

hLearning Places Summer 2019

SITE REPORT #2

Newtown Creek

NAMING PROTOCOL. When saving and posting your site reports on OpenLab, please follow the following format: SiteReport#.LastnameFirstname. Here's an example: SiteReport2.SwiftChristopher.



The start or end of a journey

STUDENT NAME: Elizabeth Ramirez

SITE OBSERVATIONS

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

Some general observations I noticed when walking to the site was that the area wasn't really clean. There was a lot of mechanical workshops, as well as a laundry workshop. Once arriving near the area I saw these egg shaped structures surrounded by a numerous amount of pipes. At first I didn't know that it was the Wastewater treatment plant, but then I realized because there was a really bad smell coming from it. This gave me a first bad impression of the site and I thought the nature walk was going to be worse because it was closer to the plant. Upon arriving to the site I was a bit surprised because it wasn't dirty as I expected, it was actually pretty clean. The nature walk starts with narrow stairs leading up to a small narrow path, which is kinda design to simulate a ship since its near the water. Along the path there is a circle called the Turret, then the rest of the path goes to the water. The area near the water was also really clean and there were a couple of trees and sitting areas, there were also steps that go down to the water, which I didn't understand the purpose of since the water is dirty and who would want to go in it. Another thing that I noticed was that the side where we were standing was nice and clean but on the other side it was really dirty. There was an old rusty bridge that looks like it's going to collapse and next to it there was a pile of car scraps. I didn't really see a lot of boats in the area except for one that was transporting the metal scraps and a small one with at least 5 people. Overall the space reminded me a bit of dumbo, because it's a nice place to walk along the water with the plants surrounding it. The difference is that the view is not so nice and it is located next to a water waste treatment plant.

2. Historically, what are some of the important developments that have created the current environmental situation at Newtown Creek area. Refer not only to the reading and Prof. Spellane's lecture, but also what you learned on the Newtown Creek Alliance tour (hint... estuaries, for instance)?

Some of the developments that have created the current environmental situation at the Newtown Creek area were the Kerosene refinery and the Oil refineries. With these factories being set up the area became a huge shipping industry. This polluted area area and it destroyed the fresh water source. The industries along the water way disposed of their byproducts into the water, because the government was not stopping them from doing so. Due to this the water became so polluted that it was no longer safe to consume any of the marine life or even go in the water. Now the water is filled with sludge and garbage, and to contribute to that is the metal company that's near the water.

3. In what ways is the natural environment contained or shaped by the architecture of the Newtown Creek Nature Walk? In what ways is the natural world repossessing, interacting with, or invading spaces that have been over-polluted or industrialized?

Newtown Creek Nature Walk is shaped by architecture because it was designed specifically for art. The walls in the path are designed to simulate the way a ship looks, including the holes in the wall that allows a view to the treatment plant. The reason for this is because the area used to be a shipping industry. Another thing is the materials that were used for the wall, in this case it was all concrete. For this site concrete is good because it can withstand erosion which means that it will last longer. Also because this is a place that is trying to be improved and it would be bad to have a material that will waste away fast. The path was designed to be slim and narrow so that people can get to the water faster because there really isn't much to see when walking to the water. One cool thing about the path was the Turret because when you stand in that small circle the sound changes and becomes a bit louder, this all plays with how the acoustics of the place is designed to be. The area near the water is more open and there are several plants that make the space more welcoming and comfortable. It actually kinda takes away the feeling of being next to a treatment plant. The steps that lead up to the water are like slopes that help block some of the waves of the water when ship or boats pass by. The steps also have cuts that allow Goldenrod plants to grow. Overall architecture is helping reduce the industrialized area and make it more people friendly.

4. Discuss the program of the nature walk. How are people meant to interact with one another and with the environment?

The program of the nature walk is for people to be informed of the history behind Newtown Creek and the events that happened there and how it happened. At first it's not so clear what the purpose is because the place doesn't seem like it goes anywhere. But when you are near the water there are multiple signs that state the purpose for each park of the walk including the entrance stairs. It is also a good place for a small group of people to interact with one another because the area is not so loud. Since it's a quiet place because not many people go there a person can go alone and just observe the surroundings of the area. That way they can see the difference between the clean side and the other side where all the scrap metals and garbage is. This can help raise awareness for areas like this to be cleaned.

