

Fall 2020

LARC 1150: INTRO TO LA

Clemson University
Landscape Architecture
College of Architecture, Arts and Humanities

EXERCISE 1: PLACES PROJECT

What is a place? Why are places important? What makes a place great?

Most landscape architects, architects, and city planners have read **Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture** (1980). This book, by Christian Norberg-Schulz, is one of the most important books about the concept of place. Norberg-Schulz suggests that: "the spaces where life occurs are places...A place is a space which has a distinct character. Since ancient times the *genius loci*, or spirit of place, has been recognized as the concrete reality man has to face and come to terms with in his daily life. [Landscape] Architecture means to visualize the *genius loci* and the task of the architect is to create meaningful places, whereby he helps man to dwell (5)." He recognizes that: "The structure of a place is not a fixed, eternal state." Even so, the essence of a place often persists in different forms. As Norberg-Schulz says: "*Stabilitas loci* is a necessary condition for human life (18)."

Project for Public Spaces (PPS) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping people create and sustain public spaces that build strong communities. PPS is the central hub of the global placemaking movement, connecting people to ideas, resources, expertise, and partners who see place as the key to addressing our greatest challenges. <https://www.pps.org/>

A fundamental question that PPS explores is "What makes a successful place?" According to PPS: "Great public spaces are those places where celebrations are held, social and economic exchanges occur, friends run into each other, and cultures mix. They are the "front porches" of our public institutions – libraries, field houses, schools – where we interact with each other and government. When these spaces work well, they serve as the stage for our public lives."

Another question PPS has investigated is: "What makes some places succeed while others fail?" PPS says: "In evaluating thousands of public spaces around the world, PPS has found that to be successful, they generally share the following four qualities: they are accessible; people are engaged in activities there; the space is comfortable and has a good image; and finally, it is a sociable place: one where people meet each other and take people when they come to visit."

The agrarian author and philosopher **Wendell Berry** once spoke of "his" home and favorite place like this: "... I don't feel "associated" with all of Henry County. The part of it that I intimately belong to, my home country, is a sort of corridor running from New Castle to the Kentucky River below Port Royal, in the watersheds of Emily's Run, Cane Run, and Town Branch of Drennon Creek. That is the country I rambled and swam, and fished and hunted in when I was a boy. It contains all the farms I have worked on and know best." For Berry, he took: "...some surprise and a lot of comfort in realizing how endlessly instructive and enriching my knowledge of so small a scrap of country has been and still is." <https://gardenandgun.com/feature/wendell-berry-the-poet-of-place/>

Goals:

- define the concept of place
- explore different types of places
- document and inventory a specific place holistically by its unique and inherent identity
- identify key features of a place and analyze their relationships and meanings
- derive inspiration and place-based ideas to be used for designing
- present a compelling and appropriate visual story of place and the various places you've explored

Procedures:

Part A

- ☐ **Select a favorite place.** The place should be somewhere you enjoy visiting and that holds meaning for you. The place should be close enough to visit at least once. You must have safe access to the place.
- ☐ Go to **Google Maps** or similar. Find your favorite place. Zoom in so that your place fills the screen. Save this image or take a screen shot. Print the map on 8.5x11 if you can.
- ☐ **Plan your trip** to the place. Think about these questions before going to your place:
 - What will you do first when you get there?
 - Where will you start?
 - How will you progress through the place?
 - What will you need to take with you?
 - What do you want to inventory and document?
 - What data will you collect?
 - What stands out and what seems hidden away?
- ☐ **Write down your plan** in your sketchbook.
- ☐ **Important Note:** you will be using this place for *Exercise 1: Favorite Place* in *LARC 1280*.
Your sketches of your favorite place along with your photos will be used for both projects.

Part B

- ☐ **Go to your place** according to plan.
- ☐ **Take pictures. Take video. Sketch. Collect samples. Write notes. Spend Time.** Document, translate, and re-present what you experienced.

Part C

- ☐ When you get back to your studio. **Organize your data, docs, images, and videos.**
- ☐ **Think about** how these items tell separate and shared stories. Continue to document, translate, and re-present what you experienced.
- ☐ **Write a reflection in your sketchbook.** Make up a story about your place. Emphasize what was there what wasn't. What was the Genius Loci or underlying spirit of the place?

Part D

- ☐ **Spark Page Story.** Turn your reflection, notes, pictures, and other content into a Spark Page story using the templates provided. You will add to this story in the follow parts.
- ☐ **Post** your Spark Page.
- ☐ **Present** according to schedule.

DUE: SEPT. 17

Part E

- ☐ **Select two more places to study from the list below.** You may pick any two you want. However, it might be easier if you think about all three (favorite plus two below) as a set of sort. Here are your choices:
 - a. Shared Place
 - b. Damaged Place
 - c. Youthful Place
 - d. Sad Place
 - e. Fun Place
 - f. Fixed-Up Place
 - g. Wildlife Place
 - h. Your Choices
- ☐ **Follow Parts A through C above for each of these two places.** For each place do the following: research the site, make a plan, visit the site according to plan, document your experience, reflect on it, and tell its story.

Part F

- ☐ **Spark Page Story.** Turn your reflection, notes, pictures, and other content into a Spark Page story using the templates provided. You will add to this story in the follow parts.
- ☐ **Post** your Spark Page.
- ☐ **Present** according to schedule.

DUE: SEPT. 29

Part G

- ☐ **Create an Adobe Spark Page** using the template as a guide. Make sure that you create a rhythm and sense of consistency between your three places. Or, you could use design to contrast the places so that you emphasize their different characteristics.
- ☐ Here is **a written outline for your Spark Page.** There are five parts. *You do not need to use these headings.*
 - a. Introduction including:
 - i. What is a Place? The concept of place

- ii. Key features of great places
 - iii. An overview of your three places
- b. Favorite Place
- c. "2" Place
- d. "3" Place
- e. Conclusion including:
 - i. What makes places great?
 - ii. What have you learned...

Part H

- ☐ **Post** your Spark Page.
- ☐ **Present** according to schedule.

DUE: DEC 1

Schedule:

Sept. 17	Parts A-D/Present D
Oct. 29	Parts E-F/Present F
Dec. 1	Parts G-H/Present H