

Learning Places Fall 2019

SITE REPORT #1

Gowanus Canal



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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 neighborhood is very rough, not very well kept. There's a lot of pollution and litter especially in the water, and a lot of the buildings there aren't in the best of conditions. I felt kind of sad, like I was in the Dominican Republic which is very similar to this neighborhood in which the surrounding area doesn't look its best.

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?

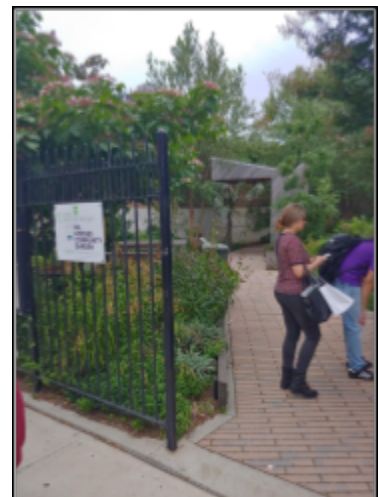
The plant life is really limited to those that can really survive in such a polluted area, and I hardly saw any animals in the area such as birds or squirrels. It seems the pollution caused by human activity has really contain much of the natural world keeping it from flourishing. I hardly saw many green spaces in that neighborhood.

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

It seems the people there are just going about their business. Some are gathered together talking with each other. For the most part it seems to me that they really don't care about their neighborhood anymore like they just grown accustomed to it.

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.

To program the space is a community garden way of getting the people in the community to grow their own locally-sourced produce, and gets people to interact with one another and with nature through gardening. I don't know if a performance is possible here given that the space is tight, but a performance could be done at the entrance. Since the garden already gets attention from people who walk by it. Kinda like street performances. The performances that would best work here are stationary performances, text based performances or musical base, which would probably end up being rather passive.



"Man made nature in a man made environment"

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?

Could raising environmental awareness in the neighborhood of Gowanus actually stir people to take a more active role in repairing their neighborhood?

2. Question?

Instead of reusing land for new building, why not use some of that land to improve the environment of the neighborhood?

3. Question?

Could improving the environment in Gowanus raise the quality of living for those living in the neighborhood?

PART 2: RESEARCH

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

Revised Research Question:

Wouldn't adding more natural space and repairing much of the surrounding area near the canal not only improve the environment in Gowanus but also improve the overall quality of life, and spread environmental awareness?

CITATION 1:

Gisolfi, Peter. "Reclaiming Spoiled Landscapes: A New Way of Thinking about an Entrenched Problem." *Planning*, vol. 77, no. 2, 2011, pp. 23–25.

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

The reason I selected this source is because it has a lot of information regarding reclaiming and

reusing landscapes in order to improve the surrounding environment not to mention the fact that it has information directly connected to Gowanus canal. They mentioned other such projects similar to the Gowanus canal in which there were attempts to repair the environment or replace what's been damaged. My question is by adding more natural space around the canal could we improve the surrounding environment. This article takes it a step further.

Is the source credible? Why or why not?

Given how much information they already have about the bonds canal in only four pages of this book, I do believe that the source is credible, especially with the other projects that they talk about.

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

I would most likely need to research some of the techniques or methods that are mentioned in this book in order to fully understand whether they can be applied to Canal. I probably look in the index of this book to see where it got its information regarding the methods mentioned in it.

CITATION 2:

"City unveils major Gowanus rezoning proposal." Real Estate Weekly, 6 Feb. 2019, p. B5+. Gale General OneFile, https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A577459189/ITOF?u=cuny_nytc&sid=ITOF&xid=b275f466. Accessed 23 Sept. 2019.

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

My question focuses more on how we can change the surrounding area in order to better help improve the environment, and this article talks about how the city plans to do rezoning around that neighborhood in order to do exactly that. If done correctly, the rezoning could lead to a lot more open spaces around the canal. And since it is going to have a big effect on the people living in the area though become more aware of what's going on with their neighborhood and possibly take part in it.

Is the source credible? Why or why not?

The site seems credible enough. Much of the information found on this article doesn't seem to be wrong and given that this website ends with ".edu", means that it's for educational purposes instead of a privately owned website where the information can be changed by the owners to serve their own purposes.

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

I'm most likely need to search up which parts of Gowanus are actually getting rezoned and what they're being rezoned to in order to find more information for my question. Star websites that contain detailed drawings and documents that show the entire city of New York and Zoning for each part of its so if there are any changes that will be made I can search them up there.

PART 3: Performance Reflection (after second site visit)

Upon revisiting the Gowanus neighborhood I assumed that it would be no different from last visit seeing as how we were going to the same place rides and turn out things were very different as to what we were going to do there. A person from the EPA the environmental performance agency had us do a strange activity we had to pretend as if we were like something from the actual Gowanus Canal we had to get really close to one another. To be frank it was really uncomfortable and awkward and I wasn't the only one to feel it a lot of the students there express the same feeling. Next part of the activity we were really just walking toward the canal from Thomas Greene Park trying to get a sense of the smells that were in the area picking up three that were private in three that were public, and I have to say it was rather difficult to decide what could be considered public and what's considered private. But to be honest it was rather calming to be in complete and utter silence not having to hear other people talk just taking in the neighborhood it felt nice although there were some smells that were rather offensive to the nose such as a smell of people smoking weed and cigars. the third part of the activity is worth things God extremely awkward and cringy. We were tasked with pretending to be either the clouds the sky or the water and and I was tasked with water which meant if I wanted to understand that one of you I'd have to get really close to it and I can tell you right now there's a lot of weird stuff in that water it was rather disgusting which is also one of the words I wrote down to describe the feeling of that area. Another word with death and given how if you go into that water you're most likely going to die. Honestly having to do a dance based off of three of the words we chose was what made this so uncomfortable and cringy especially knowing that the professor was going to take pictures. Even though this was one of the most uncomfortable things I've ever done for any of my classes I did see the Gowanus canal in a rather different view. It did make me think more about the environmental impacts something like this could have, and maybe something that I should try to take an active role in fixing in the future.

