

Columbia Pool, community space and community healing: The perils and promise of North Portland aquatics

My work at the Business school

Create a collaborative learning environment, enhance their analytical and interpersonal skills and enables them to be successful and ethical leaders in their community and the changing world.

Ethics is based on standards of right and wrong that prescribe what humans ought to do, usually in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society, fairness or specific virtues.

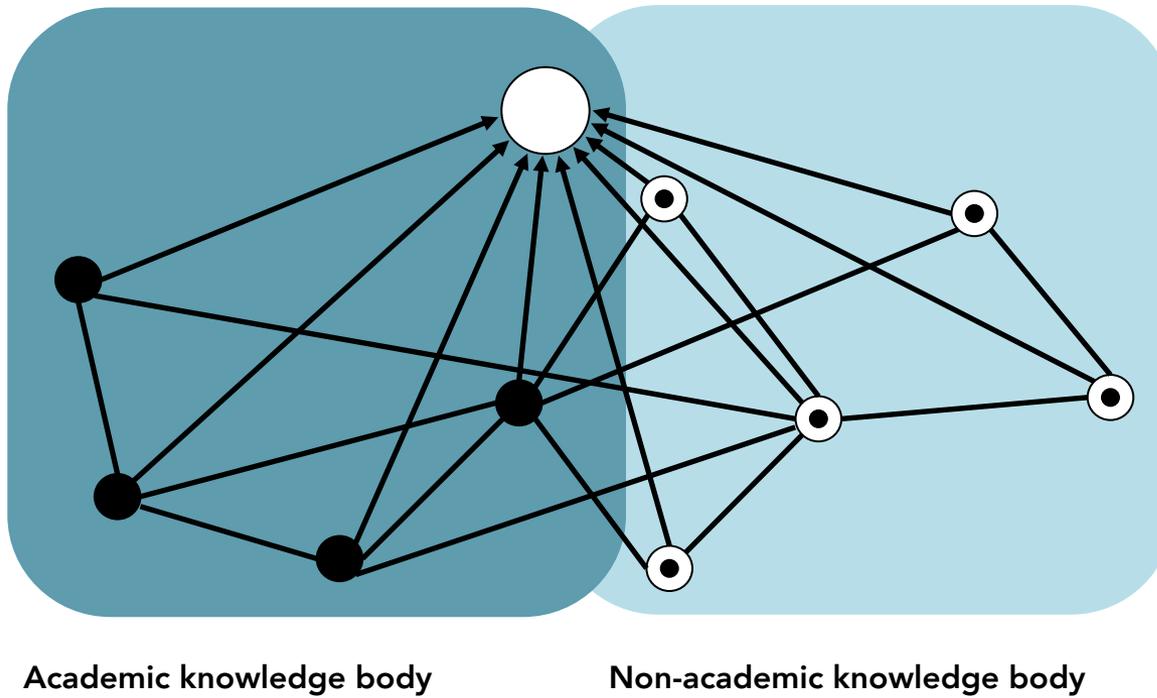
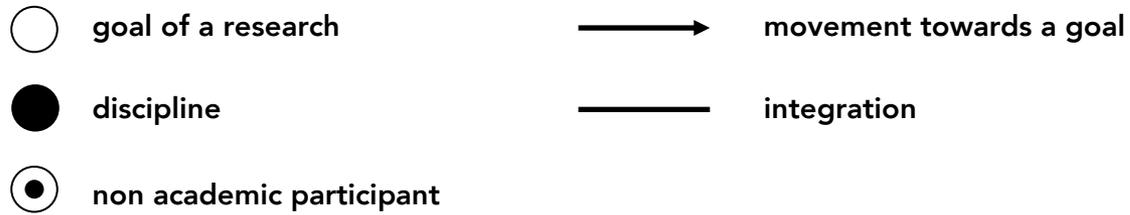
transdisciplinarity

It is a research that integrates knowledge across different unrelated disciplines with non-academic participants to address societal complex challenges.

