



The Necessity of Place

Honors Thesis

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by

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introduction, preface

Introduction

This thesis is one undergraduate student's journey to find the meaning of place. The journey is an account of the experience of discovering the power of place in landscape design. The following chapters are split into three parts; the first studying the theory of place in literature and in the landscape architectural profession. The second part of the thesis was a case study inspired by the great researcher William H. Whyte's work on human behavior in urban settings. The methods tested and observations made helped me to define the meaning of place. The final chapter is a studio project where the ideas of place and context are applied to landscape design. The following thesis is meant to narrate my process of discovering the meaning of place, and the absolute necessity of designing for it.

Preface

This thesis has been developing over the past four years of my undergraduate career in the Landscape Architecture Department of Cornell University. Every landscape project, conversation, assignment, paper, reading, and experience I have had in the past four years has led up to the thoughts in this thesis. This thesis is really just the beginning point to a future in "place making" studies. There are so many more things to learn about "place" in landscape architecture, and I cannot say how excited I am to continue on with these studies.

For the last year or so I have had distinct moments of clarity in which I have furiously translated my fleeting thoughts into sketchbooks, the margins of books, and the backs of random sheets of paper. The collection of notes elegantly depicts the process of the thesis.

“I have always felt the influence of landscape on people, and then with Paula Horrigan’s landscape architecture studio, realized that the designer can manipulate the landscape to have an affect on people. I am now realizing how they have an effect on one another, and how to depict, mark, trace, observe, and record the affect. And also how this realization can translate into affective space, and therefore, successful design. Arguing that the only way we can move forward with landscape architecture as a ‘known’ profession is to make affective spaces. With resources dwindling, human values disintegrating, and urban space losing its sense of place, we must create landscapes that have an affect because people will always have an affect (positive and negative) on space. Even more thoughtful design can analyze how landscape and people can have an affect on each other, and how the landscape architect can facilitate and predict this interplay (7.22.07).”

I began to see the profession and practice of landscape architecture more clearly. I became increasingly passionate about the subject as I read, thought, and discussed the idea of place. I saw what I believed the profession needed, and where the profession could go.

“A project is more than a designed space. It is the space that you provide people who will make it a place. It is about what goes on in the space the design provides. The (conventional landscape) architecture of a space is not the end in design, but a means to an end. The end is what events, activities, and emotions occur in that space, which is what creates place. I appreciate the need for specificity in design-the measurements, construction documents, site engineering-but I do not believe that this is design. Design is what happens after the site is constructed. I would like to focus on what the site will do and does, un-built and existing. I would like to affect the after by focusing in on the before, where you can most effect the after-that is-the life of the site that is created (11.25.07).”

I developed my idea of what was important in landscape architecture, and found ways to express and validate these ideas. Landscape architects are visual people and I began to work on techniques that would portray and further develop the concepts graphically.

As an example of a visual way to depict places, I was inspired by a lecture given by James Turrell at Cornell University on November 12th, 2007. He made me realize that perhaps the amount of light, form, sky, and earth that you see in the perspective experience of space is the basis for your experience of the place. I was inspired to diagram the visual planes in different spaces (How much sky, earth, etc. you see) and to see if the amount of each element mass in the perspective could correlate to the amount and quality of attachment to the space.

“It is not the specifics, but the planes of space-of activity, of motion, of sky, of the built, of earth. It is a clarity that one gets from a space; an understanding of the planes that collectively are space. (11.12.07)

Other graphic representations were inspired by projects in studios, and readings in books of completed projects; all were ways of understanding the idea of place, and body and space from a variety of perspectives.

A class in Cornell University’s City and Regional Planning department, lead by Jeremy Foster, taught me about the idea of context. To me, this was the link between people, site, and place.

“I have come to believe that place is only constructed from that which surrounds the space (4.22.08).”

More than anything, this thesis has become an evolving process of my exploration in landscape architecture. It is a collection of related ideas, methods, and perspectives, in hopes of making the idea of place more approachable to designers. I have realized that in the end, it truly represents so much more than the assemblage of text, photo, and image.

I would like to give my sincerest thanks to a great number of people who have inspired and supported me through the process of this thesis and through my

undergraduate education at Cornell University. To Deni Ruggeri, who, new to the department faculty, agreed to take on this project and advise me based on his extensive knowledge of the subject of people, and who similarly passionately pursues the study of experience of landscape. It was an honor to work under someone who is so experienced in this incredible part of landscape architecture. To Daniel Krall, who has always supported me in my pursuits of landscape architecture. My academic advisor, thesis reference, and friend-Dan has consistently kept me pushing for my goals and kept me on track even when I felt that I could not do anymore. To Paula Horrigan, whose sophomore landscape architecture studio opened my mind to the possibilities of place and to the link between people and space. Paula's support and understanding lead me to "place making", and to the realization of my passion in landscape architecture. To Jeremy Foster, whose class in Cornell's City and Regional Planning Department during my senior year introduced me to the idea of context. His emphasis on, and support of, the experience of place has and continues to drive me through my research. He continues to be an inspiration. To my family and friends who have always given their love and support of my passions and interests beyond even the boundaries of this thesis. To the unnamed faculty, staff, and students of the Cornell University Department of Landscape Architecture who provided the opportunity and base for my understanding of landscape. It was an experience that I will always cherish and remember. I would not be anywhere without the department's knowledge, flexibility, friendship, and support. To the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell University, for giving me the unique and incredible opportunity to develop this individual thesis project. I only wish that this

thesis was more complete to honor these important people in my life of landscape, but I truly believe that this project represents only the beginning of a great pursuit of place. The future is where I will be able to do justice to the people who have taught me so much. I am forever grateful for these experiences you all have offered.

