

Rural Conversation Prompts, v1 (2018)

We are artists who have spent a good amount of time as visitors, making projects in and with communities that are new to us. We are also deep home-artists in our own home-places, and have been facilitators and hosts of residencies and visiting artist projects.

We are working together on a collection of projects exploring the ethics of visiting, the politics of engaged work, and what it means to be a citizen artist. We're reflecting, making tools for inquiry, and trying to ask the hard questions. Our practices incorporate strategies from graphic design, design research, workshop facilitation, journalism, and neighboring.

—*Mary Welcome (Palouse, WA) and Nicole Lavelle (Lagunitas, CA)*

Print these flashcards! Cut them down the middle, and voila!

These cards are designed on standard letter-sized paper, ready to print on a basic home or office printer. They require no re-sizing or special treatment. If you're feeling really deluxe, laminate them!

If you are working with an institution that has a budget, and you find this tool useful, please consider getting in touch to make a monetary donation to support our artistic labor.

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- Give us attribution (Mary Welcome and Nicole Lavelle) (linking to our work is even nicer!)
- Not sell the work in a commercial context
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We love feedback! Get in touch to let us know how these flashcards are working for you.

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UTOPIA

time

purpose

history

Utopia

Is utopia a process, or a destination?

Is it based on impossibility or potential?

Where do you see utopias around you?

Towards what type of utopia do you wish to work?

A utopia is an imagined community or society that possesses highly desirable or nearly perfect qualities for its citizens. According to Lyman Tower Sargent "there are **socialist, capitalist, monarchical, democratic, anarchist, ecological, feminist, patriarchal, egalitarian, hierarchical, racist, left-wing, right-wing, reformist, Naturists/Nude Christians, free love, nuclear family, extended family, gay, lesbian**, and many more utopias".

The term utopia was coined from Greek by Sir Thomas More for his 1516 book Utopia, describing a fictional island society. The word comes from Greek: οὐ ("not") and τόπος ("place") and means "no-place." (Wikipedia)

Purpose

Other words for purpose: motivation, goal, intention

What is your intention?

What is your goal?

What is your motivation?

Where do you see purpose manifested in the landscape?

Who is behind it?

Time

Discuss how time interacts with place.

Is it necessary to consider time when considering place?

Where can you see geologic time scales in the environment?

Where can you see human time scale in the environment?

Take turns pointing out visible evidence of time in the built and natural environment; what do you see and what does it tell you?

Where can you see the future?

READ Sense of Place, Sense of Time, J.B. Jackson

History

Where do you see history in this place?

Where is it visible, and where is it invisible?

How do you think **now** will be remembered?

Who has written it? Who is publishing it, paying for it?

Who do these histories benefit?

Whose histories are missing? How will you find them?

READ Outside Lies Magic, John Stilgoe

RURAL

engagement

language

speculation

rural

How do you define rural?

What are examples of different communities and places who define themselves as “rural”? How do they use the word?

Discuss the meaning of each of these words and how they relate to the idea of the rural.

Agrarian

Remote

Wilderness

Landscape

Small town

Desert

Mountains

Tourism

Destination

language

How does language contrast with experience as a way to understand place?

Do you ever feel like language is inadequate? In what ways?

Discuss the language used by different voices when telling the story of a place. What are their motivations? What words do they use or not use?

Signage at a store

Billboard advertisements

Voices on the radio

Advertisements for tourism

Fiction

Poetry

Journalism / Reporting

engagement

What does “engagement” mean to you?

Who uses this word and why?

Does engagement have to be reciprocal, by definition?

What is the difference between “engagement” and each of these other things?

Participation

Contribution

Collaboration

How does generosity factor into engagement?

speculation

How has speculation impacted this environment?

What is the history of risk in this landscape?

Where do you see speculation now?

What is being guessed, hoped for, expected?

What is the emotional impact of speculation in this place? Where do people’s hopes, dreams, and fears live in the landscape?

community

VISITOR

place

tourist

community

How do you define community?