“scientific rigor meets societal relevance”

A transdisciplinary process requires that all participants contribute to a mutual learning process on equal footing.

“process of mutual learning between science and society (...) which embodies a mission of science with society rather than for society.” (Seidl, et al., 2013



Source: Tress, et al. 2004

academic context challenges

- 1) **Trade-offs.** Depending on project design, may be trade-offs between time and resources for producing academic - societally oriented outputs.
- 2) **Rewards and incentives.** The conventional reward system at universities of promotion, hiring and tenure has not historically being tied to transdisciplinary success and outcomes.
- 3) **Publishing.** Not all journals favor transdisciplinarity research. Editors and reviewers can be put-off by messy transdisciplinarity process.
- 4) **Early career progression.** It can be harder to build a research portfolio/profile to tenure promotion.

democratisation of expertise

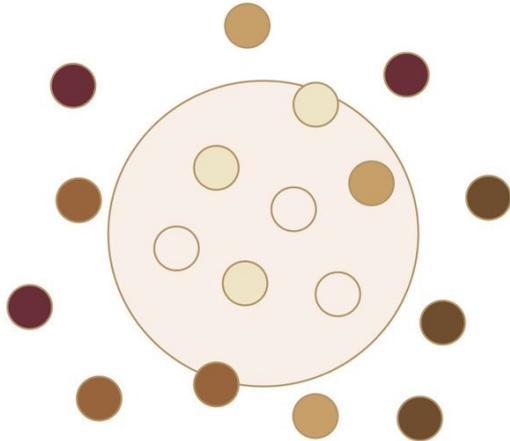
Whose knowledge is to be recognised, translated, and incorporated into action. The future depends on the decisions taken by others.

This approach makes apparent:

- the possibility of unforeseen consequences,
- to make explicit the normative within the technical, and
- to acknowledge from the start the need for plural viewpoints and collective learning.

The four focal points are framing, vulnerability, distribution and learning.

design as usual



Colonial society

one world for the privileged

What is at issue?

Who will be hurt?

Who benefits?

How can we know?

Questioning our role

How can we be sure that our involvement won't retraumatize your community from previous engagements processes?

Source: graphic G. Mauricio Mejia

“Nihil de nobis, sine nobis.”

“Nothing about us, without us.”

A collaboration between the
Design Thinking Class, the
Portsmouth Neighborhood
Association and the Moreau
Center for Service and Justice

current situation

Goals:

- Explore the fundamental needs that neighbors, community members, or any other stakeholder may have about the Columbia swimming pool
- Use Human Centered Design (HCD) principles

Objective:

- Create awareness about the necessity of access to an indoor pool for the North Portland community
- Ensure that community members have an opportunity to tell their stories

why Columbia swimming pool matters

It was a setting where individuals generated emotional ties bind and built community relationships. Sense of community is a process that provides opportunity for:

membership
(sense of belonging)

influence
(empowerment
within community)

reciprocity
(fulfilment of needs)

**Collective
experiences**

Source: McMillan and Chavis, 1986

Why place attachment matters

The emotional connection of a person to a physical environment as the result of personal experiences

contributes to wellbeing and life satisfaction (Gustafson, 2001)

differs according to individual experience (Ryan, 2005)

