Saltmarsh, 2008, p. 67) and to become active participants in their learning and in democratic life.

**David Kolb (1984).** Building upon the work of John Dewey, David Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle provides a second framework for service learning development (Hatcher & Bringle, 1994). According to Kolb, learning “is the process in which knowledge is created through the process of experience,” (Steinberg, 2002, p. 218), providing opportunities for enhanced understanding and greater retention of material (Bolk, 2010). Within Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle four phases were introduced: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Eyler, 2002; Hatcher et al., 1994). As it is cyclical, “learning can begin at any point on the cycle” (Hatcher et al., 1994, p. 153) and moves learners between experience and reflection as they process experiences and organize new knowledge; experiential educators, such as service learning practitioners, continually utilize this model as “it provides intuitive, easily managed scaffolding for planning instruction” (Eyler, 2002, p. 520).

As established by Dewey, experience and reflection are necessary for learning to occur, the latter allowing for participants to link concrete experiences to abstract ideas (Bolk, 2010; Hatcher et al., 1994). “That structured, in-depth reflection complement[s] the service experience is what argues most convincingly for service-learning as a course-based undertaking” (Zlotkowski, 2011, p. 100). When experiences are separated from academic support, it makes the

linking of knowledge to understanding more unlikely, calling for faculty support for learning to occur. Well-developed reflection activities, such as guided journal entries, small group discussion and presentations, “should (a) intentionally link the service experience to course-based learning objectives, (b) be structured, (c) occur regularly, (d) allow feedback and assessment, and (e) include the clarification of values” (Bringle et al., 2010, p. 5). Additionally, “by linking theory and practice, reflection and experimentation, it opens up the learning process to accommodate a much wider variety of student learning styles than has traditionally been the case” (Zlotkowski, 2011, p. 117).

### **Civic Education and Global Citizenship**

Beginning in the early 1990’s, emphasis was placed “on the link between citizenship education and service learning. This notion of active citizenship highlights not only the importance of human rights, but also stresses the significance of social responsibility, or duty, as well as democratic participation” (Annette, 2002, p. 84). The connection between service learning, and citizen or civic education has been “increasingly recognized as a valuable strategy for strengthening both civil society and higher education in the United States” (Thomson et al., 2010, p. 217), due to “its potential to clarify values related to social responsibility and civic literacy” (Lisman, as cited in Hatcher & Bringle, 1997, p. 156). These values and civic skills include the ability to think critically, solve problems creatively, enhance communication effectiveness, garner appreciation for different knowledge bases, and engage in fair, democratic and participatory relationships (Battistoni, 2000; Plater, 2011; Tolken et al., 2010).

For service learning to educate for citizenship, it should engage participants in a direct and intimate way within the community (Saltmarsh, 1996) In *Dewey’s Dream: Universities and Democracies in an Age of Education Reform – Civil Society, Public Schools and Democratic*

*Citizenship*, authors Benson, Harkavy and Puckett (2007) note Dewey's belief that "public schools are particularly well suited ... to function as neighborhood 'hubs' or 'centers' around which local partnerships can be generated and developed ... They then provide a decentralized, community-based response to rapidly changing community problems" (as cited in Saltmarsh, 2008, p. 64)<sup>8</sup>. In a domestic setting, these opportunities allow for citizens of a shared space to integrate with one another on common grounds; reflecting Dewey's view of citizenship, its fundamental connection to society, and education's ability to engage citizens in such a manner (Giles et al., 1994; Hironimus-Wendt et al., 1999). Dewey believed that "thinking has a dynamic, creative relationship with doing" (Steinberg, 2002, p. 211); which he summarized by stating, "interest in learning from all the contacts of life is the essential moral interest" (as cited in Steinberg, 2002, p. 211).

In its simplest form, Dewey's theory of democracy is "based on the idea of an integration of all citizens in a self-organizing community" (Honneth, 1998, p. 765). However, while "traditionally, citizenship has been limited to the nation state [...] increased travel, communication and economic interdependency in a global context have challenged this traditional concept" (Sandy and Meyer, 2009, p. 59). Falk (1993) stated, "citizenship can be understood both formally as a status and, more adequately, existentially as a shifting set of attitudes, relationships, and expectations with no necessary territorial delamination (as cited in Longo et al., 2011, p. 71). Expanding upon this sentiment, Barber (2000) writes, "civic efforts – the work of citizens (and not just their own) – embody a global public opinion in the making, a global civic engagement that can alone give the abstraction of international politics weight" (cited in Annette, 2002, p. 91).

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<sup>8</sup> Original omissions as cited in Saltmarsh, 2008, p. 64.

In response to a globalizing world, service learning and “higher education, regardless of national or social context and geographic location, is undergoing rapid and dynamic change as societies endeavor to align the local context to national priorities and global pressures” (Thomson et al., 2010, p. 216). Bank (2004) notes that “citizenship education should also help students acquire the attitudes, knowledge, and skills needed to function in communities other than their own, with the national culture and community, as well as within the global community” (as cited in Longo et al., 2011, p. 72). These attitudes and skills include language competencies, understanding of world cultures and global systems, cross-cultural contact, intercultural sensitivity, and knowledge and appreciation of foreign cultures and their differences with the intention that this knowledge could then be applied to participants daily lives as citizens (Crabtree, 2008; Longo et al., 2011). Ultimately, fulfilling one of education’s greater goals of students becoming “effective engaged citizens in our democratic society, and to be good citizens in our increasingly international world” (Cunningham, as cited in Bringle et al., 2009, p. 44).

International service learning initiatives are “particularly well-suited response[s] to the urgency attached to preparing graduates to be effective in their communities – wherever they might be – because [through these initiatives students] [...] have the ability to act *in* the world and *for the world*” (Platter, 2011, p. 42, original emphasis). Participating in academic service activities, in a new and unfamiliar cultural context, allows participants to gain necessary skills for a global world, while also revealing “insights into understanding various purposes and meanings of service, [...] [opening] up the possibilities for a deeper analysis and understanding of service in the U.S. context” (Longo et al., 2011, p.77).

## **Community Relationships**

“Service-learning deliberately seeks to reverse the long-established academic practice of using the community for the academy’s own ends” (Zlotkowski, 2011, p. 98). One way for academic institutes to accomplish this goal is with the establishment and development of relationships within their communities. Ruch and Trani (1991) identified effective university-community relationships with three characteristics: “(a) the interaction is mutually beneficial to the university and the community, (b) the interaction is guided by institutional choice and strategy, and (c) the interaction is one of value and import to both partners” (as cited in Bringle et al., 1996, p. 234). Service learning initiatives should be designed to “align with the education objectives of the course and with community partners’ agendas to ensure that the community service is meaningful not only to students but also to third sector organizations, their clients, and community residents” (Thomson et al., 2010, p. 224). The key to meaningful and successful community relationships is reciprocity, collaborative and democratic interactions and mutual investment (Campus Compact, 2012; Crabtree, 2008).

While “building interactions into partnerships is a matter of time and commitment of resources” (Bringle et al., 1996, p. 234), these community relationships have the potential to “change the nature of faculty work, enhance student learning, better fulfill campus mission[s], and improve the quality of life in communities” (Bringle et al., 2009, p. 37). Such “complex and dynamic relationships [...] are necessarily subject to re-negotiation over time” (Bringle, Clayton & Price, 2009, p. 2), however to maintain, “universities must provide strong leadership, articulate clear goals, and maintain supportive institutional policies” (Bringle et al., 1996, p. 234). By allowing for relationship development and approaching situations together true reciprocity can be reached, as stakeholders move towards goal and expectation fulfillment. While working

within an international context, Longo and Saltmarsh (2011) contend that students should have realistic expectations in terms of community contribution and change, and be prepared to partake in reflective activities that discuss the relationship of their service learning projects to the host community. Within these new international settings expectations may need to be adjusted, but “best practices for domestic engagement” (2011, p. 75) can still be utilized to guide the development of international partnerships.

Serving “as a foundation for service learning in higher education today” (2011, p. 75), the Highlander Folk School’s approach to partnerships is provided as a specific example. Located in Tennessee and conducting innovative, cross-cultural work within the U.S., Highlander was based on in-depth knowledge of the local cultures of the communities where they were working; and “emphasized the power of creating a safe and open environment where people could become acquainted with another culture through a mutual exchange of ideas and experiences” (2011, p. 76). By utilizing inquiry, and respecting and recognizing the importance of local histories and backgrounds, participants placed “value on local, as opposed to expert, knowledge” (2011, p. 76). This approach ultimately, assisted to further develop and maintain community relationships and reciprocity, and bridge “institutional rhetoric and institutional action, between professed values and actual practice” (Zlotkowski, 2011, p. 118). Many, if not most, individuals involved in international service learning initiatives are unfamiliar with their host culture and do not possess the above mentioned in-depth knowledge, but can still garner this knowledge by approaching interactions cautiously and with an open mind.

### **About The Umbra Institute**

The Umbra Institute, located in Perugia, Italy, offers summer, semester and year-long academic programs to American university students. Since its founding in 1999, Umbra hosts

nearly 400 students annually from over 100 U.S. institutions. Its “mission focus is to afford every Umbra student a safe and rewarding academic program, supported by co-curricular experiential learning and community engagement opportunities” (The Umbra Institute, 2013c). As an institution, Umbra strives to “be the leader in study abroad in Italy through cultural competency, reflection on personal growth, and living and learning abroad” (2013c).

