

Learning Places Fall 2018

SITE REPORT #1A

Zuccotti Park Site Study



Welcome to Zuccotti Park, Everyone and Anyone

STUDENT NAME: Melanie Guaba

INTRODUCTION

What were your expectations of the place, before arriving? Did your experience of the place match your expectations? How did it, or did it not, live up to your expectations? What did you notice about the place that you didn't already know from reading or previous visits?

Before arriving at Zuccotti Park, I had an idea of what to expect because I had already been there before. I usually wait in that park for my cousin who attends the economics high school right across the street on its west side. I knew that there would be people walking at different paces trying to get to their destination. People would be on their phones, eating, reading, and waiting, all while walking, standing, or sitting on the benches that rise off of the ground. It wasn't until we were close to the park that I realized where we were going. From the reading, I thought that the park was gated and so that is why I didn't think I had been there before.

SITE OBSERVATIONS



1. Sit in Between Lines



2. Invasion of Privacy



3. Opposites Don't Attract

Why did you choose these images? Do they summarize a feeling you have for the place? Do they focus on prominent objects or features of the place? Explain.

I chose the first image because the extruded lines divide the benches so that people could sit between them. They also make it uncomfortable to lay down on. The second image I like because the light on the ground was in a sense invaded by an outside factor. Like in a park, you don't have privacy, so I thought that was ironic. The third image I took was of two contrasting buildings that tower over the park. The building on the left is composed of a glass curtain wall that looks light in comparison to the building on the right that has exposed horizontal and vertical metal elements making it look heavy. My images focus on features of the place and summarize my idea of awareness when it comes to being in this space. I say awareness because we are aware that it is a space to hang out and not sleep, and that anyone can see you because it is out in the open, just like how the buildings surrounding the site invade the park's privacy.

Describe the sizes and shapes of buildings in this area. Is there general uniformity or heterogeneity among structures?

In the area around Zuccotti Park, the rectilinear buildings tower over it on all its sides except the west side. On its south side, the building is more than 10 stories high, on its east and north sides, the two buildings are more than 25 stories high, and on its west side, the building is about 5 stories high. Therefore, there's heterogeneity among the surrounding structures.

Describe the patterns, textures, colors, and ornamental features of the surfaces of the buildings and structures in and around the place.

In and around Zuccotti Park, the buildings and structures range in patterns, textures, colors, and ornamental features. On the building to the south of the park, there was a smooth beige stucco looking finish to it. This building with its hints of classical architecture and ornamentation, reminded me of a performing arts school I had seen in a movie. The two buildings on its east and north sides are both dark in color. On the park's east side, the building reminded me of the Seagram Building, on 375 Park Ave, because of the tint to the glass and the remaining dark building envelope. When it came to the north side building, I didn't get the best feeling looking at it. What I didn't like about it were the small windows in comparison to the horizontal frames around them. These horizontal elements do provide a clear understanding on where the slabs are located, but they are extremely bulky and suffocate the structure. The west side's building is mostly beige with squared and rectangular windows and hints of red and navy blue because it is a home to Burger King on the lower levels. I saw other colors like browns, deep burgundy, and deep green around the site. Other buildings that are visible from Zuccotti Park have typical glass curtain walls that give that important district an elegant and high class look.

How is the natural world integrated into the built environment? Were trees, plants, lawns, and bodies of water established *around* existing architectures, or were the buildings and walkways built to observe preexisting "wild" areas? Describe patterns and methods of integration.

In Zuccotti Park, the trees, direction of the pattern on the ground (including the rectangles that light up), and the angle of the seatings, direct a pathway from the south-east corner of the park to the north-west corner of the park. The direction of the pattern and lights on the ground are perpendicular to the direction of travel making it seem like such patterns and lights are steps leading you the right way. I look at it as leading those leaving work for lunch, towards the Oculus, World Trade area, and maybe all the way over to the water to enjoy the view of New Jersey.

Other than buildings, what are the functions of the designed / built structures (walkways, seating, etc)?

In Zuccotti Park, the functions of the built structures, like the walkways and seating, are to provide a shortcut for people to get to the touristy destinations in that area. The touristy destinations in that area being the World Trade Center area and even the Wall Street area. I say this because the park's pathways are angled diagonally.

What public amenities are offered to users of the space (water fountains, wheelchair access and other supports for the disabled, public telephones, phone charging stations, WiFi, subway and bus stations, etc.)?

In Zuccotti Park, there are stairs that transition you into the space, but the inclined sidewalk gets you inside the park as well and that would be how wheelchairs can access the park. There are also multiple subway trains just a couple of blocks away from the site.

How have the planners and architects communicated the purpose of the place, via signage or design elements?