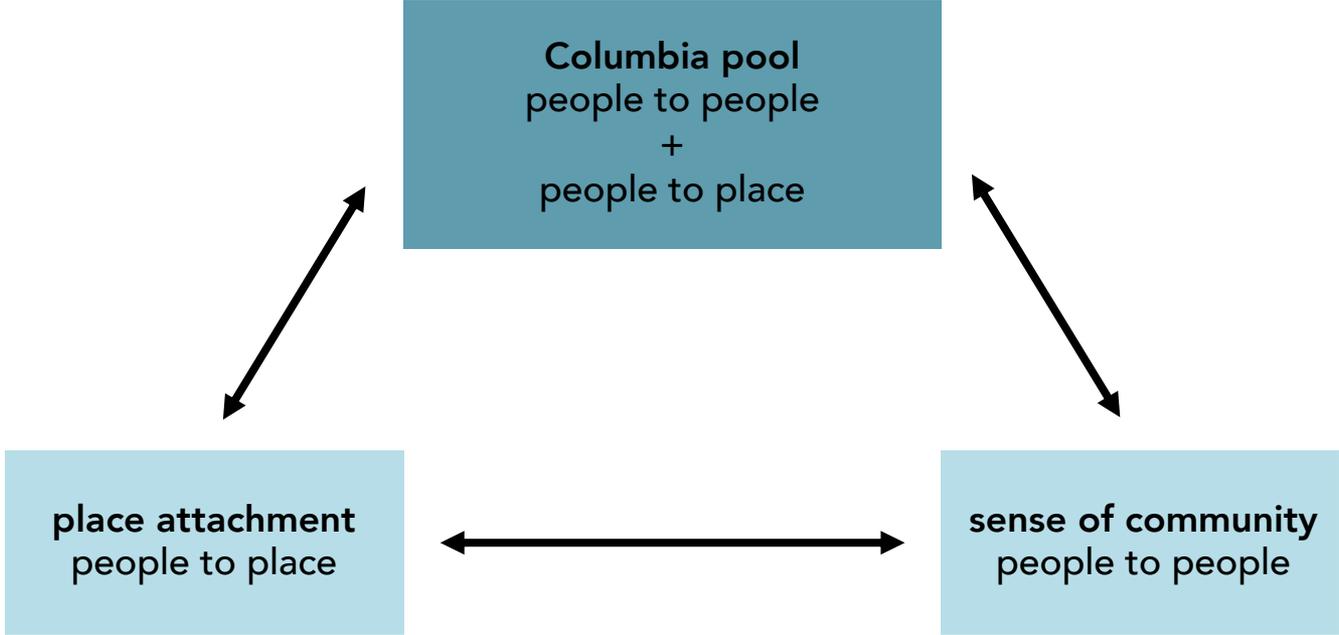
Why sense of community matters

provides a pathway to wellness (Herrero & Garcia, 2007)

creates a sense of mutual aid (Unger & Wandersman, 1985)

emotional safety (McMillan & Chavis, 1986)

increase in confidence levels among parents of small children (Martinez et al., 2002)



Pool ladies' group

Retired from 60's to 90+ years old attending aquarobics.



Membership

Attend Aquarobics +
Po'Shines coffee shop
Interactions with staff,
other members and
children

"Even as an adult, my mom and my grandma like we would go and do water aerobics together... My grandma's is getting older. It was just a kind of something we could go and do together as a family."



Influence

Organized to inform,
empower and rally
about the pool's
closure.

"I felt that there's the information people didn't know that the pool was going to be closed. And so I made out a half sheet of the emails and telephone numbers of the city council members, and stood in the lobby at Columbia pool and handed those out and said, you know that the pool is going to be close contact these people."



Reciprocity

Forms of support
beyond kinship
networks
Achieve physical and
mental health
Attain wellbeing

"I felt that water aerobics had a lot to do with it and life. We still have one lady from the original group who is 90, still drives, and could go to water aerobics if it were open."

"there was this one lady that would invite everybody to coffee, they would go to Po'shines in Canton, afterwards. It always sold coffee for \$1 for us ladies, so we'd get coffee or tea for \$1... So, there was a time when I was feeling down. And I thought, oh, I'm going to go to coffee that picks me up. And they were so nice and supportive and eventually I told them my problems."



Collective memories

Multigenerational
memories
Making more
meaningful memories

"My grandma stop doing exercise... for me, I thought I'm gonna be you know, take my daughter there... So it's unfortunate, like lost in the sense that I wasn't gonna be able to share those memories with her that I had when I was a kid."

Mature women

Employed full-time around 50-60 years old.



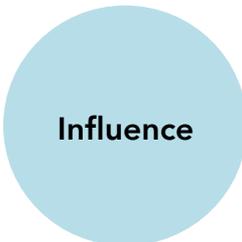
Membership

Individual swimming exercise and /or group exercise.