Participants who select The Umbra Institute have the option of enrolling in either the General Studies or Direct Enrollment program. Umbra’s General Studies program allows students from any major the opportunity to choose from a variety of elective courses, taking courses independently or creating curricular concentrations. All students enrolled in this option must fill an Italian Language requirement, a language class or course taught in Italian, in conjunction with full-time enrollment (14-16 credit hours). Many courses within the General Studies program include a community engagement component, which can take several forms: academic internships, service learning projects, community-based courses, co-ops, and volunteer projects. These opportunities further immerse students into the local community, allowing for enhanced language skills, and deeper learning; which is possible due to Umbra’s “well-established relationships with community partners — local artisans, internationally-recognized companies, schools and universities, city and regional government, fair trade cooperatives and festivals, museums, and Italian families” (2013b).

### **Urban Spaces Course Overview**

As a Community Engagement and Student Services Intern at The Umbra Institute, I worked towards bridging Umbra’s academics, community engagement programs and student services. This included assisting in development, and improving coordination between these three areas. A specific responsibility of this role encompassed supporting the delivery of

community engagement curriculum in various elective courses. Due to its approach to service learning and the manner in which it engages students within a community neighborhood, one of these courses, ESUS 310: Urban Spaces: Rebuilding Community in Perugia (Urban Spaces), caught my attention shortly after beginning my internship. Introduced into Umbra's elective offerings in the fall of 2012, this course works exclusively with one of Perugia's central and most active neighborhoods, Borgo Bello.

Due to various factors, including lifestyle and demographic changes, city development, consumer patterns and citizen relocation, the "urban spaces which people once considered their own because of familiar association, collective responsibility and shared uses, no longer serve their everyday functions" (The Umbra Institute, 2014a) as a shared place. Inevitably this has weakened the sense of community that once existed in these urban areas. In a country, such as Italy, where community and family are strong cultural components, Borgo Bello's neighborhood association has taken steps to stop this decline. As the demographics of its resident population diversified, they have orchestrated various community events, such as concerts, holiday celebrations and community nights, to revitalize the neighborhood. The "creative [and] intentional mix of promotional events, networking, collaboration and *place-making* with the active participation of the people who live, work and study in the city" (2014a, original emphasis) has made this an urban success story.

Since its introduction into the curriculum, Urban Spaces has had three faculty members involved with its implementation. Developed as a joint course taught by two faculty members, it continues this format today, with one of the original faculty. The course was established as an academic internship and seminar course, though was not run as a traditional internship with student involvement in one site. It was purely research based with initiatives that included

weekly meetings with Borgo Bello community members to discuss different course themes, such as childhood, social capital, community activism, and recent neighborhood history. From the communications with community members, the course expanded to assist the Neighborhood Association with concrete acts within the community, for instance cleaning street numbers and organizing communications. It was during the fall 2013 semester, with more experience and familiarity with the neighborhood, that the course began to focus on transformative projects that on a small scale would improve the places in which course participants were working.

The natural next step with these transformative projects was to work with course participants to engage community members in participatory processes that focused on determining the needs of the community and what could be done within the spaces of the neighborhood (V.L., personal communication, 2014). These efforts were possible due to the Neighborhood Association President wanting “more people actively involved in the neighborhood” (2014), but not having the knowledge of participatory methodologies or the workforce to implement such an initiative, without the assistance of Urban Spaces, its faculty and student body. As the participatory process evolves further the intent is that more community members will become active in the process, allowing for a greater capacity to create projects from the bottom-up. Future participants in Urban Spaces will continue to interact with this established, ongoing process within the community.

Through Umbra’s partnership with the Neighborhood Association, students “explore the history of Perugia and examine [how] the past has shaped the cultural, political, and social landscape of the city today” (The Umbra Institute, 2013a). This course utilizes “participatory planning workshop activities, comparative readings and discussions, as well as urban exploration exercises to understand the relationships between people, places, actions, and values” (The

Umbra Institute, 2014a). Course readings and classroom discussion provide students with a theoretical foundation, while reflective journaling exercises and participation in neighborhood activities and interactions with community members, or the community engagement element, allow students to link theory to practice, during this weekly, three-hour class.

Participants spend the first half of the course focused largely on theory and methodologies to provide them with the background knowledge and instruments needed to understand participatory processes in an urban and community context. During this portion of the course participants are also introduced to the community to meet the local stakeholders and explore the physical space, to gain understanding of the overall picture before project discussion, development and implementation begins. The learning method behind the community engagement aspect is described, amongst other things, as a way to explore how their role as an American student abroad connects them to the local community, while gaining practical hands-on experience based on the neighborhoods' needs (2014a). The idea of community connection and citizenship is further incorporated in course objectives that include student development of “an appreciation and understanding of relationships between persons, perceptions, activities, identity, and public open space” (2014a); application of “civic engagement approaches and methods in interactions with community partners” (2014a); and community collaboration in developing neighborhood revitalization initiatives and finally, reflection on future implications of their interactions and the experience to the communities where they may live (2014a). The semester is intended to end with a “formal moment where the students donate or give their contributions to the community in a public event” (V.L., personal communication, 2014).

End of fall 2013 course evaluations, administered by Umbra, indicated a high student satisfaction rate for the professors and overall course design. In regards to the community

engagement project feedback was largely positive, with such comments referencing it as a strong example of a successful community engagement program; being part of the community facilitated learning; and student participation inspired more community participation. However, even with these positive remarks there were indications of areas for improvement. A language barrier was mentioned numerous times, along with unclear objectives and project structure, and the need for more direct student involvement with the project. No specific negative comments were provided in relation to the involvement of community members, nor was there in-depth discussion on their perceptions of citizenship or civic education.

With these student evaluations came a personal interest in the partners' satisfaction and feedback from the semester. Based on personal observations and interactions with Neighborhood Association members, they appeared to be quite pleased with students, their involvement and contributions to Borgo Bello. At public events, including press conferences, the Neighborhood Association President spoke highly of the students and the relationship with Umbra. However, no formal written or verbal feedback was captured. With this missing piece, how was Umbra to know that this experience was reciprocal and that they were meeting the Neighborhood Association's needs, goals and expectations? For residents of Borgo Bello, what does it mean to have these temporary community members involved within their community? How are their own ideas of citizenship altered?

### **Research /Practitioner Inquiry Design**

Qualitative research methods were utilized during the course of this IPIC inquiry, including stakeholder observation, review of participant journal entries, in-person interviews and electronic evaluations. Open-ended and multiple choice research questions for each stakeholder group (Appendix A - D) were designed to collect information on basic demographics,

participation goals and objectives, and program expectations. Based on reoccurring literature themes, a cluster of interview and survey questions also focused specifically on civic engagement and citizenship in relation to ESUS 310: Urban Spaces: Rebuilding Community in Perugia (Urban Spaces). In analyzing and coding respondents' interview and survey responses emerging themes and connections to stakeholder experiences, and their views of citizenship and community engagement were considered. Final research findings will be presented to Urban Spaces faculty and the Assistant Director of Community Engagement at The Umbra Institute, including suggested areas of improvement for meeting stakeholder goals and expectations, and how citizenship and personal values could be enhanced as themes throughout the course.

Stakeholders were divided into four research groups and identified as previous students enrolled in Urban Spaces (Group 1), current Umbra students enrolled in the course (Group 2), Urban Spaces faculty (Group 3), and Borgo Bello community members (Group 4). Questions for each research group were non-sensitive in nature and, if quoted directly, participants are identified only by their initials. Consent forms (Appendix E) were utilized for all research groups notifying participants that there are no foreseeable risks to research participation, that they have the right to withdraw from the research at any time, and that the final capstone will be available upon request. The consent forms were provided for review and signature for in-person interviews, and incorporated into an introductory email for Group 1 participants. It was noted within the survey that completion of the survey itself constituted agreement to participation. Interview questions (Appendix D) and the consent form (Appendix F) for Group 4 stakeholders were translated into Italian and proof read by a native speaker, also fluent in English. The translated consent form was offered to native Italian speakers, in place of the English form. An

introduction of this research and its research methods was reviewed and approved by The Umbra Institute prior to stakeholders being contacted to participate in this study.

The Urban Spaces course was introduced in the fall of 2012 and is currently in its fourth session. The benefit to this is the pool of Group 1 interviewees was manageable with 19 potential respondents. Group 1 interviewees were contacted via email with an introductory message, an electronic consent form and a link to an online survey (Appendix G) hosted through Google Forms. A reminder email (Appendix H) was sent out the following week, extending the survey completion deadline by a few days to garner additional respondents. Of the 19 potential respondents, six completed the survey by the requested date.

In-person interviews were conducted with individuals from research groups 2, 3 and 4. Interviews were arranged via email, confirmed face-to-face when possible, and conducted at a mutually agreed upon time and place over a two-week period. Interview time was estimated at 20-30 minutes, however actual interviews averaged 45 minutes long. With the consent of interviewees, all interviews were digitally recorded for later transcribing and translation, if applicable. All interviews were conducted in English, except for one Group 4 interview. For this interview a native Italian speaker, who is not associated with the Urban Spaces course and fluent in English, accompanied me to assist with communication if and as barriers arose. Group 2 consisted of four interviewees (the number of students currently enrolled in the course), two in Group 3 (the current course faculty), and three in Group 4 (the Borgo Bello Neighborhood Association President and two Borgo Bello residents who are also Neighborhood Association members that have been involved in the Urban Spaces projects).

## **Research Limitations**

Limitations to this research included a low response rate to the electronic survey and participation request sent to Group 1 participants (n=19). Of the six participants that did respond, five were students that I knew personally from the fall semester and whom were extremely active within the course. This fact leads me to believe that survey participation was due to personal familiarity, and the strong connection to the course and community during their time in Perugia. While interviews were conducted with all potential Group 2 participants (n=4) a larger interview pool may have lead to a greater variety in responses or stronger support of developing themes. A similar discussion could be had of Group 4 participants (n=3); who have been involved since the early stages of The Umbra Institute and Borgo Bello collaboration and while experienced with the course and collaboration, a point of comparison could have been established between their responses and Borgo Bello community members new to the experience.