***Most of the writing and formatting of this thesis was written in a particular place; a little European-style café in Collegetown of Ithaca, New York. The casual environment of the café blended sensually aromatic specialty coffee, fine food, and the constant movement and conversation of many sorts of people, inspired me through the completion of this project. The idea of place has been with me throughout the entire development of this thesis project. Place is something that we are subconsciously and instinctively drawn to.



i. theory of place

Potential

Landscape architecture is the manifestation of potential. It is the concretion of thought, analysis, and layer understanding. According to Arnold Reijndorp, “urban sociologists... consider the built environment as a ‘potential’ environment, which can only be transformed into a social or cultural environment through use and by acquiring a history (Meurs, 87).” Essentially, even though landscape architecture appears to provide the potential of space, it is the use and human connection that make the ‘potential’ space a place. Place is not static, a characteristic often overlooked by landscape architects in design and representation. Place is the opportunity for human beings to use, interact with, and be a part of the physical world. It is an entirely human ideological construct. Without place, humans would have nothing physical to attach to, and would be living entirely in the mind. “Place is the concretion of human value (Tuan, 12).”

Potential is what landscape architects design for; the creator of passion, purpose, and the will to make the world better. It seems foolish to suggest that many landscape architects forget what they are designing for, but it is entirely true in the design field. It is easy to get caught up in the act of design, easy to use the unique opportunity to make a place an icon representative of the designer, rather than a reflection of existing conditions and circumstances. Designers are in fact human beings who support the idea that “Every person is at the center of his world (Tuan, 41).” However, it is the responsibility of a designer to channel the desire to represent his or herself in the design opportunity, into a productive, intelligent, and passionate creation of potential. Designers have the unique opportunity to use their holistic

understanding of spatiality and of human behavior to mold lost landscapes into prospective places. It is the responsibility of the designer to consider human behavior in the design of their spaces. How can a designer justify a design that lacks anthropometric compatibility? What do landscape architects design for, if not for people?

Ideally, it should not be a question of whom landscape architects are designing for, but it is a large issue on the forefront of many spatial theorists' minds. It is most likely caused by a lack of education or awareness of the way human beings function. To be a designer, one must be able to justify aesthetic arrangements of space or object, and possess the ability to artistically understand three-dimensionality. Nowhere in landscape architectural education is there a formal requirement of an understanding of human behavior, tendency, or attachment. It is relatively simple to design a space which is aesthetically successful, but what about designing a space that generates meaning?

It comes down to an understanding of the relationship between the body and space. How do bodies relate to the space they are in, or move through? How does the arrangement of space adjust to the presence of human beings? What is that meaningful human-space connection, that attainment of potential that emerges from landscape architecture when it is done correctly? Is there a formula, or is it a delicate and unique linking of dynamics that creates place out of space? This thesis will attempt to better understand how designers can learn to design focusing on the idea of place.

Place and Context

“Movement is essential to the experience of space (Meurs, 87).” Space is not some thing or object to behold, but an area that a human can relate to in a physical and mental way. The word ‘space’ implies something to interact in, as well as the static objects that create boundaries. The word ‘place’ refers to a space, yet it contains a personal connection or meaning, implying that space is devoid of meaning and significance without actual human influence. Space and place are very different concepts, and according to many cultural geographers, this is a difference worth knowing. “Place is a type of object. Places and objects define space, giving it a geometric personality (Tuan, 17).” Harvey Cox, quoted in Edward Relph’s *Place and Placelessness* wrote, “Space is for man and places are understood as giving pace, variety and orientation to man (Relph, 145).”

A place is not one static object, or even the arrangement of objects in space. A place is a metaphysical condition that exists when many circumstances come into play. For example,

“A city such as San Francisco is recognized by its unique setting, topography, skyline, odors, and street noises. An object or place achieves concrete reality when our experience of it is total, that is, through all the senses as well as with the active and reflective mind (Tuan, 18).”

Tuan suggests a couple of important points. First of all, all of the senses are what determine experience of space. It is not as if humans use only one sense when encountering a space; they will hear things, smell things, see things, touch things, and perhaps even taste things. Human senses allow us to understand the world at different degrees, and then combine the information into a complete or personal understanding of that particular experience. Designers must take this absolutely

dynamic and exciting opportunity to better influence people, and use it to their advantage in design. Unfortunately for the common designer, this information may seem cryptic or unattainable without significant research, though I believe it can be accomplished with much of our own simple observation of how we and other humans react to different sensual stimuli. Designers need to use their mortality to their advantage to help to create a holistic experience for people in space. What would be more satisfying than to create a place that stimulates all five senses and affects users so deeply that they start to develop an attachment to the space created, making it a true place?

In the San Francisco quote, Tuan also suggests that not only a variety of senses come into play when designing space, but a variety of environmental, cultural, social, political, temporal, and historical horizontalities (a word frequently referred to by a professor Jeremy Foster) have great effect. The topography of a site is the basis for design, theoretically and physically. Historical uses and memories are sedimentary layers that collect on sites over time. History leaves traces of objects and of previous lives. The structures and objects that remain are often empty reminders of what once was important, and now are only meaningless matter that take up forgotten space. They exist in memory, but in the present are only pieces of a time that once had value and significance.

Environmental, cultural, social, political, and temporal influences are flexible and intangible, yet deeply affect forms that are built from the layers of history over topography. These elements represent a society's value system, therefore, when used in design, they help to make space into a significant and understandable place. If

landscape architects do not consider these elements that are representative of current human values, how can they expect to make spaces that are meaningful, or have the ability to be relatable to human beings? Designers must use human tools and knowledge to help their spaces construct meaning.

The Human Perspective

It should be mentioned that it is not designers that make place. Designers only provide the structure and potential for place, but it is the human interaction that determines meaning and identity. Designers can use human values globally and individually to help make spaces more meaningful. Placing objects in space randomly or simply aesthetically is not a way to make the multi-dimensional human being relate to place. Perhaps the non-designer would understand the placement of objects in plan view with some form of explanation, but the plan view does not provide an adequate perspective what I call the “five foot view.” It also fails to take into account the sensuality, sensitivity, and intellectual nature of human beings. Humans are far from objects that can be freely directed and manipulated in space through objects in plan. Humans believe that space is something that they rightfully can interact with and affect, so why do designers expect them to simply obey and understand aesthetic object placement? It is critical for designers to take the multi-dimensionality of human beings into account when designing for them in space.