5. If you were to stage a performative intervention in a *specific* site (i.e., a single structural aspect of the walk or industrial remains) where would you stage it and why (how does the environment add meaning to the performance)?

If I were to stage a performance I would use the whole site because from the beginning to the end, I can show the evolution on how the area became polluted and the reason it should be

cleaned up. The performance would be theatrical and full of different art galleries. So from the start of the Nature walk there will be different pieces of art that show how the area was nice and clean when the Lenapes lived there. Then, throughout the path different art pieces will be displayed showing how the area slowly started becoming more and more polluted until there was no marine life left in the water and the place had a pungent smell. Once that's done it will continue to show how the Newtown Creek looks now that it's starting to get cleaned up again and how marine life is returning and the smell isn't that horrid anymore. Once the people get near the water there will be a theatrical performance about how it is unsafe for people or marine life to go in the water, thanks to the pollution. The performance will begin near the end of the narrow path. There will be people dressed or body painted as fish just happily dancing minding their own business, just being fish. As they are dancing there will be a group of people dressed as factories and will go and settle near the water, with them they will bring in waste that they will throw into the water (*but not actually in water*). At first the fish won't notice, but then as the fish progress closer to where the stairs they are decreasing in size. The fish are still not aware of what is happening then there is ships that start passing through the water and the fish start to become worried. As they continue the decrease in size once again and there is only a 5 fish left. Once they reach the stairs there is a person dressed as a garbage monster, and this garbage monster is about to enter into the water and the fish finally see and stop and see how bad their home has become. They can no longer live there so they leave. This happened so quick that the fish didn't even see it happen. (*looks better in my head*)

6. What message would your performance convey and who needs to hear this message?

The message that this performance would convey is that historical areas like this should be protected and not polluted even more. The area should be cleaned up because we have to help improve the environment that we live in. The people that need to hear this are those factories who are not helping the environmental distress by adding more pollution to the waterways. People in general should hear this because the more people there are the more the impact will become. Also that people need to open their eyes because things like this are happening all the time but no one is saying anything and by the time they notice it's too late. It is easier to stop the problem now than it is to clean up the mess after.

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? How long will it take the Newtown Creek to be cleaned up ?
2. Question? Who is responsible for the pollution in Newtown Creek?
3. Question? How does the polluted water in Newtown Creek affect the people who live nearby?

FURTHER RESEARCH

Choose and **revise** one of your research questions for further research. Refine your question following from examples that we've discussed in class.

Revised Research Question: How does the polluted water in Newtown Creek affect the people who live nearby?

Find and cite 2 sources that address your question in [MLA format](#). Respond to the questions below.

CITATION 1: Fortis, Bianca. "City's Pumping Air Into Polluted Newtown Creek Has Critics Worried." *Muck Rack*, City Limits, 8 Aug. 2018, <https://muckrack.com/bianca-fortis/articles>.

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 talks about how pumping oxygen into the water can be hazardous to the public's health. This is because the process of pumping oxygen was actually spraying bacteria directly into the air. And the most affected would be the people who live near that area. Another reason I selected this source is because it talks about the higher rates of sickness that the residents of that area had compared to those who live far from the water.

Is the source credible? Why or why not?

Yes this source is credible because it reference information that was conducted by the DEP, as well as the NCA. The site also included links to the site containing statistics about how bad the water is. The article was also fairly recent meaning that the information they used is up to date.

CITATION 2: Enman, Scott. "There Are 3 Active Oil Spills on Newtown Creek." *Brooklyn Eagle*, 20 May 2019,

<https://brooklyneagle.com/articles/2019/05/20/there-are-3-active-oil-spills-on-newtown-creek/>.

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 talks about a recent oil spill that occurred in Newtown Creek, and instead of the water becoming cleaner it is getting dirtier. If the polluted water is already affecting people's health then adding more oil to the water is not going to make it better. This is also taking a step back into the clean up process.

Is the source credible? Why or why not?

Yes this source is credible because the article is just stating facts about the pollution of the Newtown Creek. It is also using additional information of the measures that are being used to try to prevent oil spills from happening again and the solution seems to be working as of right now.

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

Further information that I would need to answer my question is the history of Newtown Creek and how the life of the people was before the creek became toxic and polluted. I can also research the medical records of people living in this area compared to those in other areas.