Another research limitation included a language barrier with a Group 4 participant, the Borgo Bello Neighborhood Association president. While I am a high-intermediate language speaker, Italian is not my native language, which rendered communication challenging when discussing themes surrounding this research study. To bridge this limitation a native speaker proofed all translated documents (consent form and interview questions) and accompanied me on the interview to assist with translation, as necessary. The interview was digitally recorded, with consent, for later transcribing and translation. However, the location where the interview was conducted was a public space with loud, inconsistent background noise and pieces of the interview were indistinguishable, affecting the completeness of the recorded interview.

### **Presentation of Data**

For this presentation of data, demographics of previous students (Group 1) and current students (Group 2) have been gathered into a table in Appendix I. This table is to provide a breakdown of basic responses and a point of comparison between alumni from two different semesters, and current course participants.

#### **Group 1: Previous Students Enrolled in Urban Spaces**

Since its introduction into Umbra's curriculum in the fall of 2012, Urban Spaces has had 19 participants; all of whom were contacted via email to participate in this research study. Of these potential respondents, six completed the survey by the requested date, resulting in a 32% rate of return. All of these respondents had previous experience within community engagement initiatives before participating in Urban Spaces (question #5). These community engagement experiences ranged from academically connected initiatives, such as mentoring at elementary schools, volunteering through National Honor Society or InterAct Clubs, to community-based initiatives, such as volunteering at soup kitchens, hospitals or with political campaigns. These responses indicate that while participants may not have had previous experience in service learning in an international setting, they were prone to participating in such forms of engagement work within their home or school communities.

To explore reasons for course selection, participants were asked about their personal or academic motivations for enrolling in Urban Spaces (question #4). While several respondents indicated multiple reasons for enrollment, responses followed similar themes. Four indicated a desire to be engaged or more involved within the community; two responded that it connected to a major or minor area of study at their home institution, and two indicated that being abroad provided an ideal setting to participate in such an initiative. S.R. felt this was an opportunity to

“see not only how community involvement works abroad and compare it to the U.S., but also to see how community engagement is different in small neighborhoods rather than big cities or towns” (personal communication, 2014).

As citizenship is an emerging learning objective widely discussed within service learning literature, participants were asked to describe their idea of citizenship prior to participation in Urban Spaces (question #6). Two respondents described it as access to rights and privileges within a country and three discussed its connection to participation within a location, and the people of that location. While participants only provided short responses to this question, it established a base line for measuring how this view may or may not have changed after participation in the Urban Spaces course.

Initial expectations (question #7) of participants varied only slightly after their introduction to the service learning project. Four indicated that they anticipated working within the local community; specifically that it would involve hands-on work (n=1), attending town meetings (n=1), establishing personal connections (n=1) and “making an impact on the Borgo Bello community” (A.T., personal communication, 2014). One participant indicated that she expected to complete a small project as a class, but did not anticipate that it would involve community members. While responses indicated mainly positive expectations, there was some doubt. M.W., who expected heavy involvement within the community, added that she was “a bit skeptical about our project and wondered if it would have any real impact” (personal communication, 2014).

To gauge student perceptions of implemented projects and typical interactions with Borgo Bello community members, participants were asked to describe their projects and interactions (question #8). *Respondents in this stakeholder group represented two semesters and*

*two different projects, descriptions can be found in Appendix J.* During each semester, students had multiple opportunities to explore the neighborhood, and meet and interact with business owners, community and Borgo Bello Neighborhood Association members. Despite the language gap, these interactions were noted as “always pleasant, meaningful experiences. Our presence in Borgo Bello did not feel paternalistic. A relationship of mutual benefit and learning was developed” (M.W., personal communication, 2014).

Participants were asked how the guided journal entries solidified their understanding of course materials (question #10). Four respondents indicated that these exercises were helpful in connecting course materials to work in the community, however two indicated a level of only moderate helpfulness. S.R. noted that the journal entries got her to think about why she was in Italy, the purpose of the class and how she could take what she was learning and utilize it in other settings after the class was over (personal communication, 2014). A.T. responded that she felt that the journal entries “were based on our thoughts and impressions, but were not guided by questions or topics. So the journals didn’t help all that much with course materials” (personal communication, 2014). M.W. thought the journal entries were relatively helpful, but commented that they, along with “our class time were not nearly structured enough. Because they were both rather nebulous, it was challenging for the two to work together to solidify a strong sense of understanding” (personal communication, 2014).

To allow participants to elaborate on their impressions of support from The Umbra Institute and Urban Spaces faculty (question #11) and the Borgo Bello community (question #12)<sup>9</sup> during their semester involvement in the class, participants were asked what would have helped them feel more supported or prepared for participation in the community (question #13).

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<sup>9</sup> Responses to questions #11 and #12 can be found in the table in Appendix I.

Two respondents replied that they felt that both Umbra and the Borgo Bello community did what they could to support them throughout the semester. Other respondents (n=4) offered suggestions central to deeper community involvement and feedback, indicating a desire for a more meaningful connection to the community and its members. T.G felt that attending “Borgo Bello meetings would have been helpful to get a clearer vision of how the community operates” (personal communication, 2014). M.W. elaborated on this thought, noting that in some ways the students felt like outsiders during interactions in Borgo Bello that it would have been better if they had had more involvement in planning and development, to feel like contributions were being made (personal communication, 2014).

As learning outcomes are frequently discussed within service learning literature, survey participants were asked what skills, if any, did they strengthen or equate to participation within the Urban Spaces’ community engagement project (question #15). Enhanced communication skills (written, listening and verbal), critical thinking, intercultural communication skills, adaptability, flexibility and analytical skills were all attributed to project involvement. Participants also indicated (n=3) improved Italian language ability and speaking confidence.

When asked in what ways experience in the Borgo Bello community changed their views and opinions of the people and city of Perugia (question #20), all respondents (n=6) commented that in one way or another, involvement in the project connected them more to Perugia and helped them see the city and Italians in a new light. For A.T., the community engagement experience provided an authentic Italian experience and destroyed the image “of the ‘romantic Italian city’. It let me see that Italians are people just like Americans, with desires to get a community more engaged” (personal communication, 2014).

As a base line for participant views and opinions about community engagement, civic engagement and citizenship was established within the survey (question #6), these themes were revisited as participants were asked to comment on what ways course participation had changed their views and opinions (question #21). Community involvement, both its importance and difficulty, was the response most widely discussed. Civic engagement, commented C.C., “is key for a successful community. Borgo Bello shows this. A neighborhood can truly be a place for members to have fun, learn from one another, and be actively involved” (personal communication, 2014). Participation in the course reminded M.W. “that community engagement is best built upon the foundations of strong relationships and genuine conversations. I can’t say that any of my views and opinions were altered, but my previously held passion for community engagement was intensified” (personal communication, 2014).

While all indicated that course participation, to some degree, met their initial expectations (question #23, Appendix I), participants were asked to provide any additional suggestions that they may have for improving the community engagement project in Borgo Bello. Five participants responded, with four indicating a need for greater project involvement, additional student responsibility and more interactions within the community, and one response addressed the need for a defined project end goal closer to the beginning of the semester. While she loved the relationship building and idea of the Borgo Bello project, M.W. commented that she felt like she did not have an active role in the development of the project, and was there as an American figurehead; “I realize that our presence was valuable, but I wanted to be an active contributor to the project. Project ownership and implementation should belong more to the students and less to the professors” (personal communication, 2014). She ended her survey by noting that while she

enjoyed the course and admired its goals, the structure and level of student participation needed to be improved (2014).

### **Group 2: Umbra Students Currently Enrolled in Urban Spaces**

In the spring 2014 semester, Urban Spaces had four students enrolled, all of which agreed to participate in this research study, resulting in a 100% rate of return. Group 2 interview questions followed the same format as Group 1. As interviews were conducted late in the semester students had already established their project within the neighborhood, created relationships within the community and had opportunities for reflection; allowing them to fully respond how participation may or may not have affected their views, opinions and learning outcomes to date.

Prior to participating in Urban Spaces, 75% of respondents (n=3) had previous experience in community engagement initiatives (question #5). These experiences were connected to academic study or interests, and ranged from volunteer work focusing on food justice and community agriculture to mentorship positions. Motivations for course enrollment (question #4) included previous experience within community engagement (n=2), fulfillment of academic requirements (n=1), and giving back to Perugia (n=1). C.R. also added that getting involved with community engagement at Umbra would allow her to expand her ideas for what could be done back in the U.S. (personal communication, 2014).

Participants were then asked to describe their idea of citizenship prior to participation in Urban Spaces (question #6); 75% of participants (n=3) said that it held legal implications with 25% (n=1) commenting on its connection to participatory behavior. E.G. commented that she had a “very flat definition of citizenship and thought of it mostly from a legal point of view. You

belong to a country, you have the ability to vote and participate in government through voting” (personal communication, 2014).

When asked to provide their initial expectations for the community engagement project after its introduction (question #7), E.G. commented that she thought the class would be continuing on the previous semesters’ work with C.A.R.O. Vicolo and “coming up with our own small project and carrying it out ourselves” (personal communication, 2014). M.R. noted that he was intimidated by what he thought was the large scope of the project, but felt that it would consist of strong academic components (personal communication, 2014). C.R.’s expectations were spurred by early class discussions regarding the neighborhood area; and she expected that there would not be a lot of community involvement, that she would “see a lot of closed businesses, not many people in the streets” (personal communication, 2014) and lower economic levels than found in the center.

From exploring expectations and pre-course experience, questions transitioned to discussion of in-class experiences as participants were asked to describe their Borgo Bello project and typical community member interactions (question #8). *A fall semester 2014 project description can be found in Appendix J.* As a native language speaker, M.L.B. found the interactions with community members easy, especially after they understood that the students and class were present to assist within the community. It was at this point that she felt that community members opened up and began asking questions, creating a mutual dialogue surrounding the project (personal communication, 2014). C.R. responded that as she is not fluent in Italian, the interactions were difficult, but translations provided by faculty, both verbal and written, were helpful, though they made interactions feel impersonal; “you never know what is

being dropped off in that translations, it is a tricky one and its one you just have to go with the punches” (personal communication, 2014).