It has been my experience that landscape architects tend to not understand the importance of theory and conceptual design in projects. Landscape architects seem to focus explicitly on the specifics of a project, the materials, costs, and in particular, site boundaries. This is an inappropriate way to design. Yes, landscape architects are

not just theorists and have the ability to translate thought into something concrete and relatable, but we cannot forget where designs come from. We cannot deny the importance of thought behind every design decision, and more importantly, the many factors that affect design beyond the site boundary. Analysis and conceptual design should be a significant part of landscape architecture, and many firms believe in this concept and that is why they create the incredible projects that are built and successful today. It is unacceptable for landscape architects to design without thought of the users of the site, as well as the theoretical, global, and regional implications of design decisions.

Theorists, researchers, and designers driven by the place are passionate and articulate people. Writer, Edward Relph, defines the importance of place to human beings:

“Places are fusions of human and natural order and are the significant centers of our immediate experiences of the world. They are defined less by unique locations, landscape, and communities than by the focusing of experiences and intentions onto particular settings. Places are not abstractions or concepts, but are directly experiences phenomena of the lived-world and hence are full with meanings, with real objects, and with ongoing activities. They are important sources of individual and communal identity, and are often profound centers of human existence to which people have deep emotional and psychological ties. Indeed our relationships with places are just as necessary, varied, and sometimes perhaps just as unpleasant, as our relationships with other people (Relph, 141).”

Relph’s passion for the subject absolutely oozes from the pages of *Place and Placelessness*. A place is a space that has meaning, that is defined by the context of the place, and the direct and personal experiences of those who visit the space. The success of a space is defined by the people who make it a place. As Relph expressed above, it is the unique relationship that is formed between the individual and the

space, most similar to the relationship between two people. If a place is as special as a human relationship, then designers need to take this reality into much more consideration. Designers need to understand this relationship, what makes this space, this relationship, this collection of people work in this constructed environment.

In order to begin to understand the idea of place and context from a designer's stand point, I developed a methodology to observe and understand the human behavior in a designed landscape. The application of this methodology offered insights into human behavior, pattern, and general attachment, and to a final design studio project designing from the essence of a place (because place exists even before the designer puts a pen to paper). The following parts (ii and iii) are the translation of theory of place into the understanding and design of place, and they aim to clarify the ideas discussed in this part (i).



ii. methodology

The Idea

An important part of being a landscape architect is the ability to observe. The design profession requires that one know human behavior in order to design for human beings. The profession assumes in its educational system of design that if you are innately drawn to design and have a passion for it, then you instinctively know the science of human behavior. If you are human, it is also generally assumed that you know and understand human behavior. This is not the case. Many designers, as discussed in the previous chapter, design for their own ego and value system.

William H. Whyte had it right:

“I end, then, in praise of small spaces. The multiplier effect is tremendous. It is not just the number of people using them, but the larger number who pass by and enjoy them vicariously, or the even larger number who feel better about the city center for knowledge of them. For a city, such places are priceless, whatever the cost. They are built of a set of basics and they are right in front of our noses. If we will look. (Whyte, 101).”

The components of enjoyed places that respond to human behavior are simple and obvious, but designers need to recognize them; they need to look for them. William Whyte is famous for his work in which he observed people in urban spaces. In reaction to his observations and work, many people scoff at the obvious nature of his observations, but someone had to reveal and validate these social truths. This observation and research are essential for all designers to be aware of and to work with. William Whyte is most known for his observation that humans enjoy spaces where other humans are. They are drawn to crowds. In Whyte’s own words, “What attracts people most, it would appear, is other people. (Whyte, 19). Whyte’s informal

writing makes it relatable to designers and any human interested in understanding why human kind works the way we do.

Project Scope

My intention was to observe people on a plaza the Cornell University Campus (from the Landscape Architecture Department's balcony) was inspired by William Whyte's observations of urban plazas in New York City and my desire to begin to understand how to observe people from a designer's perspective. One component of this thesis is to discuss the experience of observing people. A variety of methods were tested in order to find the best approach for a trained designer to begin to observe people's behavior in an urban landscape space. The methods are discussed further, and general observations and critique of the urban space follow. The observations are then confirmed or rejected using William Whyte's research as a reputable object of comparison.

The Site

Cornell University's Bailey Plaza was designed by the landscape architecture firm Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates. The site, before its design and construction, was a parking lot. It was a hub of pedestrian crossing at the Cornell. The new design was met with much contention, for noth the design itself and the reduction of on-campus parking space, but in the end the pedestrians won a safe place of access, and a new plaza on the Cornell University campus.

The plaza responds to historic Bailey Hall and the many pedestrian paths that cross through the site. The plan was obtained through Cornell University's planning and design department (See the Data, below). From above, the plaza looks like a large

open space of bluestone paneling, a series of long orange-stained wooden benches, colorful woody plantings, and has a stone water feature reminiscent of the nearby gorges. As can be observed from the plan, while the plaza appears complex, the experience on the ground is very different. The paving patterns are virtually indistinguishable (or perhaps incomprehensible from the five-foot eye level perspective), the center of the plaza is completely open and a pedestrian passing through is on display-eyes forward-as they move through this seemingly transient space. The site is a puzzle, and because it is so new it is hard to know if pedestrian activities will be drawn here.

Questions

When beginning the process of observing this site, I chose four questions that I wanted to answer through the observation of this space.

- 1). What is the number of people passing through the site and their positioning compared over time?
- 2). What is the density of people on the site at certain times?
- 3). What are the main corridors of movement?
- 4). How is the site used?

I felt that the answers to these questions would offer some insight about the site, the way it works, and the way people are engaged. Questions 1-3 can be answered and recorded via time lapse images, calculated over time (This methodology was used by William Whyte and inspired the process here). Question 4 can be answered through close observation and record taking of behavior over time. These questions inspired the methodology that would be used to discover information regarding the site.

