

Learning Places Summer 2019

# SITE REPORT #2

## Newtown Creek



-Industrial jungle -

Select a meaningful image to that captures your perception of the site we visited and provide a caption explaining what the image is.

STUDENT NAME: Katherine Parra

## SITE OBSERVATIONS

Insert 3 photographs and provide a *creative* title for each image. The title should be a word or short phrase that suggests *a theme or conceptual association* related to the photo.



Bubble of hope in the middle of “plants”



Adapted nature



Pollutants reflection

### General instructions:

- a. Do not try to anticipate an answer the instructors “are looking for”. We want you to write truthfully about your own observations.
  - b. Be sure to draw meaningful connections between what you observed and the purpose of the performative intervention. In other words, how does the performative intervention respond to, or integrate directly with, the specific material conditions of the site.
  - c. Finally, your research question should respond directly and specifically to your site observations.
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1. Historically, what are some of the important developments that have created the current landscape of the 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)?  
  
Newtown Creek landscape was a result of a long ice age, around 12,000 years ago and estuaries were created and formed part of the border between Brooklyn and Queens, after years of industrialization and traffic of petroleum that was shipped up the creek , the area become the most polluted in the US containing toxins from oil industries and killing the marine life.
  2. Discuss the historical remnants that you observed in the current landscape.

The Glacial Erratic at the entrance of the nature walk which was transported 17,000 years ago and represents an eroded piece of diorite granite, representing the ice age is one of the most interesting

historical remnants I saw around the area. Also, an abandoned old and rusty bridge which still around but is not used anymore.

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

A structure that called my attention was the Granite Slab Steps (tidal area) which contains nine steps with scientific names of biologic and geologic eras on it. The water has a direct contact with the steps, and it symbolizes the origin of life, as many people believe. The nature walk has a lot of plants that survive to toxins and try to recycle all the polluted air, some metal boxes around the water contains plants that are alive and continue growing which seems as a miracle for plants to survive and adapt their life to a polluted area.

4. Discuss one instance of architectural semiotics. **Choose *only one* building or built structure.** If the building or designed structure could talk, what would it say?

Three “digester eggs” at Newtown Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant, the particular shape as giant silver eggs immediately inform people that it processing something inside of it, if the structure could talk it would say how hard is to process all those dirty waters and would ask to people from the area to try to maintain water just with organic material on it if possible. Also, they would say how beautiful and inspirational is to the Kingsland Wildflowers Green Roof which is in front of the wastewater treatment plant.

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 what message would your performance convey?

I would perform in the watershed bollard which contains the granite table with an etching of Newtown Creek’s original watershed before Europeans took the land. My stage would be close to the table in the middle of the stones around the table, my message would be to compare how land was before and how it looks now and create in the audience a responsibility for every change that may cause damage to Newtown Creek. It is responsibility of us as humans to help nature around us to survive otherwise life will suddenly disappear. I will try to convey people to help to restore the area. As our society grows economically and people become capable to buy the power for either help or destroy the nature, I would like to inform and convey people to help nature.

## FURTHER RESEARCH

Research Question (*should follow directly from your above observations, and be complex, specific, and researchable*):

How investing in water quality can help with the revitalization of Newtown Creek?

Find an article from a journal, website, or newspaper that you believe will help you answer your question

MLA Citation for source:

Russell, Clifford S., Vaughan, William J., Clark, Christopher D., Rodríguez, Diego J., and Darling, Arthur H. *Investing in Water Quality: Measuring Benefits, Costs and Risks*. Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), 2013. Web.

How many sources did you look at before selecting this one? Why did you select this source? How does it address all or part of your research question? Be specific.

I looked four sources including newspapers, articles and websites before the one I choose. I selected the source I mentioned because it has accurate information based on important studies and it helped me to understand better why water quality is important and also it is a guide that explains how to reduce urban water pollution in developing countries which is exactly what I was looking.

Is this source credible? How can you tell (what criteria did you base your evaluation on)?

Yes, it is credible the manuscript was reviewed by Bank staff members and the book contains a lot of useful information using formulas, charts and data obtained from different research projects made about the water quality.

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

I would need actual information from NCA staff and read more articles. But I think a concrete answer can be provided by a NCA member that can explain better how the visual plan which contains the water quality investment can help with the creek.