When asked how did guided journal entries solidify understanding of course materials (question #4), all participants (n=4) indicated that they were helpful in the learning process. E.G. felt that while the journals were not “an integral part of the course, it definitely has helped me keep track of everything, so I can look back and see the progression of my thoughts” and the project (personal communication, 2014).

Participants were given an opportunity to provide suggestions on how they would feel more supported by Umbra or Borgo Bello, or prepared for participating in the community (question #13, Appendix I). Echoing Group 1 responses, Group 2 participants indicated a desire for more involvement within the community (n=2), more time to conceptualize project design before jumping into the hands on project (n=1), a better meeting place for stakeholder collaboration (n=1), and recording conversations for later review (n=1). C.R. also expressed interest in allowing community members and other project participants an opportunity to share their experiences and stories, to enhance understanding of everyone involved (2014). Such activity would assist E.G.’s perception of community uncertainty on how to interact with students, particularly with the language barrier, and also the lack of understanding for student participation (personal communication, 2014).

Learning outcomes were addressed next, as participants were asked to indicate any skills that they had strengthened or gained due to participation in the Urban Spaces course (question #15). Observation skills, the enhanced ability to think outside of the box, public speaking, and the capacity to turn conceptual ideas into tactile projects were all provided as skills outcomes. E.G. felt that the class helped her develop analytical skills related to analyzing assigned readings,

followed by application of learned knowledge and information directly to a real-world situation (personal communication, 2014). Two participants noted that it provided insight on approaching situations from the bottom-up, by “targeting the small issues, rather than the big ones because once you start small, you end up figuring the big ones out with the small steps that you take” (C.R., personal communication, 2014).

To round out their time in the Borgo Bello neighborhood, participants were asked in what ways their experiences in the community had changed their views and opinions of the people and the city of Perugia (question #18) and about community engagement, civic engagement and citizenship (question #19). Regarding perceptions of the people and city of Perugia, respondents indicated that interactions in Borgo Bello extinguished first impressions, that they witnessed a strong cultural identity that residents are working to retain, and that there were vibrant areas of Perugia outside of the historic center. E.G. commented that she really valued “being able to see the members of the Borgo Bello community and how passionate they are about their neighborhood and how much they want to change and improve it” (personal communication, 2014), adding that it was a new experience for her and something she had not witnessed in the U.S.

Changed perceptions of civic engagement included new insight into the amount of work that is necessary for successful project implementation (n=2), and the connection and sense of belonging that is necessary between people and the spaces that they inhabit (n=2). While one respondent still felt that citizenship held negative connotations, and was merely used to classify people, others implied that their views on citizenship had been altered. M.R. broke it down to passive citizenship vs. active citizenship, “it went from a title to an actual sense of belonging to that which you are a citizen of, by contributing something to it” (personal communication, 2014).

Initially viewing citizenship as having a flat definition, E.G. responded that after participation in the Urban Spaces course, she saw it as being engaged within the community and public affairs, “not just necessarily from a legal or bureaucratic point of view. But that you are working with the people you live around and in your neighborhood and community, whatever that may be” (personal communication, 2014).

While all participants indicated that course participation, to some degree, met their initial expectations (question #20, Appendix I), they were given the opportunity to provide additional suggestions that they have for improving the community engagement project in Borgo Bello. Responses demonstrated that a clearer explanation of the project near the beginning of the semester would be beneficial and help avoid confusion (n=1), and a stronger connection of course readings to content (n=2). Readings specific to the semesters’ project focus (such as greening) and central to Italy were suggested.

### **Group 3: Urban Spaces Faculty**

While originally all three faculty associated with Urban Spaces were contacted to participate in this research study, only current faculty members were available, resulting in 67% participation. Questions for this stakeholder group were designed to collect basic demographics, garner a sense of course development and establishment of the Borgo Bello community engagement project. An original faculty member and American born, R.L., has lived in Perugia for thirty-years, though his involvement in Borgo Bello was only initiated with the development of Urban Spaces. An urban planner by practice and training, this is the only course that he teaches at Umbra. Joining the class during the fall 2013 semester, V.L. is an architect, urban planner and thirty-year Perugia resident.

Faculty members were asked to provide their initial goals and objectives (question #8) and expectations (question #9) for both Umbra students and Borgo Bello community members as a result of participating in this course. R.L. noted that at the most basic level he wants students to enjoy themselves and get to know locals during their time in Perugia. At a deeper level, he wants them to be able to observe and reflect on ways communities have grown and changed, comparing what they have learned and experienced in Italy to that in the U.S. Additionally, as the course has developed he would like them to gain an understanding of the principles and techniques of participatory planning (personal communication, 2014). V.L. reiterated this latter goal, adding that with growing opportunities in the field, an understanding of facilitation and public processes could assist students in future studies (personal communication, 2014). For Borgo Bello, both faculty commented on wanting to assist the community in creating opportunities for neighborhood development, empowering them to work for themselves and create positive change within the neighborhood. The ultimate goal for both was to provide the community with tools and knowledge to create stronger and self-propelled community dynamics.

While Borgo Bello's needs were previously determined (question #10) through small group discussion, with the Neighborhood Association President and a few community members, the participatory workshops have opened "up larger community conversations and identified a wide range of needs" (R.L., personal communication, 2014). While the course cannot address everything, participants are able to respond to the community's small needs, which are more fitting to the scope and time frame of the course. While the community drives the needs and the discussion of those needs, students and faculty implement the participatory techniques to focus the conversation, creating a truly collaborative effort. When asked to identify how student and Umbra needs and learning goals are discussed with community members in relationship to their

own needs; and how the experience was evaluated at the end of the semester (question #11), both R.L. and V.L. commented that this is an area that could use improvement. Beyond discussing student limitations, time constraints, and possibilities with partners, needs and learning goals are not part of the conversation. Student evaluation is not systematic, but described as intuitive and observations based. Written assignments, which allow for evaluation of analysis and connection of theory to practice, have also been enhanced within the curriculum. Community evaluation, of students and projects, is not formally collected, but based on conversations and community participation and reactions to the project.

To determine the benefits faculty saw in course participation for both students (question #12) and the Borgo Bello community (question #13), they were asked to provide detail. It was expressed that students were benefitting from first-hand observation of participatory practices, strengthening or gaining critical thinking and analytical skills; skills that they will be able to continue to develop throughout their educational and professional careers. For the Borgo Bello community, the cultural exposure that they receive was listed as both a short and long-term benefit. “I think it is very useful for people in the Italian community to see how young students, of the American community can be so proactive and effective” (V.L., personal communication, 2014), it is a way of exposing stakeholders to different methodologies and cultural approaches. Both faculty also listed the networking opportunities that the collaboration between Umbra and Borgo Bello has initiated; “I think the placement that Umbra has in the city is really interesting. The relationship with the [Perugian] community, it is almost independent in a way and it has opened up all kinds of access for this project” (R.L., personal communication, 2014). He went on to add that this networking has been possible due to Umbra’s established relationships and trust within Perugia as a whole, which in Italian culture takes time to develop.

Faculty were then asked to describe how students and community participants are supported throughout the course of the semester (question #14). For students, support takes the form of regular class discussions, group processing, reporting back from the community workshops, and incorporation of reflective journal entries. The intent is to provide continuous opportunities for feedback and support, though the structure tends to diminish and become a secondary concern once the hands-on project begins. R.L. feels that the support provided to the community is continual, particularly as their objectives are operational; written communications and keeping all participants informed of the behind the scenes, so that the process can continue forward. He continued, noting that this support and behind the scenes work is an aspect that students may not feel as involved as they could be, but the nature of timing – preparations needing to be completed prior to student arrival and during situations where immediate action is necessary – does not always allow full student participation (personal communication, 2014).

When asked about the challenges of incorporating Urban Spaces and its community engagement goals in the Borgo Bello community (question #15), both faculty responded that time, language ability, and logistics were an issue. As the class only meets three-hours a week, it can be difficult to plan events in conjunction with the community and logistically, not having a set location to work within the community has also been challenging. While space would be available at Umbra, this move would be counterintuitive during times of community collaboration. When asked what they felt would make the community engagement aspect of the course stronger (question #16), discussions continued in the areas of time and space. R.L. commented, “if we want the work done, the students and the community, it has to be in the community, in the neighborhood” (personal communication, 2014). New opportunities are available in this area with the opening of an Urban Center close to Borgo Bello, which R.L. is

hoping to develop further for the class, “it is a center for urban regeneration and that is what my class is about, so that is perfect” (2014). To gain additional time, V.L. thinks more flexibility on the part of Umbra could benefit the course; while students have full schedules and are involved in many things, a scheduled Saturday or date outside of class time would help open planning (personal communication, 2014).

When asked to comment in what ways their experiences in the Borgo Bello community have changed their views and opinions about community engagement, civic engagement and citizenship (question #17), both commented that it was difficult to say if it had really changed their perceptions, as they have been involved professionally with similar initiatives for awhile. Though R.L. did confirm that this course has changed his ideas on the capacity and quality of American students, and “it led me to understand how difficult is to integrate learning and education into community participation” (personal communication, 2014). Both indicated that this form of service learning is particularly effective for community engagement and participation. In the case of Borgo Bello, V.L. elaborated, community life is strong and already established, making people “more willing to interact with one another, than in other parts of the city. So to me this is a perfect lab to do this kind of work” (personal communication, 2014).