Methodologies

I went through three iterations to find a method that would work for a designer to study how space works. Each method included taking images with a digital camera of the site from a specific location above. These images would be taken at specific intervals over time. Each method represented one Tuesday at the middle of the day during the beginning of spring at Cornell University¹. Over three weeks, three methods were tested. Visual observations were taken by hand on researcher designed sheets of paper, and analyzed later in the process. The identities of the people observed were sought due to the distant location, and how the data was calculated through Adobe Photoshop tools. The three methods are described and critiqued as follows:

Method 1: The first method involved creating a template to record daily observations. The intent was to take an image of the site from above (a specific location on the Cornell University Landscape Architecture Department terrace) every five minutes for 30 minutes (see Appendix, ii). Through the template, I recorded date, time, location, temperature, weather and ground conditions, circumstances that would effect activity on the plaza (i.e. certain Cornell University events, attire, etc.), and it also offered the opportunity to take general notes and sketches of the activity on the site.

Critique of Method 1: Method 1 was a great start to spatial observation, with most of the necessary components. However, there was no visual area to record observation; no way to spatially orient note taking or locate the observation. A plan

¹ The middle of the day on Tuesday was selected due to my own class schedule, the lunch hour, and the opportunity of plaza use through the transition between classes.

was needed to document the analysis. Taking a time-lapse photo at an interval of one every five minutes was not sufficient. Since much activity was missed while waiting for the next five minute mark to come. Thus, I concluded that the intervals needed to be reduced significantly.

Method 2: The second method applied the needed changes from method 1 (see Appendix, ii). A coding system was also applied, at the suggestion of my experienced advisor-inspired by William Whyte's observation criteria-to the plan system in the analysis. This coding system would allow for quicker and instant data collection, and provide a more efficient basis for analysis after collection. The time lapse was reduced to 1 minute intervals, in hope to be able to get a general idea of movement throughout space, but allowing the time and opportunity for other informal behavioral observations.

Critique of Method 2: The plan and coding system worked better than expected. It was certainly faster and allowed an increased visual record of body movement and human tendency. However, the one map on the analysis page did not permit the ability to track movement or behavior over time. I began to draw my own maps on the back of the sheet to record interesting tendencies within certain time frames. One minute intervals also missed a lot of movement, but the practice of manually taking the pictures, observing on-site, and individually analyzing the data after, made it only realistic to use one minute intervals between snapshots.

Method 3: The final method appeared to be the best system for analyzing human movement using an urban landscape space. It applied the corrections from methods 1 and 2, and proved to be an effective tool at recording behavior. A series of

plans (see Appendix, ii) were provided and allowed for a rich analysis and record of movement and behavior as time passed. The half hour time frame was insufficient to get adequate analysis out of the new method.

Critique of Method 3: This method proved to be a smooth and easy way to spatially record visual observations. There is always the issue of being able to manually take photographs exactly every minute for a half hour while recording visual observations, and this method is not a consistent example of this. A larger number of researchers collecting data should be used to apply this method, as well as apply a more stringent timing system; perhaps also using an automatic time-lapse camera.

Findings

Each of the methods that were tested collected separate sets of data. The data is recorded and organized in the chart below and highlights the opportunities of each set of findings.

Method (Date)	Temp (°F)	Sky Conditions	Description	Time Frame	Total Occupants @ 5min Intervals	Total Occupants at 1:00pm
1 (3/25/08)	37°	Clear	Cool, bright, sunny	12:30-1:00	62	0
2 (4/1/08)	49°	Clear	Warmest at Cornell yet	1:00-1:30	91	24
3 (4/8/08)	50°	Partly Cloudy	Light, cool wind	12:45-1:15	90	18

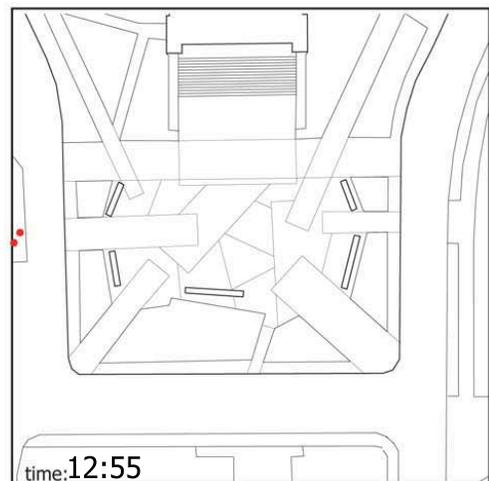
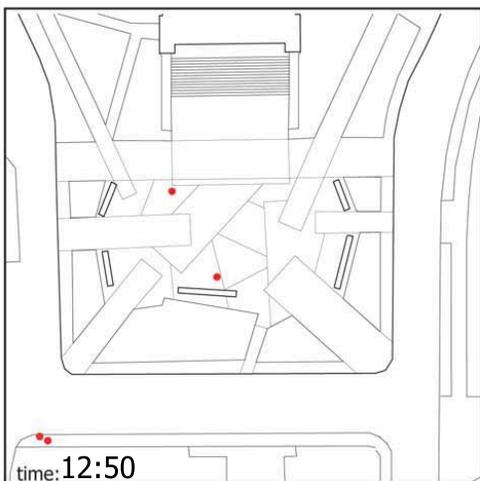
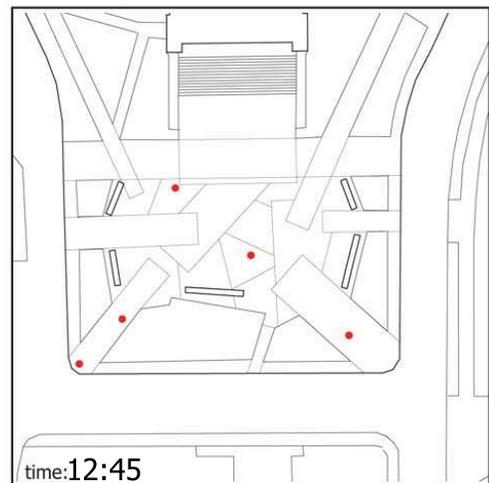
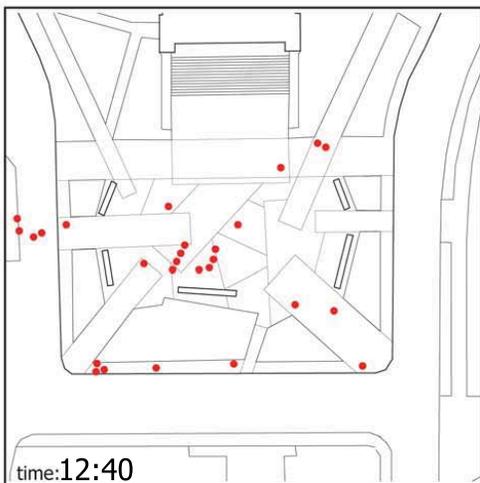
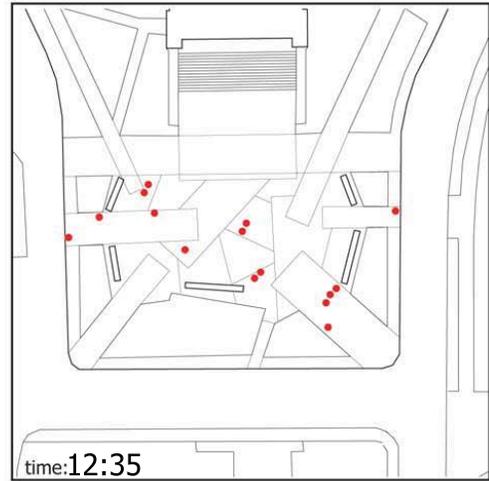
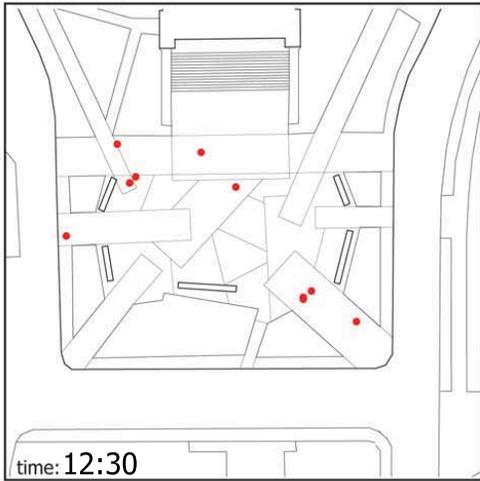
The time-lapse photographs were gathered and transferred into an anonymous series of charts. Each method has a set of data with the plan of Bailey Plaza in the background as well as a set of data without the plan in order to give an idea of spatial relationships. The final diagram in each of the methods is the total number of people

