



Note: this assignment was developed during Spring 2020 when the COVID pandemic hit NY. Fernanda Blanco Vidal developed it as part of the course Psychology of People in Places – From Climate Changes to Gentrification offered on Friday 9:00 to 11:30 City College – CUNY.

Reflexive Paper – Place Meaning During the Pandemic

Sense-Making

This paper is an alternative to the midterm "fieldwork paper" in which you were supposed to do observations and mapping in public spaces. Since we are now expected not to go outside, the idea with this project is to give you space to reflect on your own experience staying at home and being not able to walk around, visit people, and have in-person meetings. As we have discussed this semester, our relationship to place changes is based on what we experience or what kind of transformations people and places are exposed to. Place Attachment and Place Meaning are in constant transformation, and in this paper, you will be using your own experience to make sense of this transformative and dynamic process.

For instance, if we focus on the home as our unit of analysis right now, about a month ago, the meaning of home or at least the meaning of "staying at home" was different. With the pandemic, this stay-at-home process has changed how we are experiencing this intimate and private space. For some people, for example, maybe now home is a site of protection and confinement. People can have mixed feelings about home, and its meaning is probably changing day by day. For other people, let's say, the workers on the frontlines of this pandemic, maybe home might be a space for resting or worrying since their presence can expose their beloved ones to the virus. Therefore, in this reflexive essay, try to answer these questions.

What is the meaning of home for you now? How did that change (or didn't it)? And how about public space, do you miss it? What do you miss the most? How are you exercising social distance, especially with your significant ones?

Please, take these questions as starting points. You don't have to answer all of them. Self-reflexive paper

This is a self-reflective paper, and it should have around 800 to 1200 words. You should write about place meaning and attachment regarding your own home, public spaces, City College, or work. You can pick one place to reflect or a couple of them. It is up to you.



You do not need to share personal issues but personal reflections. More than that, you are asked to connect the readings we have discussed in our classes. Pay special attention to these articles. They will provide you with important insights and lenses. If you don't have enough time, the first two are especially important.



1. Manzo, L. (2005). For better or worse: Exploring multiple dimensions of place meaning. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 25(1), 67-86.
2. Imrie, r (2004) Disability, embodiment and the meaning of the home, *Housing Studies*, 19:5, 745-763, DOI: 10.1080/0267303042000249189
3. Scannell, Leila; Gifford, Robert (2010). Defining place attachment: A tripartite organizing framework. In *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 2010, Vol.30(1), pp.1-10
4. Cooper, Marcus, C. (1992). "Environmental Memories." In I. Altman and S. Low (Eds). *Place Attachment*. New York: Plenum Press.

Feel free to add other bibliographies from other classes, articles you read in journals, or reliable newspapers and magazines. Poetry and literature are also welcome at this moment and paper.

Here you can find a link for an excellent website part of a book called "The People, the Place, and Space Reader" organized by scholars from my program <https://peopleplacespace.org/toc/section-5/>. On this website, there is a special session on the meaning of home.

Bellow, I provide some guidelines for this exercise. You can use them to write your paper. Feel free and let your writing and creative process flow.

Creative and visual exercises (what do you want to focus on? Home, Public Space, City College, Work at Home ...)

- ✓ Take a sheet of paper and colored pencils and pens. Sit down and take a few minutes. Draw how you feel at this moment and the meaning of your home/public space/city college right at this moment.
- ✓ If you are focusing on your home, draw your home (as a map) and try to perceive where you spent most of your time (you can use colors and different intensities). If you are focusing on another place, for instance, your college, use the same logic. Which parts of your college are you missing the most?
- ✓ While doing this exercise, think about the meaning of home one month ago and now. Brainstorm it. Let your mind flows, and then you can use the content to organize your paper

Other topics – prompts

If you are exploring other places, here are some questions to help your reflections.

- ✓ City College. Are you missing it? What are you missing? The people? The place? Both? Which parts of the college do you miss the most?
- ✓ Public spaces – what kind of spaces are you missing? Streets, parks, playgrounds, cafes, etc.? What is the meaning of those spaces for you right now? Did that meaning change from what it was?
- ✓ How is your connection with family, friends, and beloved ones using the internet? What kind of activities are you incorporating now in these connections? Do you feel connected to them? Do you think that once you are in contact, connected, talking to each other, your perception of the distance changes?
- ✓ How about working at home? Are you working at home? What are the differences? How are you feeling the fact that those boundaries (home and work) are now blurred?



Do not forget to connect with the theories.

- ✓ Considering the tripartite model (people-place-process) suggested by Scannell, Leila; Gifford, Robert (2010), what do you think has changed to the people-place-process due to social isolation?
- ✓ How have those readings helped (or not) in your own experience?

Again, you do not need to write about everything. You do not need to talk specifically about home. You can write a reflective essay focusing on the meaning of public space, workspace, classroom, and home, connection with people using the internet, etc.

Take the points that you feel more connected with.

Do not overwhelm yourself if you are experiencing distress at home. Take another topic, and have fun.

And if, for any reason, you do not want to write about this topic, please send me an email, and we will figure out another topic or project.