

# profile

## John Nettleton

ISSUE AREA LEADER, COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



I came to this position in 1988. A friend forwarded the position description to me, saying, “This might be interesting to you.” So I found it out through a personal contact. I knew about extension and how it was structured, as my father had taught at a land-grant — Colorado State, and my grandfather had graduated from Iowa State. So even though in New York City people aren’t usually familiar with extension, I understood what it was. Before I came to Cornell, I’d been directing homeless housing programs for Westchester County’s Department of Social Services. That was an interesting, but basically “band-aid” approach to the structural problem of housing; you really weren’t doing anything but keeping your fingers in the dike. I assumed that my job was to structure responses and solutions to a basic problem, when actually the real job was to keep the problem and issue off the streets and out of the newspapers.

The extension position seemed interesting, and I wanted to get back to working in New York City. I don’t see my work and approach here as all that different from my professional outlook or previous experience. Planners come out of two basic traditions, the geographic tradition or the sociological tradition, which usually means either the design (urban design, physical design) traditions or the social sciences. I agree with Patrick Geddes: there really isn’t — or shouldn’t be — a distinction between the geographical and the sociological traditions. I’ve worked

at various physical scales, from the neighborhood scale to the small city scale to regional government (in Ontario, Canada) and a state government (New Jersey, on the original Pineland Plan, a regional preservation strategy). There are some differences, but there is more in common, so the physical scale really doesn’t matter much.

Before working in Westchester, I worked for a number of non-profits, one in NYC working with housing and neighborhood groups. I also worked with a close friend, a fellow Penn graduate, in a consulting firm doing advocacy planning. We were successful, in great demand and involved in a great number of projects around the country, practicing equity planning, which comes out of a tradition from Paul Davidoff, starting early in the sixties. That was great, as long as it lasted, which was until Ronald Reagan was first elected; then all programs were taken out, disappeared, cut, excised. I’ve been in the New York region or Philadelphia since I graduated from planning school, a period of roughly half of my life.

Our emphasis at extension in NYC is on community and economic development at a district or neighborhood scale. A number of the other programs, like nutrition, are household or family-based. They work with groupings of families brought together by different social service organizations, such as Head Start. We’re looking, not necessarily more holistically, but with more of an overview toward what’s happening throughout a given community. Within

**Profile developed by Saori Kitajima and John Nettleton**

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a community, programs can take a variety of forms, from working on food security, such as farmers' market programs or value-added food production (which has an economic development component) to housing programs and land-use issues that relate to re-use of vacant or deteriorated space.

Housing programs have changed, just as the city's program environment has changed. Ten years ago, when Edward Koch was mayor, a great deal of housing rehabilitation was going on, and New York City was spending 250 to 300 million dollars a year on rehabbing vacant or abandoned city-held buildings. They've pretty much gone through that stock, and now it's a question of management, maintaining the existing housing stock, and improving its livability in terms of health issues. There is a growing awareness and sensitivity toward indoor environmental issues, the air quality, materials use, etc. Most people, particularly the population we are working with, single-parent households, poor working families, don't have or haven't had opportunities to develop a lot of independent living skills. Single moms come from other transitional or emergency housing environments, or double up with family or friends, so they don't have the kind of skills people get in multi-generational families. The approach to improving their housing is really part of looking at a local community.

Poor communities aren't poor because there isn't any money floating around, but because they operate like a "leaky bucket." The money, whether from wages or support payments, comes in and goes right back out. It becomes a question of everything from ownership and control of the housing stock, ownership of commercial establishment, and of opportunities to save, to reinvest, and to redirect those capital flows to the benefit of the entire community.

Looking at it in this way, our programs can take a range of forms, depending upon our dialogue with the organizations that we are working with. It's really a dialogue in the sense of either their expression of needs or our discussion with them to come up with a common understanding of what the actual need is. Then there is also an expectation issue. We (Cornell) have a track record in certain areas. That means groups will come to us for certain things that they know we're involved in and do well. I get emails from people upstate who have marketing questions, from cranberry growers from Massachusetts, etc. They found something in the Farming Alternatives journal about us and responded with, "That sounds interesting." I'm not going to work with them on a direct basis, but I can refer them to somebody who can.