#### **Group 4: Borgo Bello Community Members**

Group 4 stakeholders included the Borgo Bello Neighborhood Association President and two Borgo Bello residents and Neighborhood Association members involved in the Umbra projects). As I am not a fluent Italian speaker, I was accompanied by a native speaker, who was fluent in English and familiar with this study, during the Neighborhood Association President’s interview to assist with translations as necessary. As the two Borgo Bello residents that participated in this study are native English speakers, their interviews were conducted in English.

Questions for this stakeholder group were designed to collect basic demographics, and garner a sense of project development and understanding of project goals and objectives from the community's perspective.

A sixty-year resident of Perugia, O.A. has lived in Borgo Bello for fifteen years, nine of which has been as a member and the president of the Borgo Bello Neighborhood Association. M.I.S. and M.A.S. are American expatriates who have lived within the Borgo Bello community for six and a half years, five of which have been as members of the Neighborhood Association. The relationship with The Umbra Institute and establishment of the Urban Spaces course was an opportunity to create rapport, build relationships and collaborate with Perugian universities (question #5). As community members, M.I.S. also noted it was a matter of having pride in the neighborhood and wanting to increase community involvement (personal communication, 2014). For the students, Borgo Bellos' initial goals, objectives, and expectations (questions #6 and #7) were to provide an opportunity for American students to become familiar with a new area of Perugia, while having the chance to create relationships and learn more about the area from the individuals that live and work there. For community members, O.A. wanted to build relationships with outsiders, particularly youth and foreigners. As a retired teacher, he personally liked "continuing this rapport" (personal communication, 2014) of youth work, and creating dialogue between different generations, and people from different countries.

The opportunities to work in a new context, with different age demographics and in a new cultural context were provided as the greatest benefits to student participation in the course and within the Borgo Bello community (question #9). M.A.S. noted that it was the chance to gain an understanding and appreciation of life of neighborhood residents (personal communication, 2014). O.A. added that "the alternative cultural view is, I believe, for the youths useful because

they compare themselves with some of the realities of our little streets” (personal communication, 2014) and what they may or may not have experienced in the U.S. Turning to the community benefits of the Umbra and Borgo Bello partnership (question #10), O.A. noted that he felt it was a spiral effect, Italian youths witnessing American youths working in the community and joining the efforts. Coincidentally, the need for more local youth representation within the community is the area that O.A. responded would make Urban Spaces’ community engagement aspect stronger (question #11). In his view, this would place “together all of the various realities [of the neighborhood]: the youths, the adults and the foreigners” (2014), allowing for the most inclusive collaboration.

Over the course of a semester, the Neighborhood Association has felt highly supported by The Umbra Institute (question #12), noting that the relationship has been “completely positive because it places together two realities, our association and the school” (2014), in a clear collaboration. The only challenge of incorporating Umbra students and their community engagement goals into the Borgo Bello community (question #13) has been the existing language barrier. O.A. acknowledged that this barrier was two-fold, as community members do not have a strong understanding of English, nor or the majority of students of Italian, however he felt it was a barrier that was “conquerable” (2014). While not a challenge, MA.S. added that the community did not have a full understanding of what the students’ course goals were; having this knowledge could benefit all involved (personal communication, 2014).

The Borgo Bello partnership with The Umbra Institute has exceeded all of the Associations’ initial expectations (question #14), and is a collaboration that they would highly recommend to other Associations or organizations (question #15). O.A. feels that it should not be an exclusive relationship, “the city is not just Borgo Bello, but also other neighborhoods, for

which this experience could be repeated” (2014). To end the interview, participants were asked to comment on the ways that experiences with The Umbra Institute and its students had changed their views and opinions about community engagement, civic engagement, and citizenship (question #16). Responses indicated that while the learning is occurring in Perugia, it is hoped that “students take back this idea of civic responsibility and feeling of civic activity to their own cities. Implementing this learning within their own communities, wherever those may be” (M.I.S., personal communication, 2014).

### **Analysis of Data and Recommendations**

“Service learning has two main goals: student learning and service to the community” (Brown, 2012, p. 59). However, to reach these goals, service learning practitioners need to work collaboratively to meet the expectations of the various stakeholders that will be affected by project implementation. Utilizing The Umbra Institute’s Urban Studies course as a case study several trends emerged from data collected through stakeholder surveys and interviews. These themes: relationship development and collaboration, reflective practice, community involvement, and stakeholder expectations, are supported by service learning best practices and conceptual frameworks present in current service learning literature.

The reputation that Umbra has built within Perugia since its founding in 1999 has opened doors for Urban Spaces, amongst other courses, as a certain level of trust has been established within the greater community. This trust is needed for open, reciprocal relationships within an Italian cultural context; Urban Spaces’ careful focus on mutually beneficial relationships has helped that trust transfer to the class and its work with the Borgo Bello community. Scholars support this long-term relationship development, seeing the establishment of relationships as a key to program success (Bringle et. al, 1996, 2009), which can also “catalyze significant growth

for the participants as well as substantial new work and new knowledge production” (Bringle, Clayton & Price, 2009, p. 2). An important aspect of these relationships is that the service being implemented is meaningful to all involved stakeholders (Longo et al., 2011; Thomson et al., 2010). Currently, Urban Spaces faculty captures community feedback informally through verbal comments and interactions. It may benefit the Umbra and Borgo Bello partnership to incorporate a method of capturing community feedback that would allow for honest input from *all* involved community members, beyond just the Borgo Bello Neighborhood Association President. A brief electronic survey, midway through and at the end of each semester, could be such a method and would allow for project adaptation by stakeholders between semesters.

Faculty’s introduction to participatory processes within the community has, to date, proven to engage community members and turn passive citizenship within the community to active citizenship, where concerned residents are coming together to make changes for the good of all. Students joining this process have had the opportunity to not only observe the process, but also provide feedback and input into its development and future implementation. Future plans for this area of the course appear to include a more active student facilitation role during community events, which will provide stronger reinforcement of learning and skills development as students put theory into practice (Bringle et al., 2010; Zlotkowski, 2011).

To further support skills development, faculty should consider how guided journal entries fit into the curriculum. Research has shown that this tool can be invaluable in helping students link the service experience to course-based learning objectives; as Crabtree (2008) argues “formal reflection activities [incorporated into the process] help students ‘go deeper’ in their understanding of the service experience as well as their own beliefs, including identifying and exploring changes in their beliefs as a result of the experience” (p. 28). In their current form,

journal entry assignments seem to be sporadic and concentrated during the beginning of the semester, prior to the bulk of the community engagement project work. It would benefit students to have this activity incorporated as a continuous process, with substantial entries, that challenge students “to be reflective and to link their learning to their college curriculum” (Annette, 2002, p. 83). In this manner faculty would also garner a better understanding of student learning and understanding throughout the semester. Providing students with weekly reflection prompts would make these exercises even more potent, allowing students to focus on particular course themes, and, following Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle, move beyond those themes into areas that are relevant for future utilization of learned knowledge (Eyler, 2002; Hatcher et al., 1994). *Examples of possible weekly prompts are provided in Appendix K.* Keeping records of submitted journal entries would also provide faculty with a mode of gauging the learning that has taken place over the course of the semester, which could be utilized for future course enhancements.

In the context of Urban Spaces, American university students are being incorporated into service learning work in an international context, as we are living in a quickly globalizing world it would be beneficial if reflective prompts encompassed these themes as well. Although not part of course curriculum, these new themes are areas that are a reality for this generation of Umbra students. *Examples of such prompts are provided in Appendix L.* Annette (2002) contends that international service learning can, “through experiential engagement and reflective learning activities, enable students to recognize ‘difference’ while developing a sense of shared global citizenship” (p. 91). Follow-up discussion could take place surrounding these reflection questions within the classroom, but also in conjunction with community events. While the community is not formally responsible for the learning process, they are indirectly though project

interactions. Open conversation with community members, even with translations, would provide another opportunity for stakeholders to connect with one another, leading to deeper understanding surrounding local themes, but also larger themes of civic awareness, active citizenship and community participation (Annette, 2002).

While students responded positively to existing community interactions, a desire for richer connections and more involvement was present. As C.R. commented, these interactions and subsequent conversations with community members aided her understanding of the need for the project, as there were many problems under the surface that she could not see, but that the community experienced daily (personal communication, 2014). Faculty discussed the need for behind the scenes preparations prior to student arrival and occasionally the need to find immediate solutions so projects could continue to move forward. My recommendation would be that faculty become more explicit regarding the process, throughout the semester, so that students are aware of the nature of what is necessary for these types of projects, involving multiple moving pieces and human components, to run. This nature of explicitness lends itself as well to the realities that are in place surrounding course themes of urban planning and civic engagement. With the right student, this would provide an avenue for more class involvement in coordinating logistical pieces during the semester, potentially an independent study for students in related majors of study. While a higher Italian language ability would be necessary to communicate with the Neighborhood Association and community members, it would be an opportunity to further student learning, community interaction and alleviate some work from faculty.

The Umbra Institute continually strives to integrate students into the local Perugian community through academic and volunteer opportunities; with this integration comes the

opportunity, or perhaps challenge, of utilizing new language skills. As stated by Wanner, “to give students the chance of interacting with another community on its own terms and in the native language opens up a true experience and appreciation of the other culture” (2009, p. 84). While course participants mentioned that interactions with community members were difficult due to language barriers, it is a natural challenge that will appear in any service learning initiative taking place in an international setting with new language learners. To recognize this challenge, Urban Spaces faculty could call attention to the opportunity that course participation provides in allowing them to stretch and grow their language abilities in a supported environment as they engage “in meaningful and challenging communication about nonlanguage subjects” (Genesee & Cloud, 1998, p. 64).