passing through the site throughout the entire 30 minute observation period. It may also be interesting to observe the time-lapse photograph data with the observed data enclosed in the Appendix, ii.

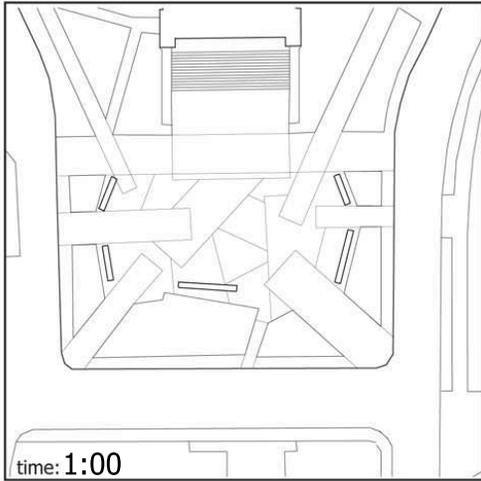
Notes:

- One red dot represents one person.
- The time of the photographs is located in the lower left hand corner.

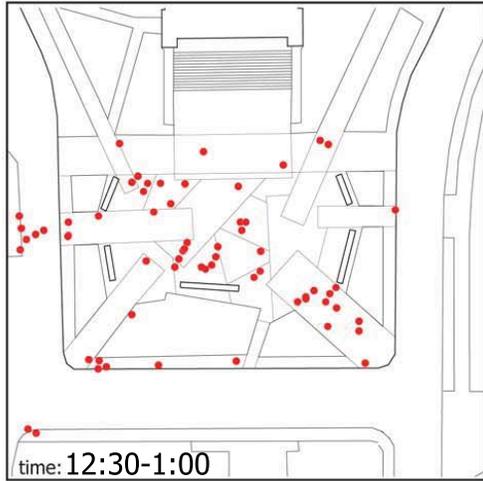
Method 1: Tuesday, March 25th 2008



Method 1: Tuesday, March 25th 2008



Method 1, Combined: Tuesday, March 25th 2008



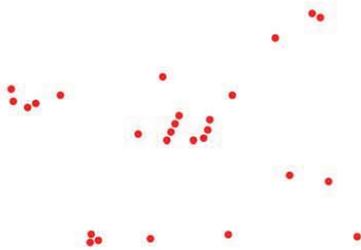
Method 1, No Plan: Tuesday, March 25th 2008



12:30



12:35



12:40



12:45



12:50



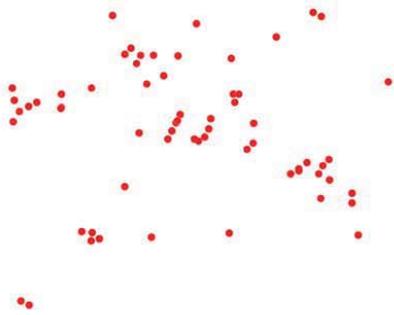
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Method 1, No Plan: Tuesday, March 25th 2008

