

Learning Places Fall 2019

SITE REPORT #1

name of site report

NAMING PROTOCOL. When saving and posting your site reports on OpenLab, please follow the following format: SiteReport#.LastnameFirstname



Select a meaningful image that captures your perception of the site we visited.

STUDENT NAME: Elizabeth Ramirez

PART 1: SITE OBSERVATIONS

1. What are some general observations about the character of this neighborhood? What does it remind you of? How does it make you feel?

The area near the canal is historically protected, and it was known as South Brooklyn where the houses are made of brownstone. It is super expensive to live in one of those houses, because it's where the upper class is located. There are a lot of restaurants in near the canal, which I didn't really understand why because of the flooding. When I was there I was able to see the gentrification very clearly because in one area it was nice and clean with a nice house, and in other parts it was very dirty and it kind of smelt.

2. How is the natural world contained or shaped by human activity or architecture? In what ways does the natural world invade or disrupt human activity, planning or architecture?

Human activity can shape the way the natural environment is in a negative way. For example the Gowanus Canal, before it was filled with muck and it wasn't so toxic the canal used to be a nice place, filled with fish and plants surrounding it. But then people started throwing their garbage in and the sewer water was flowing into the canal. The effect of this was that the canal started smelling and became toxic, decreasing the value in the area because no one wanted to live there.

3. What people did you observe in the neighborhood and what activities are they engaged in?

The people in that neighborhood didn't seem to be bothered by the canal they were just going on with their day. I saw a couple of moms with their kids. By Carroll Gardens in one of the brownstone houses there was an old man watching people pass by, mostly kids going home from school. By the canal there was mostly bikers crossing the bridge, and like two people jogging across.

4. Reflect on a **specific** place you viewed in this neighborhood. A specific place means a single building, or an intersection, or an individual built structure, etc.

- a. Insert 1 photograph and/or sketch and provide a *creative* caption for the image. The caption should be a word or short phrase that suggests a theme or conceptual association related to the photo or sketch.



“ DO NOT ENTER “

- b. What is the *program* of the space? How are people meant to interact with one another and with the environment?

The space is mostly used for parking cars. The far building in the picture is actually being rented as a living space. People just walk by this place since it doesn't seem very inviting.

- c. describe a possible creative reuse of this **specific** space for a performance:
- a) Which areas are best for performers/activists and which areas are good for observers? Do these spaces overlap? Mention specific objects and structures in your answer.

The whole area overall could be used for either performance, activists and observers. That's because it's an open space with enough room for a small group of people to gather. It's also a good place because there are plenty of people that pass by this area and since it's an open area they can immediately see what's going on.

- b) What kinds of performance would work best (intimate or grand; processional or stationary; text and/or music; interactive or passive audience; etc.)?

The performance that would work the best in this area is stationary; text and/or music. Since this is a dead end it won't disturb the traffic, and it's located near a building that's rented for parties. Meaning that the people in this area are already kind of used to the noise in the area.

QUESTIONS for FURTHER RESEARCH. These should follow directly from your analysis section and be complex and specific enough to serve as the basis of a research project.

Questions might relate to architectural or environmental observations, socio-political problems and/or solutions, demography, history, zoning, civic processes, performance strategy, etc.

1. Question?

Why should the EPA spend billions of dollars trying to clean up and restore the Gowanus canal ?

2. Question?

Why can't the Gowanus canal just be drained and then covered ?

3. Question?

If the Gowanus canal is cleaned how will the demographics in that area change ?

PART 2: RESEARCH

Choose and revise one of your research questions for further research.

Revised Research Question: Why should the EPA spend billions of dollars trying to clean up and restore the canal ?

Find and cite 2 sources that address your question in MLA format. Respond to the questions below.

CITATION 1: Nosowitz, Dan. "What Would Happen If You Drank Water From The Gowanus Canal?"

Popular Science, Popular Science, 18 Mar. 2019,

www.popsci.com/science/article/2013-08/fyi-what-would-happen-if-you-drank-water-gowanus-canal/.

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

The reason I chose this source is because it states the evolution of the canal. It also states the the canal has been considered to be a superfund site, meaning that the site requires to be cleaned up. A

superfund site is usually contaminated with hazardous substances and pollutants, and it poses a risk to human health as well as the environment. Another key point that the source states is that the canal is not in an isolated area, nor is it tucked away behind some fences. According to the source, "It's smack in the middle of some of the most expensive parts of the area" . With new commercial spaces thriving the area is becoming more popular and more people are attracted to this place. This source addresses my question because it states some of the reasons why the canal should be cleaned.

Is the source credible? Why or why not?

I would say that the source is credible because it contains many facts gathered by scientists. The source also contains information based on statistics.

What further information would you need to answer your question? Where would you look for additional sources?

Some additional source that I can look for is the medical records of people who live near the canal or those who have fallen into the canal. This can be helpful because I can see how the health of the people is at risk if the canal isn't cleaned.

CITATION 2: "GOWANUS CANAL Site Profile." EPA, Environmental Protection Agency, 20 Oct. 2017, [cumulis.epa.gov/supercpad/SiteProfiles/index.cfm?fuseaction=second.Stayup&id=0206222#Stayup](https://semspub.epa.gov/work/02/550165.pdf).

- <https://semspub.epa.gov/work/02/550165.pdf>

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

I selected this source because it shows the history of the canal and how it was once a beautiful place that turned toxic. The source states that before the canal became one of the busiest waterways, it was a wetland that provided habitats for many species of fish and other wildlife, such as oysters. The water was clean people could swim there, unlike today where people are scared to even go near the water. This source addresses my question because if the canal is a toxic place that the EPA can restore to mimic how it once used to be

Is the source credible? Why or why not?

The source is credible because it is taken directly from EPA website. Meaning that the information is mostly facts gathered from research.

What further information would you need to answer your question? Where would you look for additional sources?

Some further information I can look for is how does the polluted water affect the areas near it. I can also look for is the positive impact the canal will have on the community if it gets cleaned.

PART 3: Performance Reflection (after second site visit)

Write a 200 word reflection about how you felt during the second visit to the space and during the performance activities. How did this visit change your perception of the place and your relationship to the natural and built environments? Did the experience of 'performing' in the space (i.e., moving your body) teach you anything new about the landscape or architecture?

The Part of the site visit to the canal was different from the second visit. On the first visit we went by the bridge and on our second visit we went by Thomas Greene Playground. During our second visit to the Gowanus Canal, I was a bit worried or nervous one can say. That's because I was aware that I was going to have to do some type of performance, but I didn't really know what. Once on the site a person from the Environmental Performance Agency had us close our eyes and think of something that we remembered from the first site visit. At first I thought wow why was I so nervous, but then she made us act like that thing we remembered. This made me feel a bit strange because it was something out of my comfort zone. After that we proceeded to walk around the park to the canal using our sense of smell so we could determine the public and private smells in the area. At first I didn't really understand the reason for this exercise. All I could smell was the grass and some rubber from the mechanic shop nearby, but as we got closer to the canal it started smelling a worse. Being able to use my sense of smell helped me determine that the canal is actually very much repulsive, because as we got closer to the canal the smell became almost pungent. The last part of the performance was to do a dance based on the words that one felt near the canal. I didn't really enjoy this part it was kind of uncomfortable and awkward for me. However it did make me realize that the canal is far worse than it seems. I was able to get a closer look at the canal and see how dirty it is. If I was alone I would have never got out of my way to go look at the canal.