Per survey participants and stakeholders, initial expectations of the Borgo Bello community engagement project were met to some degree through participation in Urban Spaces. The areas noted by participants as areas of improvement, included greater project involvement, additional student responsibilities, defined project goals and expectations, a clearer connection between course readings and content. These are all areas that could be strengthened by implementing and exploring suggestions made above.

### **Further Implications**

Through my internship at The Umbra Institute, academic research, and utilization of Umbra’s ESUS 310: Urban Spaces: Rebuilding Community in Perugia course as a case study, I set out to examine how, in a global world, international service learning initiatives can be better developed to capture the values and expectations of its stakeholders. Urban Spaces served as a perfect case study for this research because in many ways the course is already following, unintentionally or intentionally, many best practices within service learning. Properly designed

and delivered, service learning initiatives can provide students with opportunities to practice and develop skills learned through academic study in conjunction with experiential activities; and provide an excellent opportunity for developing procedures to assess the civic outcomes of service-learning at the course, department, and institutional levels (Bringle et al., 2009).

Participation in service learning has been shown to increase community involvement, a statement demonstrated at Umbra, on a small scale, as nine of the ten student survey participants had had extensive community engagement, service learning or community volunteer experiences prior to enrolling in Urban Spaces (Thomson et al., 2010). The tenth, being Italian, had not been exposed to these academic opportunities prior to the course.

Within this research study several nuances emerged, as points of exploration for further study. Each semester represented within this case study, had a different project that developed from community input and participation; not explored within this survey is how these different projects influenced the experiences of Urban Spaces participants. Also beyond the scope of this research, is the impact of language on participant experiences. While it is indicated that language was a barrier for some participants, what level did it hinder their learning? Are they getting the same long-term effects out of course participation as native or advanced language speakers?

With more students in U.S. higher education being exposed to domestic service learning opportunities during their educational careers, it is natural that these students would look to continue community participation during study abroad experiences. With this in mind, and the need to consider our globalizing world, it is imperative that educational institutions look at ways of strengthening or improving their international service learning curriculum. While the experiences and “partnerships are international, [...] the service generates learning that is global” (Longo et al., 2011, p. 71). “It also prompts the service learning practitioner and researcher to

consider not only outcomes associated with civic engagement, but the parameters of citizenship defined by globalization, migration, national identity, regionalism, nationalism, and human rights” (2011, p. 71). All stakeholders should be engaged throughout the collaborative process, as all perspectives can be relevant to the design and implementation of service learning programs (Longo et al., 2011). Community partners should be driving the needs of the project for the community, while at the same time allowing for transparent conversations regarding the needs and expectations of all involved stakeholders. In an international context, room should also be left for dialogue and reflection on how participation in this new community context changes and affects all of those involved.

Participation in service learning initiatives can deepen a student’s study abroad experience. It is not just another university or college experience that they are part of, but it is an opportunity to gain real world experience in locations around the globe. Participation leads to heightened skills and has a positive effect on personal, moral and social development. In a globalizing world, service learnings’ hands-on approach exposes students to ideas of global citizenship and civic responsibility, regardless of the location. In the context of service learning, place becomes more than just a physical space; it is a “way of seeing, knowing and understanding the world” (Creswell, 1994, p. 11).

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**Appendix A**  
**Stakeholder Group 1 Electronic Survey Questions:**  
**Previous Students enrolled in Urban Spaces**

**Exploring Service Learning in Study Abroad: Participant Survey**

This brief survey has been designed to capture participant motivations, goals and objectives, expectations and learning outcomes from participating in the service learning component of The Umbra Institute's Urban Spaces: Rebuilding Community in Perugia (Previously, Urban Engagement) course.

There are no foreseeable risks to participation in this survey and research. Unless otherwise specified, interviewees will only be identified by first name. By completing the survey, you are agreeing to participation in this research study, however, participation is entirely voluntary and you may choose to withdraw at any time. An electronic copy of the final master's thesis will be available, by request, beginning June 2014.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research, please do not hesitate to contact me at +39-331-257-0161, [lgeorge@umbra.org](mailto:lgeorge@umbra.org) or [lisa.george@mail.sit.edu](mailto:lisa.george@mail.sit.edu).

1. Please provide your first name, and your semester and year of enrollment in Urban Spaces (or Urban Engagement).
2. Please indicate your Italian language level upon enrollment at Umbra.
  - a. Italian 101 – 102 – 110
  - b. Italian 201 – 201 – 210
  - c. Italian 310
  - d. Independent Study / Italian 310+
3. Were you aware of the Urban Spaces community engagement element (the work in Borgo Bello) prior to enrolling in the class? – Yes or No
4. What were your motivations (personal or academic) behind enrolling in this course?
5. Please briefly describe your experience in community engagement initiatives (service learning, volunteering, etc.) prior to participation in Urban Spaces.
6. Please briefly describe your idea of 'citizenship' prior to participation in Urban Spaces.
7. After your introduction to Urban Spaces' Borgo Bello community engagement project, what were your initial expectations?
8. In as much detail as possible, please describe your semester's Borgo Bello project(s) and typical interactions with community members.
9. How do you feel in-class discussions and readings related to the community engagement project?

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- a. Directly related
  - b. Moderately related
  - c. Neutral
  - d. No Relation to In-Class Content
  - e. Other:
10. How did your guided journal entries solidify your understanding of course materials?
11. Over the course of the semester, how supported did you feel by The Umbra Institute and Urban Spaces faculty?
- a. Highly Supported
  - b. Fairly Supported
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Fairly Unsupported
  - e. Highly Unsupported
12. Over the course of the semester, how supported did you feel by members of the Borgo Bello community?
- a. Highly Supported
  - b. Fairly Supported
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Fairly Unsupported
  - e. Highly Unsupported
13. From either Umbra or Borgo Bello, what would have helped you feel more supported or prepared for participating in the community?
14. In what ways do you feel your work in Borgo Bello contributed to the community?
15. What skills, if any, did you strengthen, or do you equate to your participation in the Urban Spaces community engagement project in Borgo Bello?
16. Did you participate in Borgo Bello activities or events outside of the assigned class project? – Yes or No
17. Have you participated in other community engagement opportunities since your involvement in Borgo Bello? – Yes or No
18. If you answered yes above, what is the likelihood that this participation was a direct result of participating in Borgo Bello and the Urban Spaces course?
- a. Highly Likely
  - b. Fairly Likely
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Fairly Unlikely
  - e. Highly Unlikely
19. If you answered no above, what is the likelihood of participating in future community engagement opportunities as a direct result of participating in Borgo Bello and the Urban Spaces course?
- a. Highly Likely
  - b. Fairly Likely
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Fairly Unlikely
  - e. Highly Unlikely

20. In what ways did your experiences in the Borgo Bello community change your views and opinions of the people and city of Perugia? *Please detail.*
21. In what ways did your experiences in the Borgo Bello community change your views and opinions about community engagement, civic engagement, and citizenship? *Please detail.*
22. How did participation in Urban Spaces' Borgo Bello community engagement project meet your initial expectations?
  - a. Exceeded my expectations
  - b. Met all or most of my expectations
  - c. Met some of my expectations
  - d. Did not meet most of my expectations
  - e. Did not meet any of my expectations
  - f. I did not have any initial expectations
23. Please provide any additional suggestions that you have for improving Urban Spaces' Borgo Bello community engagement project.
24. Please provide any additional comments here that relate to what you know about this research study.
25. Would you be willing to participate in a brief, follow-up Skype (or similar) interview regarding your survey responses? Follow-up interviews would be scheduled prior to April 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Appendix B**  
**Stakeholder Group 2 Survey Questions:**  
**Umbra Students currently enrolled in Urban Spaces**

1. Please provide your first name.
2. Please indicate your Italian language level upon enrollment at Umbra.
  - a. Italian 101 – 102 – 110
  - b. Italian 201 – 201 – 210
  - c. Italian 310
  - d. Independent Study / Italian 310+
3. Were you aware of the Urban Spaces community engagement element (the work in Borgo Bello) prior to enrolling in the class? – Yes or No
4. What were your motivations behind enrolling in this course?
5. Please briefly describe your experience in community engagement initiatives (service learning, volunteering, etc.) prior to participation in Urban Spaces.
6. Please briefly describe your idea of ‘citizenship’ prior to participation in Urban Spaces.
7. After your introduction to Urban Spaces’ Borgo Bello community engagement project, what were your initial expectations?
8. In as much detail as possible to date, please describe your Borgo Bello project(s) and typical interactions with community members.
9. To date, how do you feel in-class discussions and readings relate to the community engagement project?
  - a. Directly Related
  - b. Moderately Related
  - c. Neutral
  - d. No Relation to In-Class Content
10. How have your guided journal entries solidified your understanding of course materials?
11. How supported do you feel by The Umbra Institute and Urban Spaces faculty?
  - a. Highly Supported
  - b. Fairly Supported
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Fairly Unsupported
  - e. Highly Unsupported
12. How supported do you feel by members of the Borgo Bello community?
  - a. Highly Supported
  - b. Fairly Supported
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Fairly Unsupported
  - e. Highly Unsupported

13. From either Umbra or Borgo Bello, what would help you feel more supported or prepared for participating in the community?
14. In what ways do you feel your work in Borgo Bello has or will contribute to the community?
15. What skills, if any to date, have you strengthened, or do you equate to your participation in the Urban Spaces community engagement project in Borgo Bello?
16. Have you or do you plan on participating in Borgo Bello activities or events outside of the assigned class project? – Yes or No
17. What is the likelihood of participating in future community engagement opportunities as a direct result of participating in Borgo Bello and the Urban Spaces course?
  - a. Highly Likely
  - b. Fairly Likely
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Fairly Unlikely
  - e. Highly Unlikely
18. In what ways have your experiences in the Borgo Bello community changed your views and opinions of the people and city of Perugia? *Please detail.*
19. In what ways have your experiences in the Borgo Bello community changed your views and opinions about community engagement, civic engagement, and citizenship? *Please detail.*
20. Has participation, to date, in Urban Spaces' Borgo Bello community engagement project meet your initial expectations?
  - a. Exceeded my expectations
  - b. Met all or most of my expectations
  - c. Met some of my expectations
  - d. Did not meet most of my expectations
  - e. Did not meet any of my expectations
  - f. I did not have any initial expectations
21. Please provide any additional suggestions that you have for improving Urban Spaces' Borgo Bello community engagement project.
22. Please provide any additional comments that relate to what you know about this research study.