1:00

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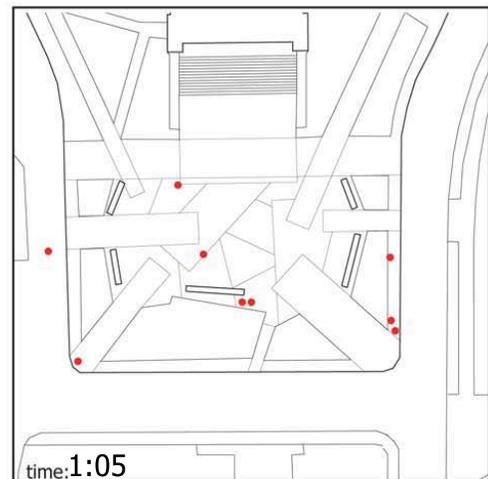
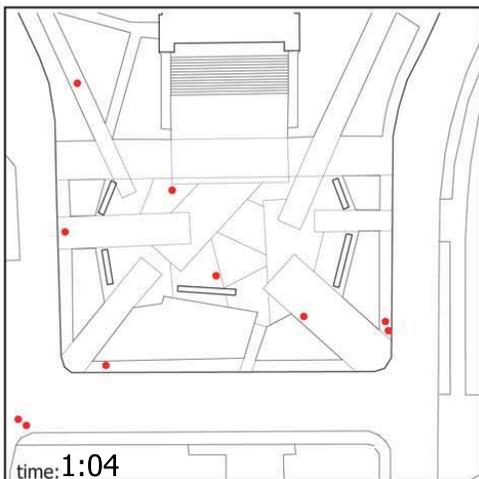
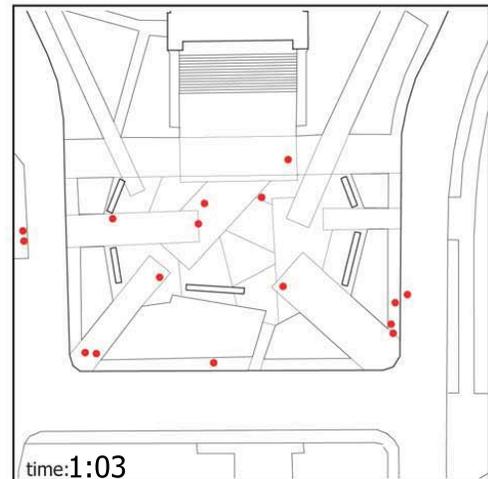
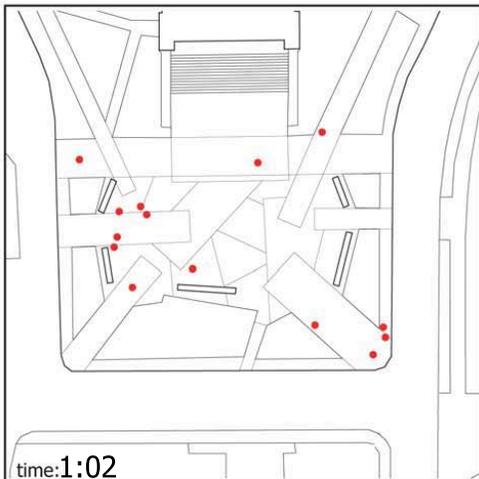
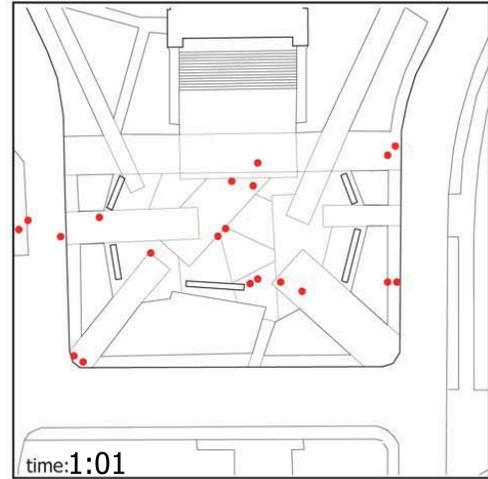
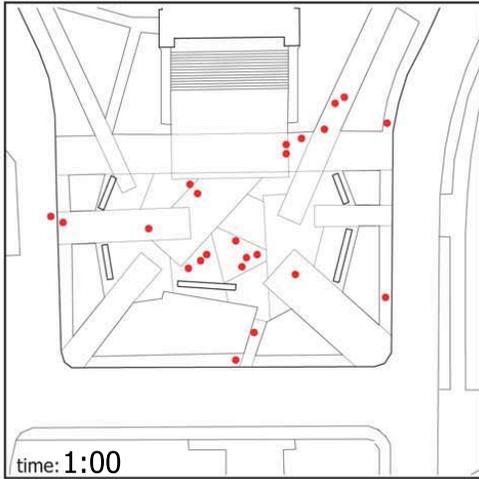
Method 1, Combined, No Plan: Tuesday, March 25th 2008