Took children to swimming lessons

"When my kids left home, I realized I was aging, and I get a physical condition that did not allow me to do strenuous exercise."

"Children took swimming lessons, played in the playground, we participated in a lot of different picnics after the swimming lessons."



Influence

Advocate for children's water safety, as it is essential in States surrounded by water.

"Water safety is essential when surrounded by two rivers."



Reciprocity

Need for healing
Self-care
Be gentle to the body
and mind (therapeutic)

"I could slip away from home and the kids and the husband and everything and be within walking distance just around the corner and just be able to get in that pool and just swim."



**Collective
memories**

Memories of their
children and their
youth
Acknowledge the
space as a place of
healing and self-care

"The pool holds a special place, because I remember the Roosevelt high school trainings and competitions... I also love how we acknowledge each other when using the pool."

"My best memory was the sense of healing. I have joint problems and I was feeling better after three months... There is no private club anything that I could pay money to there is none where I can go."

Health-conscious people

Physically active people employed full-time with families.

Membership

Individual swimming exercise (with friends). They used to swim beside running and cycling (triathlon).

"It is always open when you need it. You will see the same two or three people. It is clean and convenient."

Influence

Advocate for children and teenagers' access to inclusive spaces. They also care for people with mobility issues.

"I love watching the kiddos. You know, there was one kiddo that was there and I saw pretty frequently. She has down syndrome and had one on one swimming lesson. And I just loved watching the instructors work with her. They did a great job of, you know, just being kind and flexible. And you know, meeting her needs. I really appreciated seeing that."



Reciprocity

Physical + mental
health
Physical therapy
wellbeing

"People with mobility issues (wheelchairs). When they get into the water and you know it gives them freedom isn't it. Those are the folks that I most concerned about not having access."

"I have enough injuries from cycling. I have messed up my left shoulder. It is really bugging me. I just need to get back in the water."

"Swimming is its own thing because it is rhythmic. You do not have to think if you do not want to, or you can think about other things, not necessarily what you are doing. It is quiet... it is just a different way of being."



**Collective
memories**

Seeing individuals
feeling part of the
community
Gender and sexual
orientation diversity

"I love being asked, or being told, you know. Please use whatever restroom is appropriate for you. You feel comfortable. I love that. I mean, I'm cisgender which you know, I have privilege there."

Staff Columbia pool

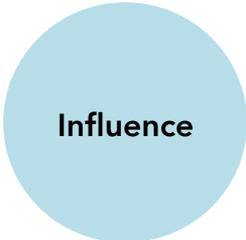
Worked as swim coaches or lifeguards.



Membership

Taught swimming lessons
lifeguards

"There was always activity happening on in the entire pool and then as soon as we get out there, take the lane lines out and set up for the water exercise classes."



Influence

Provide for disadvantaged families, and people of color.
Acknowledge there was no discrimination.

"A lot of the kiddos who come are just disadvantaged youth who you know families are impoverished and just kind of in different situations and I think that being able to provide like a place, a safe place for kiddos."



Reciprocity

fulfilled their needs for serving the community

"Keep in touch with all the families and like getting to know everyone and just seeing my little kids grow."

"It is pretty much the only indoor year-round swimming pool in North Portland. Only pool that serves the community and it has been around since like the 60s."



Collective memories

Generation of swimmers
Have family beyond their kinship network
Physiological, safety, belonging and love needs.

"I spent my life there and literally would not have my family...I was swimming instructor, he was a lifeguard, and yeah. I literally would not have my family without it."

"I still call my swimming lessons kids my kids. It's crazy."

Impoverished families

Families deprived of richness, rights, essential means.



Membership

Feel they belong to
this country.
Feel safe and loved

"I went several times but there was no one who spoke my language. There are people who go out of their way to help you. It is a little bit complicated for me (language and son has a disability), for the same reason that no one talks my language."