Our work comes down to making an assessment of what the critical issues are in the community. Some of the staff have been working with gardening and related groups for twenty-plus years, so there literally isn't a gardening organization or organization working on food issues that doesn't know who we are and what we do, and that role is very well understood. Similarly in the housing area, though that has had its ups and downs. We refer to other non-profits, and they refer groups to us. For example, if it's a group that wants to do something not really directly linked to what we are working on at the moment, we'd say, "Call so-and-so." So there's a very good organization of networks throughout the city.

In Community & Economic Development, we most closely work with the Workforce Development issue area because they are working on the same issues from a different perspective. We are developing new farmers' markets, expanding the existing farmers' markets, and helping to recruit farmers for markets that don't have enough pro-

ducers. We are getting community-based organizations involved, basically to rebuild a system that was here up until World War II, then dormant for fifteen to thirty years, and then came back in the seventies.

We are working in the food area for a couple of reasons. One, there are more resources for food issues at Cornell than there are for a lot of other things, especially since we don't really have access to folks in the endowed side of campus.\* I know most of folks in the Department of City and Regional Planning, but they don't do extension work — that's just the way the game is played. So we are working on food-related issues because there are a great number of resources at Cornell that we can tap into. In that sense, it's opportunistic. It also ties in with the program emphasis. Half of the staff in New York City works in nutrition education, so we work closely with them as they bring the community educators to the farmers' markets in summer.

I think the program we are developing here is going to stay pretty much the same, as I don't think we can attract and maintain staff to build the programs to another level. There is too much turnover in staffing and too much competition for the staff we need. I hope we can do some very good work in terms of demonstrating potential, but I don't see a real opportunity to substantially change how we work in New York City. It's not that there isn't interest in doing more. I just don't think there is an organizational capacity for us to be able to go to the next step. It is really an institutional lack of infrastructure or resolve for us to begin to develop programs. That's not a very positive vi-

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\* Cornell University has both private (endowed) and public (statutory) units. Few faculty members in the endowed units are involved in extension activities.

sion, but that's the experience that I encountered. We work in spite of that lack of resources, but I'm not sure that the model — taking university resources and applying them at a community level to deal with problems or to resolve issues — works here. To work would imply that there is a willingness or interest on the part of university resources to really get involved. There are examples of faculty who can and would do that, but it is not widespread.

I can see community development best reflected through demonstration projects. People, particularly Americans, don't deal too well with the abstract. So the idea of having a local market is much more relevant, and generates much more impact, than talking in the abstract about how local resources might be retained in theory.

The other aspect of community development work that I see is regional in nature. There is a symbiotic relationship between the urban dweller and the surrounding region in terms of environment, in terms of watershed, air shed, natural resources, commuting and communication in the community, etc. We are trying to reinforce that understanding and awareness. Some people call it a bioregion; that's the term used in the Pacific Northwest. But by and large, we are doing that in a political environment in which most people operate in a very parochial fashion. For example in New York, the state doesn't provide regional tourist dollars. They don't provide support for Hudson River Valley as a destination. They provide money for this county or that county, which makes it difficult to develop a regional awareness or understanding of what you are doing. We're also working regionally because, politically, the New York City program is somewhat atypical. We don't have a local association, and we don't get money from the local government. We are really "one off" in the statewide structure.

That regional work with other extension programs gives us a lot of tie-ins with other people and helps to make us more a part of the system. It's the ecological argument; variety or diversity means stability. So we are trying to be diverse as possible in the connections we have with other programs.