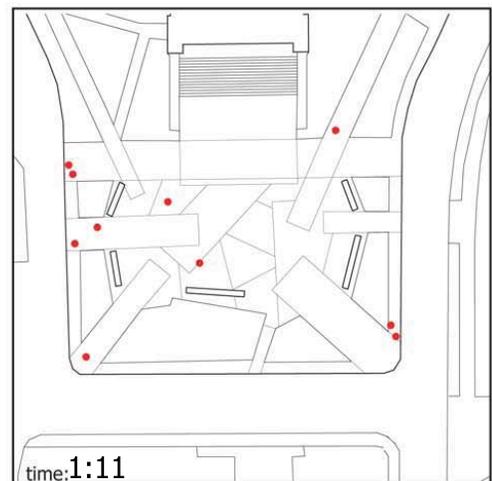
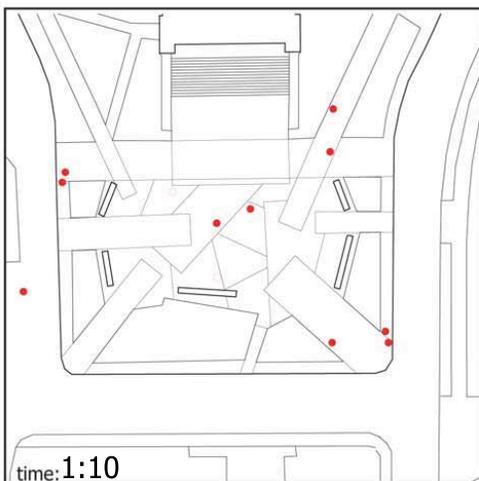
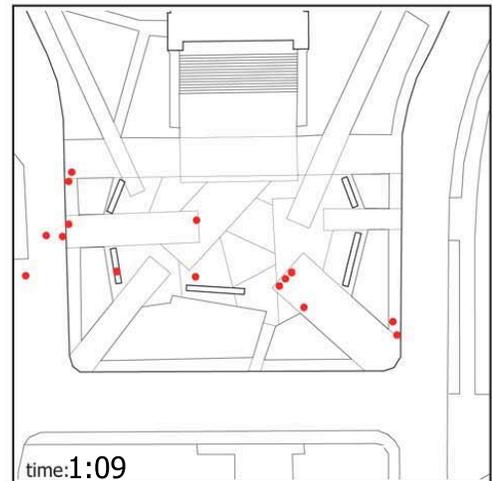
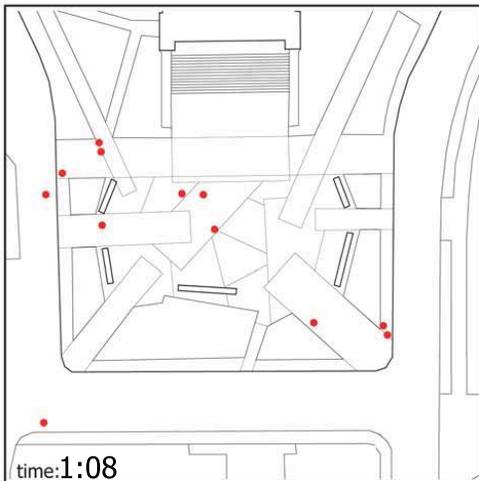
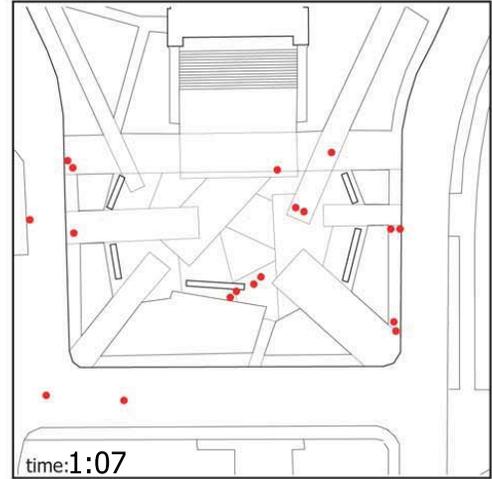
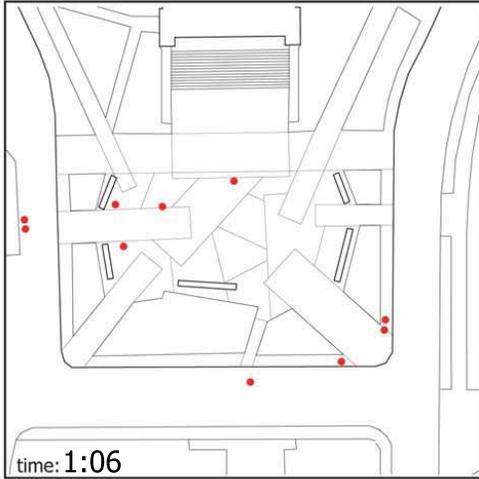
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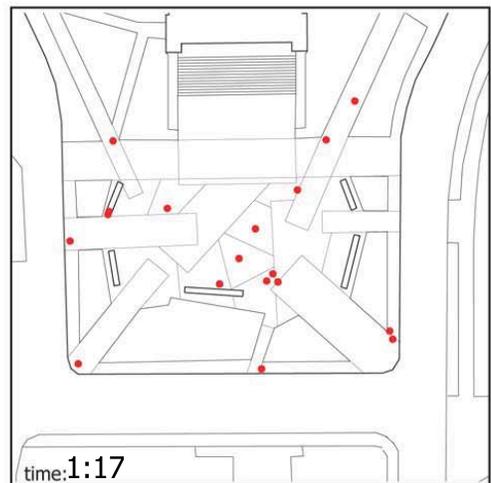
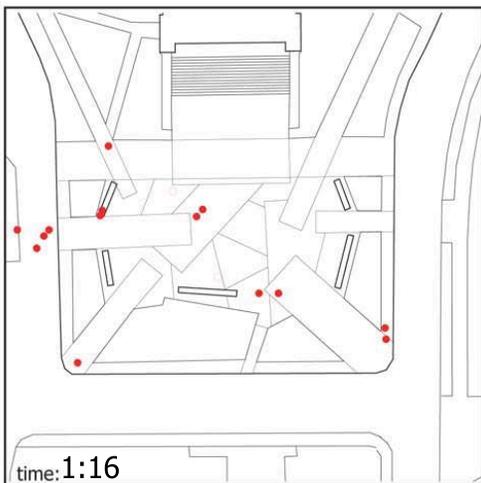
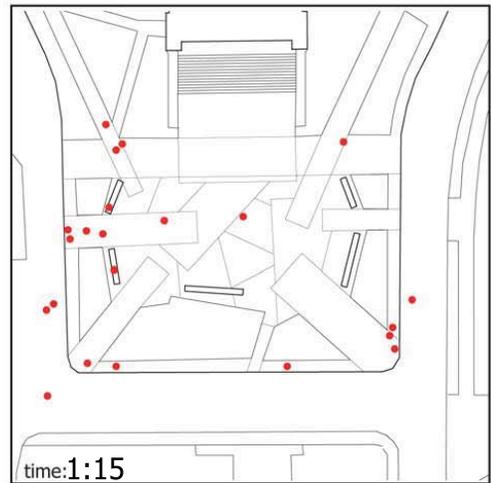
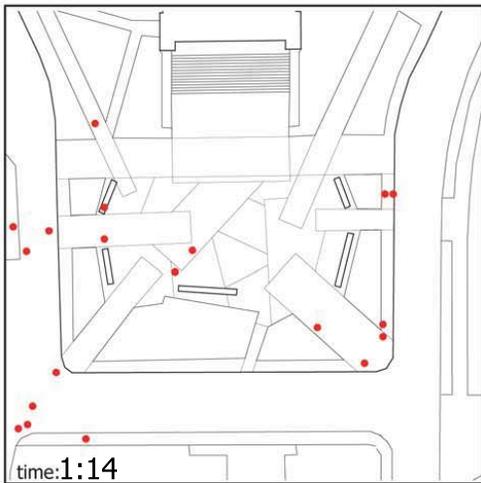
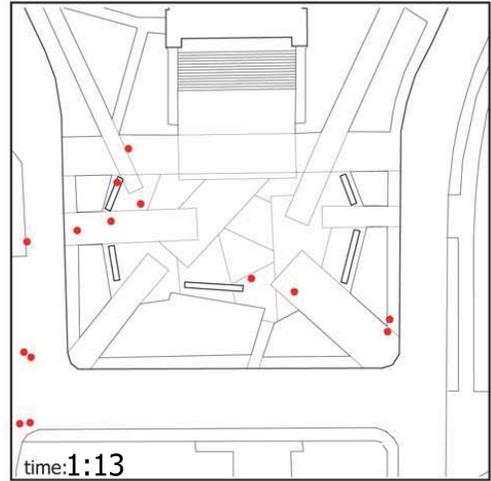
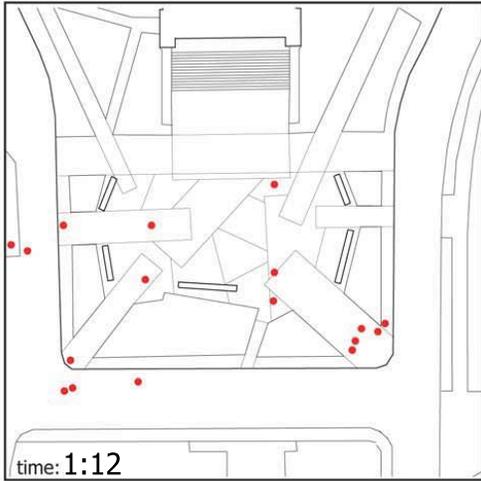
Method 2: Tuesday, April 1st 2008