**Appendix C**  
**Stakeholder Group 3 Survey Questions: Urban Spaces Faculty**

1. Please provide your first name.
2. How long have you lived in Perugia?
3. How long and to what capacity have you been involved with Borgo Bello?
4. When was Urban Spaces introduced as a course at Umbra? With its creation, what gap or need, if any, was it filling in Umbra's curriculum?
5. How did the partnership with Borgo Bello begin?
6. How has Urban Spaces evolved and grown since the first semester it was introduced into Umbra's curriculum?
7. Please describe, in detail, the typical layout of the overall semester.
8. What were your initial goals and objectives for this course in regards to Umbra students? To Borgo Bello community members?
9. What were your initial expectations for this course in regards to Umbra students? To Borgo Bello community members?
10. How are Borgo Bello's needs determined each semester?
11. How are student/Umbra needs and learning goals discussed with the partner in relation to their needs at the beginning of the semester? Evaluated at the end of the semester?
12. How do you see participation in this course and in the community engagement project benefitting students?
13. How do you see the Umbra and Borgo Bello partnership benefitting the Borgo Bello community in the short-term? Long-term?
14. How are students and community participants supported throughout the course of the semester?
15. What have been some of the challenges of incorporating Urban Spaces and its community engagement goals into the Borgo Bello community?
16. What, if anything, do you feel would make the community engagement aspect of the course stronger?

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17. In what ways have your experiences in the Borgo Bello community changed your views and opinions about community engagement, civic engagement, and citizenship? *Please detail.*
18. Please provide any additional comments here that relate to what you know about this research study.

## Appendix D

### Stakeholder Group 4 Survey Questions: Borgo Bello Community Members

1. Per piacere fornirca il suo nome.  
Please provide your first name.
2. Da quanto tempo abita a Perugia? Nella comunità di Borgo Bello?  
How long have you lived in Perugia? In the Borgo Bello community?
3. Da quanto tempo è un membro dell'associazione di quartiere di Borgo Bello?  
How long have you been a member of Borgo Bello's Neighborhood Association?
4. Da quanto tempo e in con quale ruolo ha collaborato con l'Istituto Umbra?  
How long and to what capacity have you been involved with The Umbra Institute?
5. Quali sono stati i motivi iniziali di collaborazione con l'Umbra?  
What were your initial reasons for partnering with Umbra?
6. Quali erano gli scopi e obiettivi iniziali di questo corso per quanto riguarda gli studenti dell'Umbra? Per la comunità di Borgo Bello?  
  
What were your initial goals and objectives for this course in regards to Umbra students?  
To the Borgo Bello community?
7. Quali erano le sue aspettative iniziali per questo corso, per quanto riguarda gli studenti dell'Umbra? Per la comunità di Borgo Bello?  
  
What were your initial expectations for this course in regards to Umbra students? To the Borgo Bello community?
8. Per piacere, descriva le interazioni tipiche con i partecipanti del corso durante il corso di un semestre.  
  
Please describe typical interactions with course participants during the course of a semester?
9. Crede che la partecipazione a questo corso e al progetto di coinvolgimento della comunità porti benefici agli studenti? Come?  
  
How do you see participation in this course and in the community engagement project benefitting students?
10. Crede che la comunità di Borgo Bello trarra' benefici a breve termine dalla collaborazione tra Umbra e Borgo Bello? E benefici a lungo termine?

How do you see the Umbra and Borgo Bello partnership benefitting the Borgo Bello community in the short-term? Long-term?

11. Che cosa pensa che potrebbe rendere piu' forte l'aspetto del coinvolgimento del corso Urban Spaces?

What, if anything, do you feel would make the community engagement aspect of Urban Spaces course stronger?

12. Nel corso del semestre, quanto si e' sentito supportato dall'Umbra Institute?
- a. Fortemente Supportato
  - b. Abbastanza Supportato
  - c. Neutrale
  - d. Abbastanza Non Supportato
  - e. Fortemente Non Supportato

Over the course of the semester, how supported do you feel by The Umbra Institute?

- a. Highly Supported
- b. Fairly Supported
- c. Neutral
- d. Fairly Unsupported
- e. Highly Unsupported

13. Quali sono state alcune delle difficoltà nell'integrare gli studenti Umbra e i loro obiettivi di coinvolgimento nella comunità di Borgo Bello?

What have been some of the challenges of incorporating Umbra students and their community engagement goals into the Borgo Bello community?

14. La sua collaborazione con l'Umbra Institute ha soddisfatto le sue aspettative iniziali?
- a. Ha superato le mie aspettative
  - b. Ha soddisfatto tutte o la maggior parte delle mie aspettative
  - c. Ha soddisfatto alcune delle mie aspettative
  - d. Non ha soddisfatto la maggior parte delle mie aspettative
  - e. Non ha soddisfatto nessuna delle mie aspettative
  - f. Non avevo alcuna aspettativa iniziale

How has your partnership with The Umbra Institute met your initial expectations?

- a. Exceeded my expectations
  - b. Met all or most of my expectations
  - c. Met some of my expectations
  - d. Did not meet most of my expectations
  - e. Did not meet any of my expectations
  - f. I did not have any initial expectations
15. Raccomanderebbe la collaborazione con Umbra ad altre associazioni o organizzazioni di quartiere? - Sì o No

Would you recommend partnering with Umbra to other neighborhood associations or organizations? – Yes or No

16. In che modo l'esperienza con l'Umbra Institute e con i suoi studenti ha modificato le sue opinioni e i suoi pareri circa l'impegno per la comunità, l'impegno civico, e la cittadinanza? Per piacere, spieghi dettagliatamente.

In what ways have your experiences with The Umbra Institute and its students changed your views and opinions about community engagement, civic engagement, and citizenship? *Please detail.*

17. Per piacere, fornisca eventuali commenti riferiti a ciò che sa di questo progetto di ricerca.

Please provide any additional comments that relate to what you know about this research study.

**Appendix E**  
**Consent Form – English Version**

Thank you for agreeing to take part in the research study currently being conducted by Lisa George, the Community Engagement and Student Services Intern at The Umbra Institute, and a master's candidate at SIT Graduate Institute in Vermont. The purpose of this interview is to determine motivations, goals and objectives, expectations and learning outcomes of the service learning element of The Umbra Institute's ESUS 310: Urban Spaces: Rebuilding Community in Perugia (Previously, INIT 350: Academic Internship and Seminar: Urban Engagement) course. Interview research findings from previous and current Urban Spaces participants, Urban Spaces faculty, and Borgo Bello Neighborhood Association members will be compiled, along with observation notes and a focused literature review, into Lisa George's master's degree thesis. Ultimately, research results will be presented to The Umbra Institute in the form of a report card, including suggested areas of improvement for meeting stakeholder goals and expectations.

There are no foreseeable risks to participation in this interview and research. Interviews will last approximately 20-30 minutes and will be recorded digitally for transcribing and translating purposes only. Unless otherwise specified, interviewees will only be identified by first name. Participation is entirely voluntary and participants may choose to withdraw at any time. An electronic copy of the final master's thesis will be available, by request, beginning June 2014.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research, please do not hesitate to contact Lisa George at +39-331-257-0161 or [lgeorge@umbra.org](mailto:lgeorge@umbra.org) or [lisa.george@mail.sit.edu](mailto:lisa.george@mail.sit.edu).

**If you agree to participate in this research study, please sign below:**

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your time and contributing to this study!

~ Lisa M. George

**Appendix F**  
**Consent Form – Italian Version**

Modulo di Consenso

Grazie per aver accettato di partecipare allo studio di ricerca attualmente condotto da Lisa George, stagista del Community Engagement e Student Services all'Umbra Institute, e candidata al master presso il SIT Graduate Institute nel Vermont. Lo scopo di questa intervista è di determinare le motivazioni, le finalità e gli obiettivi, le sospensioni e risultati di apprendimento dell'elemento di apprendimento tramite servizio (service learning) di ESUS 310 Spazi Urbani: Ricostruzione della Comunità a Perugia, un corso dell'Umbra Institute. I risultati delle interviste di ricerca a precedenti e attuali partecipanti al corso Urban Spaces, alla facoltà Urban Spaces, e ai membri dell'Associazione di Quartiere di Borgo Bello verranno inseriti, insieme alle note di osservazione e a una mirata selezione di letteratura critica, nella tesi del master di Lisa George. Infine, i risultati della ricerca verranno presentati all'Umbra Institute sotto forma di un resoconto, che includerà indicazioni su alcuni aspetti da migliorare al fine di soddisfare al meglio gli obiettivi e le aspettative degli interessati.

Questa intervista e questa ricerca non presentano prevedibili fonti di rischio per i partecipanti. Le interviste dureranno approssimativamente 20-30 minuti e saranno registrate con strumenti digitali con il solo fine di essere poi trascritte e tradotte. Se non diversamente specificato, gli intervistati saranno identificati soltanto dal loro nome di battesimo. La partecipazione è esclusivamente volontaria e i partecipanti possono decidere di tirarsi indietro in ogni momento. Una copia elettronica della tesi finale sarà disponibile, su richiesta, a partire da Giugno 2014.