We started the farmers' market program from scratch six or seven years ago when Congress cut the urban horticultural program from the federal budget, which left us with staff who possessed decades of work experience and no present program rationale. The Urban Horticulture/Urban Gardening program had operated for a number of years in twelve to fifteen cities. When Congress cut out the budgets, several other "greening" organizations in the city came to me, and asked, "Can we make an economic development argument for continuing this work?" I said, "Of course, absolutely. Let's do that." So we redirected our emphasis from working with groups that were doing community gardens to working with groups that were doing gardens for market-related production. To some of the same groups that we'd been working with before, we said, "We'll work with you, but we'll work only if you're interested in doing farmers' markets." You want to have community gardens, that's fine. There are a couple of other groups that can work with you. We are going to focus on this." So we changed our focus to keep it under the umbrella of programs in community and economic development.

The farmers' market coverage is primarily determined by the producers' decisions, what they are willing to do, what kind of transportation costs and time costs they will bear. It's really a question of their operation, their resources in terms of people, transport, and the time they can be away from their farms. A majority of the producers in the farmers' market system are

within an hour and a half up to two hours away. So you see farmers coming to market in New York City from Kinderhook; some are from Connecticut or New Jersey. It's a straight economic issue — the congestion factor versus their net income from their operation — and what fellow producers are doing, whether they're in an area where a number are coming to a farmers' market. So it's an economic decision by producers as to what they are willing to bear in relation to how much they take home. We'll try to recruit from up to the Hudson River for the Bronx and Manhattan markets. In north Jersey, Long Island, they tend to go to the Brooklyn market to reduce sitting around in city traffic as much as possible.

Each year, we were starting or initiating a market in a neighborhood that was underserved, working with groups that expressed interest in adding that to the program. The first one we did could be a good illustration. It is in HighBridge in the Bronx, just above Yankee Stadium. Workforce Development had been working on a neighborhood capacity building program there to respond to drug issues, via an umbrella group of six to eight organizations. One of those organizations began to develop a farmers' market in front of their storefront operation. They had a rural retreat center in Orange County, so the retreat site could be used for production. The residents in the urban program would go out and work in Orange County, and then the stuff would be brought back and sold at the farmers' market that we helped them to start. Out of that, they made the decision that they wanted to develop their own marketing to restaurants and do their own community supported agriculture out in Orange County.

Our role changes depending upon where the group is in the development process. In the first year, it's a question

of getting them to look at how a market operates, how to display, how to arrange for people to just move about in front of the market if it's a sidewalk operation. Simple things. "Well, what day of the week are you going to have the market? Is that the day of the week when the parking is on this side or the other side of the street?" Very simple, nuts-and-bolts kind of things. Then they think about issues as the marketers: "Is it in the best place that would have the greatest number of people walking by?" For example, in Williamsburgh in Brooklyn, we helped to start a market at a really nice site, two and a half blocks from the major bus and subway stop, but business remained slow: when we and the groups decided to move it two blocks, business expanded threefold. For an organization, it becomes a question of thinking differently than they would think as a social service organization. They are still doing their social service mission, but they're also keeping an eye on how they are selling, what they are selling, what they are selling it for. All of that is a different mindset. You'd get in a discussion with somebody, let's say a staff person who would be behind the counter. People would be looking around and maybe sitting in a chair reading a book. That's nice, but they are not really tending the business. It's good to read, but now you're working, so you have to think about some of those things, talk about them and see how to make it work out for them.

After a while those start-up questions are no longer pertinent, and you get into questions of growth. How do you want this market to develop? What do you want to add to it? What different members of the community do you want to be involved? Do you want to have more youth involved? Do you want to have some of the older members of the community involved? Then those become the relevant questions,

at that stage of development.

In the food growing stage, the organization may already be involved in growing food perhaps for an educational purpose, a youth science or environmental group. Or, they may have been part of their project at a site outside this city where they have a conference or several programs. So it's really a question of how to get it to fit in their program. There is no real set design method. We are not going in with pre-cooked, off-the-shelf plans, a menu you can choose, A, B, C, or D. Our approach is that we are going to help you to make food part of your program. Now let's decide how you want to do that. It sounds messy, but it's actually much,

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much simpler than saying, "OK, this is a program now of seventeen steps. We are at step two." People really need to be engaged in making things work.

