

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:

Darwin Cruz

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?

Some general observations that I noticed about this neighborhood was that it was very quiet. Not necessarily, in terms of noise, but in a way of it being empty in a way. There wasn't even that much of cars passing by. It kind of reminds me of a place where I pass by sometimes. That location is near the way the East River in New York, and it also has a quiet empty vibe to it.

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?

In the Gowanus area, the natural world is contained by very little human activity. One thing I noticed at the Gowanus trip, was that there was a lack of people in the streets. There was some here and there, but there would mostly be 1 at the time. There usually wasn't really any a family passing by or a group of friends. When people did pass by, they were just passing by in a bike or a car.

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

Throughout the tour, I was seeing a lack of people in the streets. However, towards the end of our tour, that's when we started seeing some people. We started people, stores, and a garden. One activity that I observe in the neighborhood was gardening. Near the end of the tour, we stop by a small garden, where I saw people gardening. They were planting, watering, and taking care of the plants. I even saw some children in helping out, by carrying some smaller pots. Another activity that I observe in the neighborhood was people sitting and hanging out, outside of their buildings. Most of the people that I saw were, small elderly white women. While they did that, some of their children or grandchildren, were playing on the sidewalk, right in front of them.

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.



Carroll Street Bridge in its stable position, when not used as a moveable bridge.

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

In the image above, it is a picture of a bridge in the Gowanus neighborhood, that is called the Carroll Street Bridge. It is located, on Carroll Street in Brooklyn, passing over bodies of water of the Gowanus Canal underneath it. The bridge is a movable bridge, which means that it's one of those bridges that open up or move around in order for incoming boats. The program of this space is that it is being used at a bridge. People are using it to walk, over the canal. In this space, people would most likely interact with the environment, as a tourist spot. When people pass by this bridge, they aren't going to think about the Gowanus Canal, or the history behind it. They are going to think about how "beautiful" the view looks like from there.

- 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.

In the Gowanus neighborhood, there are a lot of different areas that can be used for many different types of performances and activities that are good for people. One example that can be used is The Green Building. The Green

Building, is a green building, ironically, located in the Gowanus area. I think that this can be a good spot to have some performances or activity, relating to the Gowanus Canal, mainly because of what the building is. The Green Building is already a pretty popular place for, not only observers, but for visitors as well. They have many different types of celebrates, so why not inform people about the Gowanus Canal with some performances or activities. This way people can get informed, while also having a good time as their event.

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

I believe that the best type of performance that would work best here would a stationary type of performance. It can work both in text and/or music, but the music could be a bit more effective, since it can grab more people's attention, compared to text , since some people could not just notice it. As for the type of music, it can be mostly anything that's appealing to people. However, the music should relate to the Gowanus Canal, or relating to the problem of pollution.

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 is the Gowanus Canal so toxic?

2. Question?

Why are the building in Gowanus so special.

3. Question?

Why the effects of the Gowanus Canal are bigger than you know?

PART 2: RESEARCH

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

Revised Research Question:

Why the Gowanus Canal became so polluted?

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

CITATION 1:

Gregory, Kia. "Industry Still Churns, Even as Cleanup Plan Proceeds for a Canal." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 26 Sept. 2013,.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/27/nyregion/as-cleanup-plan-is-set-for-gowanus-canal-violations-continue.html>

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

I decided to use this source because I believe that it proved a lot of points that relate to my research question. Kia Gregory addresses that fact that companies are literally using the canal as their own personal trash can. For example, according to the author, Kia Gregory, she says that, "The bulk of the pollution was caused by long-closed factories and by decade of untreated sewage carried into the canal by city drains. But businesses currently along the canal have been fingered by the state or environmentalist for sometimes treating the canal like a waste dump" (Gregory). These companies are using the city drains as their way to dump their waste into the canal.

Is the source credible? Why or why not?

I believe that the source is quite credible. The New York Times has usually always been putting out nothing, facts. They have been reliable and the author know what they are talking about, without being bias to their audience.

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

Some additional sources of information that would help answer my question would probably looking into the Federal Water Pollution Control Act. With this act, people can check companies, and see if they are getting away with illegal dumping, in their areas.

CITATION 2:

Navarro, Mireya. "Gowanus Canal Inquiry Underlines Severity of Pollution." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 2 Feb. 2011,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/03/science/earth/03gowanus.html?hp>

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

I chose this source because it was talking about the type of chemicals that the canal actually has. It address my research question because in the article, the author, Mireya Navarro, states that, "They are formed during the incomplete burning of coal, oil, gas, wood, garbage and other organic substances, and were found mostly ear former manufactured gas plants along the canal" (Navarro). Here, she is saying how the polluted water came to what it is today. Over the years, the water was collecting this and become so polluted to the point where, "people should not swim in the canal or eat fish from it" (Navarro).

Is the source credible? Why or why not?

I believe that the source is credible. I say this because the author herself, seems to have a knowledge of the environment, because she was an environmental writer from 2004 to 2008. She also seems to know a lot about New York, since she has been working and writing for most of her career.

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

Some further information that would help answer my research question would be how much was actually being polluted. One place that I would look is probably all the records of all the companies that was throwing their waste into the canal. Looking as the records, can show just how much each company did their own dumping, and see how much the overall amount of waste in total.

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?

During our second visit to the Gowanus Canal, one thing that I felt was my appreciation for the cleaning filter, spotted on the Gowanus Canal. On the previous trip, we learn about the learning filter that the government installed in the 1900's. From where we were last week, we weren't able to see it that well. We only really saw it moving around. However, during the second visit to the space, I was able to see the filter up close and in action. On our second visit to the canal, even though I already saw the canal and the waters, my perception of the place has changed a bit. But they didn't change for the better; they change in a negative way. My perspective changed from feeling bad for the canal, to feeling even more bad for the canal. For example, on the second visit, since I was seeing the water up close, I what was able to see what was in the water. In the water, I saw a shopping cart thrown in. It was covered up in underwater mold. But right under there, was a custer of fish hoarded up. They seem to be searching for food, since some were swimming on the surface. I also saw a couple of ducks swimming along, trying to look for food. As I was seeing these animals living their lives, it made me feel bad for the animals, just trying to live their lives, unaware of the conditions they could be living in. At the end of the tour, when I was doing my dancing, even though, I didn't do anything, it did make me feel a bit responsible for something that I didn't do. Even though, I know that I didn't pollute the Gowanus Canal, I still feel as if I am polluting something much bigger, such as the ocean or even the land.