There is a clear purpose for the space in Zuccotti Park. Planners and architects incorporated seating and tables for eating on lunch breaks or people grabbing food around and wanting an outdoor scene to enjoy their food. The tables can also be used for getting work or studying done because of the many office buildings around and the high school just across the street. A sign on the north side of the park says that “Zuccotti Park is a privately owned space that is designed and intended for use and enjoyment by the general public for passive recreation.”

Are there any restrictions or rules (either explicit or implied) about how to use the space or interact with other people? Do you see anyone using the space in a manner that exceeds or violates the intentional design? Describe.

In Zuccotti Park, an implied restriction is no sleeping on the seating because there are divisions on the seatings for one person to sit at a time. It isn't flat to lay on. The divisions make it uncomfortable to rest on, but I did see one person look like they were making it work in their favor. A sign on the north side of the park says that there is no skateboarding, rollerblading, or bicycling allowed in the park. Another sign next to that one says that it is prohibited to camp or erect tents, lying down on the ground or public sitting areas or walkways, the placement of sleeping bags, the storage of personal properties on the ground or public sitting areas or walkways, removing objects from the trash, and any other activities prohibited by law or statute.

How do people generally interact with the environment? Is this place crowded? Walkable? Easy to navigate? Comfortable?

The people in Zuccotti Park keep it moving if they aren't seated. I know that when the teenagers get out of school, the park can get a bit crowded, but it doesn't last long like this. For the amount of time that we were there, the environment was calm, comfortable, enjoyable. People had no problem maintaining the same pace walking through the space. There was plenty of room to stop and think as well.

What is your personal experience of the place? Think about sound/smell/touch, your body's movement, contact with the ground and physical comfort. How does the place make you feel?

I enjoy being in this park. People meet there and their greetings are full of happiness which makes me smile. People also rush through there as it is what I like to call a shortcut. Seeing other people in a rush makes me a bit anxious, but there is so much to look at, including interactions to observe, that I quickly get over it and put my attention on something else like the food trucks. It can get to smell like halal food because of the halal trucks off on the south sidewalk. I don't get to touching much when I'm in this park, but that's just me in any place. I do feel free enough to move though. I like to walk back and forth, each time observing different things and seeing new faces.

ANALYSIS/DISCOVERIES

Thinking about the neighborhood in which the place is embedded, who is this space designed for and for what general purpose?

Zuccotti Park is designed for the people who inhabit the area, work and learn in the area, and tourists who are just passing through the area. The park's neighborhood is among the busiest in the city during the day, so it is designed for any person to sit and admire the space or simply walk through it.

More specifically, what kinds of social interactions does the place encourage or support? How do noise and light affect social interaction? What about the proximity of design elements (walkways, benches, etc.)? Mention specific design elements in your answer.

Aside from a meeting point for individuals to go to but then venture off together to another destination, Zuccotti Park can be a place to have meetings as well. It is definitely big enough and it has seats to accommodate a crowd. During the day, even though there's trees, it is bright in the space, so meetings can happen without a lighting problem. At night, the lights on the ground at the street lights would make it possible for the meetings to occur as well.

How might you use the space in a creative way that exceeds the intended use of the designers? Think about behavior, physical movement and organization, numbers of people, etc.

I would make a section of where the benches are a performance area. There is two main sections with such benches and what separates them is a wide pathway. I would suggest only using one side so that those who just want to relax or do something else have the space to do so. Regarding the performance zone, the audience would sit on the benches and the performer(s) would perform in front of them, in the widest pathway. The performer wouldn't take up much space though, so pedestrians that don't want to watch the show can simply walk behind the performer. This wouldn't go on all day either, maybe just a couple of hours in the day, around lunch.

QUESTIONS for FURTHER RESEARCH. Write down questions that require further research to answer. These should follow directly from your analysis section and be complex and specific enough to serve as the basis of a research project; do not include questions you can answer with a quick google search.

1. Question:

What dictates the orientation of the features and/or objects in a space? What factors must be taken into consideration and how would you go about deciding what will work best?

2. Question:

What rules do designers follow when it comes to planting the green life in a space? If a landscape architect is brought in, because it's their specialty, what do they take into consideration? How do they go about the project?

3. Question:

What are things that have been done in public spaces, like Zuccotti Park, that aren't prohibited or illegal, but have caused commotion? What or why did it start in the first place? What was done about it?

SITE REPORT #1B

FURTHER RESEARCH

Choose and revise one of your questions for further research from part 1A of this report.

Revised Research Question:

Find a book, government document, or newspaper article that could help you answer your question.

MLA Citation for Book, Government Document, or new article:

Why did you select this source? How does it address all or part of your research question?

Describe the process you used to find this source including any keywords and the search engine or tool you used to search.

What other sources or further information would you need to answer your question? Where would you look for them?