For example, in Orange County, people are not bringing stuff into the farmers' market anymore. They are growing stuff out there. Some of that is going to the kitchen because they have a summer program for kids from city. Some of it has been sold to local restaurants in the Middletown area. They also set up a couple of community supported agriculture projects; families subscribe and buy their food. They are on their own. They still have a market, which they sponsor and coordinate in their neighborhood in Bronx. But farmers who are there are doing their food things for themselves. So it's changed

in that sense. In those situations, we are sometimes involved in helping them make those decisions. Sometimes, we just find out that they decided to go and do this. The important thing is they made that part of their program and they are doing it in ways that suit their situation and conditions.

We usually pay regular visits to project sites. It would probably not be me; it would probably be an agronomist, John Ameroso. In the summer, we recruit summer interns, college students, graduate students, preferably those who know what plants look like. But it's more important that they know how to work in a neighborhood site. We've been very lucky. We've been able to get

people who have a background in agriculture and horticulture. So in the summer, there are anywhere between four to six interns working with staff and with neighborhood organizations.

I really have a coordinating role, a networking role, and also a resource development role in a sense of being primarily responsible for fundraising for additional grants and project dollars. We have some research money from SARE (Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education) to look at ethnic markets. I was directly involved in that, and I help coordinate how interns and the other staff work. Part of that is getting a sense of how many people we need and how to find them. For example, at a conference at Penn State a few weeks ago, I went for three days. It wasn't that I necessarily wanted to be away from home for three days, but it gave me a chance to talk about the program, give out some position descriptions, advertise for interns, get the word out that we are looking for some people for summer. So we all do that. As there are very few program

staff, we have to wear a lot of different hats. We have an outline of what we are doing over the year, and it's flexible in a sense that the groups that we are working with have real expectations of what they want.

We are in an environment in New York City where there are a lot of other organizations doing similar work, even on the same issues. So we have to define the niche that we are working with and how we are working with other organizations. In that sense, there may be some competition at funding times. That's not really a big issue; because since we have to pay a university overhead, we are not really competitive, and we're also not going for the small grants that other organizations need to survive. It makes no sense for us to take in \$6,000 so that we end up with \$2,000, especially since that creates an antagonistic relationship with organizations in the community. Instead, we jointly look for funding resources for some projects. Most of the funds and grants that we are looking for were going in co-venture with another organization. It's very rare, at least in our issue area, that we would go out and say, "We need this so that we can do this." We are looking for some funds so that we can do this program with these two organizations and their neighborhoods. It's always very specific in that sense. There is no kind of random, "Oh, I think we'll go out and see ways to handle half a million dollars this year. Let's think about what we can do with it." We don't operate that way.

There are several important things for people to fully understand in doing this work. First, you need a clear respect for local people's concerns and issues. If you are to do it extremely well, you have to be able to drop your ego. You don't have to be practicing Buddhist, but I'm sure it would help.

You must also be able to be what I call an active listener, in the sense that

you are not bringing your agenda to convince someone else. You're really working with other organizations and groups of residents to get their involvement, so there's some mutual involvement in working on a particular issue or problem. I have several staff vacancies right now, and I'm looking at lots and lots of resumes of people with doctoral degrees, people with international experience, all of which are very nice. The question, at some point, becomes "Have they had some involvement, even at a research level, with communities, with residents and local issues, so that they have an understanding of people?" If someone has been a policy or data analyst, that's not the kind of person that you want in an extension educator role. It makes no sense; they have way too much baggage. It's hard to find people with the required academic background who can also interact well with people, because as they become more and more academic in their approach, they become less and less interactive. They go up on a didactic scale and down on an interactive scale. So that's the most difficult part of what we do in securing and retaining staff.

It's also difficult in a good economic environment because the skilled unemployment rate is very low. There is a lot of competition for people who can do a good job. A great amount of time is spent orienting new staff, which provides a lot of variety but drives you nuts. That's a system-wide problem in extension, but it is especially chronic in New York City and within one hundred miles of here.