Se avete domande o dubbi riguardo a questa ricerca, non esitate a contattare Lisa George al +39-331-257-0161 o [lgeorge@umbra.org](mailto:lgeorge@umbra.org) o [lisa.george@mail.sit.edu](mailto:lisa.george@mail.sit.edu).

Se si accetta di partecipare a questo studio di ricerca, accedere qui sotto:  
Firma del Partecipante:

Nome del Partecipante (stampato):

Data:

Grazie per il vostro tempo e per voler contribuire a questo studio!

~ Lisa M. George

**Appendix G**  
**Introductory Email to Stakeholder Group 1 with Survey Link**

Subject: Service Learning at Umbra - An Evaluation of Umbra's Urban Spaces (Urban Engagement) Course

Good Evening,

My name is Lisa George, and I am the current Community Engagement and Student Services Intern at The Umbra Institute, and a master's candidate at SIT Graduate Institute in Vermont. To fulfill degree requirements, I am currently conducting research on **service learning projects that are utilized during student study abroad programs**. For this research, I am utilizing Umbra's ESUS 310: Urban Spaces: Rebuilding Community in Perugia (Previously, INIT 350: Academic Internship and Seminar: Urban Engagement) course as a case study.

As a past student of this course, I am hoping that you will be able to take a brief survey to aid this research. Twenty-four questions have been designed to capture participant motivations, goals and objectives, expectations and learning outcomes from participating in the service learning component of Urban Spaces while abroad. The survey can be accessed online by **following this link**<sup>10</sup>, which will be open until **Saturday, March 29<sup>th</sup>**.

Interview research findings from previous and current Urban Spaces participants, Urban Spaces faculty, and Borgo Bello Neighborhood Association members will be compiled, along with observation notes and a focused literature review, into my master's degree thesis. Ultimately, research results will be presented to The Umbra Institute in the form of a report card, including suggested areas of improvement for meeting participant goals and expectations.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research, please do not hesitate to contact me at +39-331-257-0161, [lgeorge@umbra.org](mailto:lgeorge@umbra.org) or [lisa.george@mail.sit.edu](mailto:lisa.george@mail.sit.edu).

Thank you for your time and contributing to this study!

Lisa M. George

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<sup>10</sup> **Following this link** was hyperlinked within the email to lead survey participants directly to the survey on Google Forms: [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1zx1Fn0bBwxCQIy7Zhj6\\_FNQmfezO\\_n4HMocwwpFImpl/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1zx1Fn0bBwxCQIy7Zhj6_FNQmfezO_n4HMocwwpFImpl/viewform)

**Appendix H**  
**Reminder Email to Stakeholder Group 1 with Survey Link**

Subject: Reminder Message – Re: Service Learning at Umbra - An Evaluation of Umbra's Urban Spaces (Urban Engagement) Course

Ciao a Tutti,

I hope this finds everyone well! This message is a quick reminder that if you have not yet had the opportunity, there is still time to complete the **Exploring Service Learning in Study Abroad** survey in connection to Umbra's Urban Spaces (Urban Engagement) Course. The survey can be accessed online by **following this link**<sup>11</sup>; the closing date has been extended until **Tuesday, April 1st**.

As a past participant in this course, your feedback and insight is invaluable to my research, and I truly appreciate the responses that have already been submitted. Thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedules to participate and aid this study.

Buon Weekend e grazie mille,

Lisa

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<sup>11</sup> **Following this link** was hyperlinked within the email to lead survey participants directly to the survey on Google Forms: [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1zx1Fn0bBwxCQIy7Zhj6\\_FNQmfezO\\_n4HMocwwpFImpl/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1zx1Fn0bBwxCQIy7Zhj6_FNQmfezO_n4HMocwwpFImpl/viewform)

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**Appendix I**  
**Stakeholder Group 1 and 2 Response Table**

<b>Semester</b>	<b># of Students enrolled in course</b>	<b># of Research Participants (%)</b>	<b>Language Ability</b>	<b>Was the student aware of the Urban Spaces community engagement element prior to enrolling in the class?</b>	<b>How did in-class discussions and readings relate to the community engagement project?</b>	<b>How supported did the student feel during the course of the semester by Umbra and Urban Spaces faculty?</b>	<b>How supported did the student feel during the course of the semester by members of the Borgo Bello Community?</b>
Spring 2013	3	1 (33%)	Italian 101, 102, 110 (n=1)	Yes (n=1)	Moderately Related (n=1)	Highly Supported (n=1)	Fairly Supported (n=1)
Fall 2013	10	5 (50%)	Italian 101, 102, 110 (n=2) Italian 201, 202, 210 (n=3)	Yes (n=3) No (n=2)	Moderately Related (n=4) Neutral (n=1)	Highly Supported (n=5)	Highly Supported (n=4) Fairly Supported (n=1)
Spring 2014	4	4 (100%)	Italian 101, 102, 110 (n=2) Independent <sup>12</sup> Study/Italian 310+ (n=2)	Yes (n=3) No (n=1)	Directly Related (n=2) Moderately Related (n=2)	Highly Supported (n=4)	Highly Supported (n=2) Fairly Supported (n=1) Neutral (n=1)

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Semester	In what ways did the student feel their work in Borgo Bello contributed to the community?	Did the student participate in Borgo Bello events outside of the assigned class project?	Has the student participated in other community engagement opportunities since their involvement in Borgo Bello?	If previous answer was YES, what is the likelihood that this participation was a direct result of participating in Borgo Bello and the Urban Spaces Course?	If previous answer was NO, what is the likelihood of participating in future community engagement opportunities as a direct result of participating in Borgo Bello and the Urban Spaces Course?	How did participation in Urban Spaces' Borgo Bello community engagement project meet students' initial expectations?
Spring 2013	Brought new interest by both community members and foreigners to the neighborhood (n=1)	Yes (n=1)	No (n=1)	---	Highly Likely (n=1)	Met all or most (n=1)
Fall 2013	Brought new interest by both community members and foreigners to the neighborhood (n=2) Enhanced aesthetics of Via del Deposito (n=1) Brought attention to existing issues (n=2)	Yes (n=3) No (n=2)	Yes (n=3) No (n=2)	Fairly Unlikely (n=2) Highly Unlikely (n=1)	Fairly Unlikely (n=2)	Exceeded Expectations (n=1) Met some of (n=4)
Spring 2014	Brought fresh perspective to the neighborhood and its projects (n=1) Provided extra assistance to help accomplish project objectives (n=1) Work created a positive mental effect on the residents and community (n=1) Initiated ideas that the community can build off of in the future – to different homes, buildings, and even extending outward further into the community (n=1)	Yes (n=3) No (n=1)	---	---	Highly Likely (n=3) Fairly Likely (n=1)	Met all or most (n=3) Met some of (n=1)

## Appendix J Semester Project Descriptions

### Spring 2013

To create a scavenger hunt through Borgo Bello for American students studying in Perugia, that would introduce participants to local businesses and sites, including churches, museums and restaurants.

### Fall 2013

The project examined ways to bring life back to the hidden streets and alleyways of the neighborhood and was the initial start of the C.A.R.O. Vicolo<sup>13</sup> project. After classroom brainstorming, neighborhood interviews, and consulting with the President of the Neighborhood Association, students decided to plan and host a Christmas festival on the street to draw attention to Via del Deposito, a street that had previously been filled with life, but had become neglected. Festival design was guided by the neighborhood interviews, which allowed students to gauge if business owners and residents “were aware of this street, and what [they thought the] Borgo Bello Association could do to make Borgo Bello a better place to live” (S.R., personal communication, 2014). The final design included new lighting within the alley, the creation of a painting for the neighborhood and traditional Christmas decorations– collected from local businesses - on which residents had written their wishes for the neighborhood.

### Spring 2014

As a continuation of the C.A.R.O. Vicolo project, participatory workshops for community members were designed as an opportunity to gather stakeholders together to brainstorm ideas for community improvement utilizing the knowledge and experience that attended. The first workshop, held February 4<sup>th</sup>, was widely attended with active participation by all attendees. This meeting established the need for collaborative efforts by all stakeholders with the introduction of M.O.V.E.<sup>14</sup>, a technique that engages participants and allows for visual and group brainstorming, followed by open discussion.

This first workshop brought up smaller issues, such as the need for more planter boxes, to larger issues, such as street traffic and drug use in public parks. Due to the length of the Umbra semester, it was decided that the Urban Spaces class would focus on greening one street, Via Fiorenzuola, and assist in preparations for Florallia, a floral festival that takes place in June. Following this early workshop, participants worked alongside several community members in the classroom to brainstorm greening ideas; which were then presented by students at a second community workshop in early March, and decided upon by community members.

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<sup>13</sup> Started in late 2013, C.A.R.O. Vicolo is a place-making project central to the Borgo Bello neighborhood, and is open to all Borgo Bello residents and businesses. Its purpose is to bring attention to the back alleys of the neighborhood and identify strategies to revitalize the area, making it a place of care, conviviality and beauty.

<sup>14</sup> M.O.V.E.: *Mantenere* (Maintain – areas that are already being facilitated well within the community), *Organizzare* (Organize – areas that are being facilitated well, but there is more to do), *Valorizzare* (Value – areas that have value, but could be improved), and *Evitare* (Prevention – areas that are not being addressed, but where focus is needed).

**Appendix K**  
**Weekly Reflective Prompt Suggestions**

1. What were the main themes that emerged from this week's readings?
2. How do you see these themes applying to the community project in the Borgo Bello community?
3. Have you observed these themes in action in the Borgo Bello community? In your home community? Explain.

**Appendix L**  
**Reflective Prompt Suggestions**

1. As an American student, what is the significance for you to be involved in community projects within the Borgo Bello community? What is its significance to community members?
2. What does it mean to be an active citizen?
3. How do you see your experiences in the Borgo Bello community transferring back into an American context? Other global context?
4. How has your definition of active citizenship changed or not changed, during the course of this class?