"We spent our life pretty much at Columbia Pool, especially during summer times. My mom took all her kids, call them their kids. But really, all of the kids came to our house through swimming lessons."



Reciprocity

fulfilled their physiological, safety and belonging, and love needs.

"I took my children's friends... The children have fun, because they go with friends. Besides having fun, they learn. They take it as entertainment I brought his friends because they help my son. My son has slow learning problems and expression issues and having friends around him helps him. I invite all my son's friends to improve how he feels."



Collective memories

Accomplishment, achievement and wellbeing

"He was happy very very happy because they received diplomas. They are happy because they are achieving different levels. He moved to the second level and was recognized. He feels recognized."

"Taking a hot shower saving electricity at home because you could shower, there are hairdryers on the wall."

Families

People employed full-time with children.



Membership

Strength family bond
Build relationships
with others
Keep health
Wellness

"The warmth. I swam everyday almost that I was pregnant. I swam the day I went into labor, that pool is super accessible."

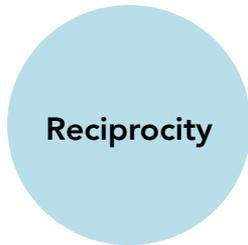
"You are taking a six month old baby into the pool. It is a little bit easier if it is not full of chaos."



Influence

Advocate for everyone
(systematic
oppression)

"We had a pool pass and we used regularly. I mean, I would be in the pool three or four times a week. Can't do that now. And there's not another option that's convenient ... You know working parents, like there is not a lot of time, so having the pool open until 8 pm was really helpful."



Reciprocity

Procure physical +
mental health
Wellbeing
Support beyond their
kinship networks

"It has been hard and especially when you work, you want to de stress and the only free options or close to free options are gone. You know, so its like, if you can't run or walk, what are you supposed to do?"

"The way city budgets are set up, there's certain money in one pot that you can use. And we might have enough money in one pot to build a new facility, but we don't have enough we can't take the money from one pot and put it into the other. And that to me, that's just kind of, bullshit."

"The staff is always welcoming. There is a sweet balance between paying attention and giving your freedom. Locker rooms are really comfortable, gendered and family lockers, non-gendered changing areas, so any body can go and feel comfortable. "



**Collective
memories**

Multigenerational
memories
Making more
meaningful memories
with their children

“That’s where I learned how to swim. So, I have been going there since I was probably one year old. Now I take my daughter. Me, my father and grand pa have lived in North Portland all our life.”

“I feel like the piece that we are missing is like the connection of the people at the pool, you know and communicating with our neighbors, because we are losing a shared love is not the same as connecting as community.”

“It is systematic oppression. The council meetings were in Northeast Portland, which was not at risk for losing any of their community center. The five communities that were at most risk for losing something, they did not have the meetings in their neighborhoods.”

Determinants of health

According to the World Health Organization (2021), many factors combined can affect the health of individuals and communities. Whether people are healthy or not, is determined by their circumstances and environment. Factors such as where we live, our income and education level, our genetics and our relationships with friends and family have a considerable impact on health.

The closure of the Columbia swimming pool has had adverse effects on their health as well as on the reduction of opportunities, networks, resources and supports for the historically underrepresented population.

Ideas



A monthly festival hosted in conjunction with other communities to share their stories, values, traditions and activities.

**Reciprocity +
Collective
memories**



Use the university of Portland as a hub for different events to the members of NoPo community that foster engagement and connections between intergenerational groups.

**Reciprocity +
Influence**



Marketing students and the Portsmouth Neighborhood Association how to run a digital advocacy campaign.

Influence

"A new aquatic center sound fantastic, how long will take and what does it means for families...the differences in the pools is privilege, with money and what things cost."

“Having lived in Portland for almost 30 years. I have zero faith that there’s anything that will come up I just don’t.”

“Communities are powerful and fragile. Communities can invest in those elements that make us feel human -dignity, care, and justice.”

“We are not alone in the world, we are connected. Communities around the world are also trying to meet their basic needs.”

Acknowledgement

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