It's also critical to have some vision. People must have a vision, at the very least, of how they want to move their issue or those concerns they feel most strongly about. These folk have a set of interests they want to see become real, and they can share that and generate enthusiasm by the fact that they

are really involved in this more than the "nine-to-five." It's the dedication, but it's more a question whether they have some real interest.

I look for people who are able to enter the community and be part of the discussion without bringing out a lot of baggage with them. That either takes experience, or in many cases involves a political outlook, which is more small 'd' democratic in terms of how you work with organizations. Because they are community-based organizations doesn't always mean that they know what's going on, that they have it all figured it out, or they are traveling in the right direction. The fact that they are locally based often doesn't give them the answers to what's happening, because in many cases there's conflict within a community from competing agendas, both between organizations and within organizations.

In one neighborhood in the Bronx, there are two community groups several blocks apart that are fighting over the best place to put a farmers' market. Neither disagrees that they want to have the farmers' market. They just want their site to be the one that is picked. Everybody agrees that a farmers' market is a good thing for the neighborhood. It is just that group A has its site, and group B has its site. Are they willing to compromise on the one side or the other? No. It sounds hilarious, but the question becomes how can they figure out what they are doing and stop stepping on each other's toes.

There is conflict resolution in certain settings, either between organizations or within an organization in terms of what they are working with on their board of directors, trying to get them to develop an understanding of where they want to go. It's incredibly messy to get them to develop a common vision. How do you do that? You have to get at what's most important to them, get them to explain what is not

the most important to them, and try to get their agendas out to the open, so that everybody can see what everybody else sees. It's like poker when you've got to show all your cards. We try doing it in a way that we do not become part of the agenda. In another words, the one advantage that extension educators can have, if they do it properly, is that they are not vested with any particular groups in a given community. We are not a community-based organization, which means we won't get those local funds that go to community-based organizations. It also means that we can work in a community between groups, in an environment in which there is a lot of push and pulls without having to take sides. That doesn't mean to be unbiased or not to have an opinion, but it just means that we don't have to see it from the point of view of any given organizational audience. Then you can say, "If you don't want me to be part of the discussion, you could handle it on your own. That's fine. I've got twelve other groups that I can work with." If you are at a point where the organization is telling you that, or somebody at the organization is telling you, "We don't want you here," you can say, "Well, fine, that's ok." But that's usually not what's happening. We are not there to take resources away from them, but to hopefully bring resources, even if it's just people.

One downside to this approach is that since we are not charging for services (which is good from an access or an equity point of view), it also means that organizations and residents who have taken on the culture's market mentality tend to discount extension education. If I'm providing you with free assistance, the fact that I have a master's degree from an Ivy League university and a quarter century of experience as a city planner and neighborhood organizational developer may not be apparent to you. That's the coun-

sel that I'm providing. If I were a private development consultant, I would be charging you three-figures an hour for that advice, and it would be exactly the same advice, the same discussion, and I'd be doing exactly the same workshop on, say, strategic planning for a board of directors. But I'm not charging that. So in that sense, they have to understand that it has value for its own sake rather than for its dollar or exchange value.

That creates the situation where you won't get a quorum for a session with board members. You need to take that up ahead of time, "Look, this is valuable to you in terms of your time and my time. So there are eleven of you,

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and we are going to have a workshop, and anytime we have a session scheduled, at least seven or eight of you will be there. If we get there and there are six of you, we've all just wasted our time getting here, and we'll will try harder to get the rest of your friends together next time." Of course, if you are in the Rockaways, it's an hour and a half by subway; you've just blown half the day getting there and coming back. But the point is you are not doing it to be hard-hearted. You are doing it because you value their time as much as you value your own. That's the approach you have to take. As long as you understand what you are doing, I think that you can get that across. The Monday Morning Memo that Merrill Ewert, former director of Cornell cooperative extension

sent out this week said, "It ain't bragging if he can do it." Basically that means that if one can really deliver the goods, then people will understand that.

