Pandemic + Gentrification: An Interdisciplinary Pedagogy to Engage the Messiness of Urban Spatial Justice

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Social work, with its grounding in competencies such as human rights, social justice and engaging in diversity and difference, can aid built environments professionals in our reach for spatial justice. In this article, we evaluate the process and outcomes of a collaborative, project based, interdisciplinary course co-taught by faculty from the School of Social Work and the College of Built Environments at the University of Washington. As authors and co-designers of this course, with professional and academic backgrounds in social work, architecture, and landscape architecture and community-centered practice, it is our hope to continue building off our understanding of the strengths of tackling the world’s complex problems through the lens of collaboration. Together, with specific skill sets, we can do better.

Ariana Cantu has spent 24 years as an organizer and social work practitioner, working alongside diverse populations to address issues of oppression, inequity, lack of access to
basic needs, homelessness, and poverty. She is guided by a community-centered ethic, both for the profession in social justice work and in the classroom, to be engaged in activities that lead to the collective liberation of us all. Her role as an Instructor is to prepare students for leadership and adaptability in meeting present moment challenges by cultivating their strengths. Through an iterative learning environment that links theory to social justice practice in the field. Ariana was awarded the Global Innovation Fund Teaching & Curriculum Award from the University of Washington (UW) in July 2020 to work in partnership with University of Namibia faculty on a global student exchange. She, along with Mackenzie, was awarded the UW Community & Curriculum Innovation Scholars Award in November 2020. Ariana holds a Bachelor of Social Welfare and Masters in Social Work, both from the University of Washington.

Mackenzie has years of experience teaching both undergraduate and graduate level studios and seminars in landscape architecture, architecture, and urban design at the University of Washington College of Built Environments where her teaching focuses on addressing neighborhood change through community engagement. As a founding principal of Seattle based Broad Design Group (www.broad.design) her practice aims to design projects that embrace and celebrate authentic uniqueness, without ducking the complexities of the real world. Spanning art, architecture, and landscape, project typologies center on action oriented research, expanding project stakeholders, integrating community knowledge, and developing tangible sets of steps towards implementation. Mackenzie holds Masters of landscape architecture and architecture from the University of Washington, and a BA in political economy from UC Berkeley.