How is community formed? What conditions does it require?

Where do you see centers for community in the natural environment? In the built environment?

Discuss a community's relationship to visitors, outsiders, strangers.

visitor

When do you identify as a visitor?

What is the opposite of visitor, and when do you identify as that?

What are the responsibilities of a visitor?

READ On the Beaten Track: Tourism, Art and Place by Lucy Lippard

place

Define place by using "space" as a contrast.

Now, define place without using the word "space."

What is the most important place to you?
Quick, go with your gut reaction!

Is it your home-place? Is it your heart-place?
Is it your origin-place? Somewhere else entirely?

How can you see place? What is the evidence that allows you to understand the ways a place is different from every other place?

tourist

What is the difference between a visitor and a tourist?

Between a guest and a tourist?
Between a researcher and a tourist?

What impact does tourism have on places?
Discuss positives and negatives.

What kinds of language does the tourism industry use to describe places? How is this different than the way locals talk about the same place?

Discuss the idea of "balance" as it relates to tourism and place.

What about Airbnb?

READ The Lure of the Local, Lucy Lippard

READ Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience, Yi-Fu Tuan

READ On the Beaten Track: Tourism, Art and Place by Lucy Lippard

READ The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class, Dean MacCannell

FRONTIER

vernacular

West

wild

frontier

What is a “frontier”?

How has the word been used in American history?

How has it moved, and in what directions?

(Geographically and otherwise)

Discuss the complications of the word. Whose frontier is it?

Who uses the word, and for what reasons?

Are you in the frontier now?

Is there still a frontier?

West

What does it mean when the word West is capitalized?

What does “West” mean to you? What about “west”?

Where does the West begin? Where does it end?

Is the West real? Where?

What is the purpose of myth?

Who are the carriers of myth?

vernacular

Other words for vernacular: folk, commonplace, everyday

Consider “vernacular” as it relates to:

Landscape

Art

Architecture

Media

Why is vernacular culture important?

READ Sense of Place, Sense of Time by JB Jackson

wild

What does “wild” mean when used to describe a landscape?

What does “wild” mean when used to describe an animal?

What does “wild” mean when used to describe human behavior?

Have you been in the wild?

Do you want to go? Why or why not?

READ The Practice of the Wild, Essays by Gary Snyder

water

home

intervention

native

water

Where is water here? Where can you see it?

How is water life?

When is water political?

Is water social?

Discuss symbolism of water.

home

Where is your home?

In what ways is your home like this place?

In what ways is it different?

Who calls this place home?

Describe what you see, the evidence of private life.

Does “home” refer to the place one lives?

Or the place one is from?

Is home a location, or a feeling?

What are the politics of “home”?

intervention

Where do you see evidence of human
intervention in the landscape?

Are humans the only things that intervene?

Can you see evidence of non-human intervention in the landscape?

When is an action part of a healthy, functioning ecosystem,
and when does it tip towards “intervention”?

native

What are the different ways we use the word “native”?

Are any of those ways problematic? If so, how?

What are other words to use besides “native”?

Where are you native to? Where are your ancestry native to?

What plants around here are native? Which ones aren't?

What are the words used to describe non-native plants?

environment

landscape

field

ART

environment

What are the different ways we use the word “environment”?

What is your relationship to the environment?

Part of it? Within it? Near it?

landscape

What is land? What is a scape?

What is a landscape painting?

Is it a landscape if you're in it,
or do you have to be looking at it?

What about metaphoric landscapes?

Symbolic landscapes?

field

What is a field?

What is *the* field?

What does it mean to *be in the field*?

What is *fieldwork*?

Where are the edges of the field?

Can you see past the field?

What grows here?

art

Where does your art live? Who is your art for?

Does art require *making*, or are there other verbs?

What is an “art context”?

Is art different in different places? Why or why not?
What does the internet mean for regionalism in art?

In relation to art, discuss the difference between:

site

location

place