I think that it's very difficult for small community-based organizations to operate because they have hard time choosing the things they want to work on. It makes goal-setting really difficult. Also in typical, traditional extension approaches, you used to do it on evenings and weekends. People don't have evenings and weekends now. Folks are working two jobs. Everybody is doing something every moment of the day. With such competition from a lot of different directions, it is very hard to get people in a setting where they can work together on the common issues. It's hard to bring people together. It's harder than it was a generation ago, and it's harder in urban neighborhoods.

Let's take a look at an organization in Brooklyn where we worked with lots of immigrant groups.

There is a new group from Cambodia living in downtown Brooklyn. They are not coming out for any workshops. They are scared to death. Once it gets dark, they go home and lock the door. You have to think what time of the day you can reach them. We work with organizations that are working with immigrant groups. We're not going into the community saying, "Hi, we are from Cornell. This is Mr. Smith and Mr. Lever, and let me tell you about the land-grant university, Abraham Lincoln and Liberty Hyde Bailey." No. We are working with organizations that already have trust with the community, which gives you an entree into the community because of that gatekeeper. You use existing social infrastructure and, in most cases, work on issues where your

involvement is well known. You work in a neighborhood where you've been working for x-period of time. In New York City, out of the fifty-nine community boards, each with between 105 and 140,000 people, we work in only ten to twelve boards, or one out of every five communities in New York City. We are really focused in that sense, both in terms of where we already have a track record and don't have to explain who we are, and also in those neighborhoods interested in what we are already doing. For example, we are doing a great deal of work in East New York. There is a lot of vacant land, and there are a lot of groups that have been doing community gardening and raising stuff in the side yard next to them since the 1950's. So that's very fertile ground in the sense that those groups are already interested and doing it. We jointly work with those folks, the developers of farmers' markets, and help additional people grow for that farmers' market.

Twenty years ago, we were doing youth environmental education in Thomas Jefferson high school there in East New York. Ten years ago, we did a summer program at that same high school, teaching kids to do a neighborhood survey looking at street trees and vacant lots. Merrill Ewert came out in 1990-91, and did a PAR [participatory action research] project on it. So we've been working in that neighborhood for a long time. It may be different people, but when we go back out on an issue, somebody will come up and say, "I remember when you were here working on so and so." So there is some continuity in the sense of some of the work we were doing. In relative terms, we have a citywide staff of seventy-five for eight million people. That's what, about one per 100,000?

These are skills that you gain if you work in a number of different settings. If you are in a setting where you are dealing with homeless issues, and

they are politically charged, you learn how to deal with press and media. I don't particularly need those skills right now, but if somebody calls me up, it won't be the first time that I talk to a newspaper reporter. In each setting, you gain something that is useful and something you will forget and never see again. But mostly, you just try to connect those useful skills together and hang on to them and improve them so that they get better. For example, when the students came here to Harlem, I started my talk by asking "how much time do I have?" There are a certain number of us doing the presentation: the worst thing you can do in that setting where five or six people have to talk is for everybody to go over by five or more minutes. You just respect that, because if you do go over, and you are the first person or the second person who was over five or ten minutes, by the time you get done, the last person gets up and they have one minute to do their thing. You're doing it both to help out your colleague and also to keep the people in the room, who are sitting there and putting up with you, from getting bored and falling asleep. You're not just doing it to watch the clock, but as a sign of respect for everyone there.

A similar conflict I have to work with staff on, particularly new staff, is when do you start your meeting. You are working with an organization; the meeting is scheduled at 7:00. You are in a neighborhood where people are walking in 7:15, or 7:45. So do you wait until everyone is there? What's everyone? Does that penalize the people who actually came on time? Yes. If you're working with a group at a meeting scheduled for 7:00, but all come at a quarter to 8:00, then you might as well schedule it for quarter to 8:00. If you do that, and it's in a far-away neighborhood, you're going to have to take a car service home. You are out in the middle of Queens at 10 o'clock at night, trying

to get a cab. It's not a minor thing or even the most important thing you are working on, but it's something that people need to address.

