Perceiving Place: A Social Design Case Study
PERCEIVING PLACE: A SOCIAL DESIGN CASE STUDY
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PROJECT SUMMARY
This project works to determine how the historical, cultural, environmental, and social factors of an area affect one’s perception of place. My research specifically focuses on the neighborhood of Twin Towers in Dayton, Ohio, and seeks to find if the application of this method will reveal varying differences in internal and external perceptions and the level to which they may or may not vary. I am interested in further exploring the ways in which such knowledge can then lend itself to the creation of more informed and effective neighborhood-based design, especially centered on bridging potential gaps in understandings of place within Dayton, OH.

BACKGROUND

Hypothesis: A person’s perception is influenced by a variety of factors, and these factors such as history, culture, environment, and social make-up, actively affect what they interpret as reality. If I develop an in-depth understanding of what influences one’s perception of a place, I will be able to create more informed design focused on positive change.

AREA OF FOCUS

RESEARCH PHASES

Phase 1 - Understanding Perception
Method: Review of Literature

Phase 2 - Developing Twin Towers Narrative
Method: Interviews and Analysis

Phase 3 - Designing for Diversity
Method: Neighborhood Proposal

FINDINGS

Phase 1 – Understanding Perception
Confirmation of the first part of my hypothesis: these four categories are affecting perception of place and can be broken down in this way.

Phase 2 – Developing Twin Towers Narrative
Interviews revealed the root factors affecting perception of place among internal, midway, and external sources. Analysis of these interviews and neighborhood observations showed that Twin Towers is extremely diverse and that the main gaps in perceptions are between internal and external perceptions.

Phase 3 – Designing for Diversity
Such diversity lends itself to various lived experiences and understandings of place. On an external level, these perceptions can be changed through a unified neighborhood identity, shifting the way outsiders see the space. Internally, there is a lack of sharing and connectivity, something that can only come from in-person contact. Thus, I developed a two-fold neighborhood revitalization plan.

CONCLUSION
- there are many aspects of perception
- rooted in the individual, but focused externally
- important for urban planners and community leaders
- how do we shift this to a global approach?

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