The first organizational group we worked with was up in HighBridge, in the Bronx. They were taking the kids out there to work on their production site at 9:00 in the morning. They all get together by 9:30, and they get up there by about quarter to 11:00. So they'd be getting out there in the field at 11 o'clock. It's summer, and it's hot. Farmers don't start working at 11:00; they're coming in for lunch at 11:00. And you don't bring kids, put them in a van with the windows down and drive up there, and put them out in the field. It's 85 degrees; they would stroke out. So you have to then turn around and say, "Well, maybe I should just create a program for the kids who are staying there during the week." You have to think of it in real time, as you're dealing with the real world. What happens if there is a thunderstorm? Is this something you have to plan to do during the day? Or is everybody going to sit around and listen to rap music for four hours 'til the clouds go by? Those are all things that have to be factored into the kind of programs you are helping to put together. And in doing that, you have to be aware of, particularly, the cultural issues as well.

I think there is the opportunity to make a difference here. But I'm not sure that it's in the present structure of the extension system so that we can make a difference as well as we ought to. Developing markets and working with groups to do actual projects, that's the easy part, because that's something that they are interested in doing. You can help them with that, and there will be a great of respect and support. I'm talking more about what you have to do to bring resources from the system or from the university to the project or the program. That's the most difficult part of

the problem. It's not working in the community. It's getting everything else out of the way so you have time to work in the community. We are an NGO in a sense. We are sort of a hybrid, not really the university in the sense that we're not in the tenure situation, even though we have academic appointments. There's no real academic responsibility except to do extension work.

I think that there has to be a common vision of issues that you are working on with people. My colleagues are people who I've worked with in various organizations who have changed organizations and jobs, as I have. We've been working together on common issues for decades in different settings. We are still working on them in same way, part of which is a political outlook. I don't think this kind of work can be abstracted from how communities and how residents are treated if they lack access to power, politically and economically. We're part of a publicly supported university, and resources are being allocated in a particular way, with decisions constantly being made between commitments to community-based public service and commitments to corporate-funded international research. Some of these decisions about resources are useful to us; many aren't. I understand how these decisions are made, but much of what is going on at the university is not really having any direct impact on peoples' lives, either in urban neighborhoods or in communities in the surrounding region. If it is a public

university and if they are not doing that, then sooner or later, people will raise the question, "Well, why are we supporting a university that isn't involved in or concerned with our issues?" This doesn't just concern New York City City; Upstate New York is an absolute mess. It took the last Senate campaign for people actually to wake up and say,

**We're part of a public university, and resources are being allocated in a particular way, with decisions constantly being made between commitments to community-based public service and ... to corporate-funded international research. Some of these decisions about resources are useful to us; many aren't. Much of what is going on at the university is not really having any direct impact on people's lives.**

"Wow, nothing has happened up here in the last thirty-five years. Towns build prisons as an economic development tool. New York's literacy rate is 49th in the U.S. Etc. Why is that?" And there's still nothing happening. Why is that, and what role can extension play to clarify some of these critical issues and respond to them?

The current issue of city limits, for example, analyzes New York City's approach to giving massive tax abate-

ments to giant corporations to generate economic activities in good times in New York City. They found that, from a performance point of view, they are getting squat for the dollar, and are giving scores of millions of dollars to companies who are hanging out for five years and then moving to North Carolina. So, basically, the city is giving away the store. In working with youth in high schools or at any level, you quickly find that they're not angry because they are stupid. They're angry because they know that they are being given a really bad deal; they have been educated for jobs that no longer exist and prepared for careers that disappeared years ago. Their chances of getting meaningful employment and opportunities for growth or dreams are on the low side of nil. That's why there is that level of anger and that level of

anxiety and distrust at the community level. It's because people have been told that they would be helped for a very long time, and they see that it's just not happening. This means you have to be very, very careful in looking at organizations to be critical and tough-minded, and you have to talk about something you can actually do with them, instead of something you think you would like to do for them.