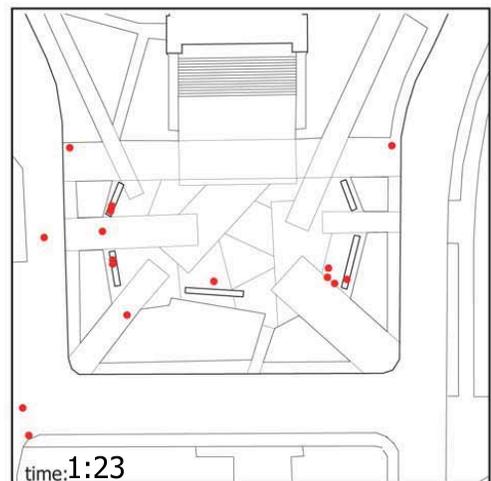
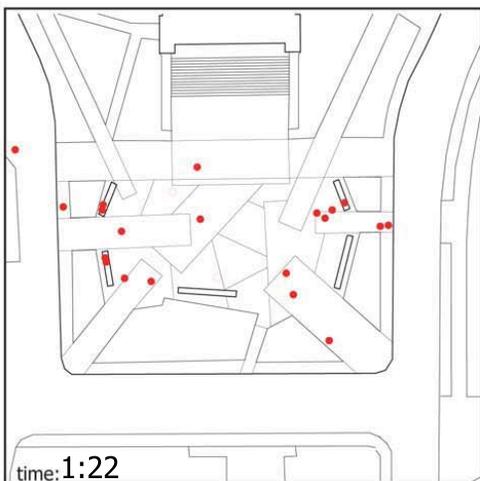
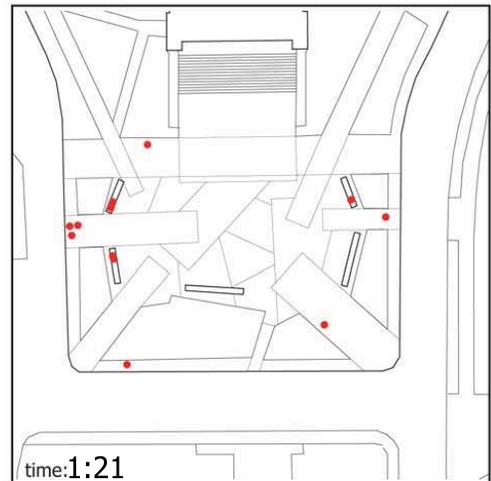
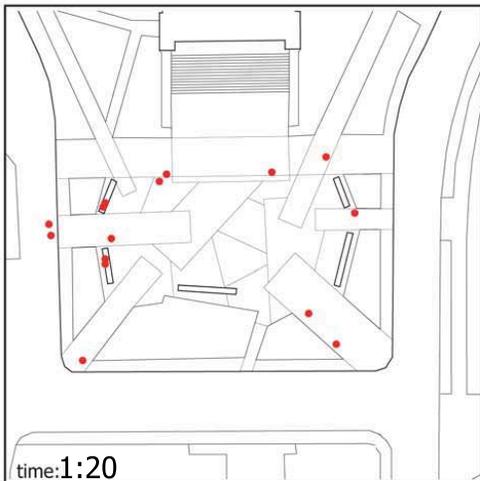
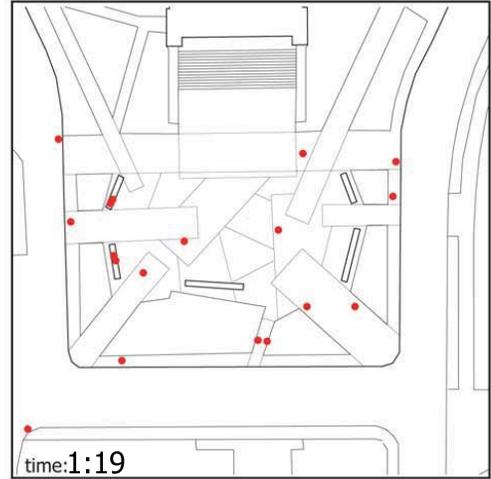
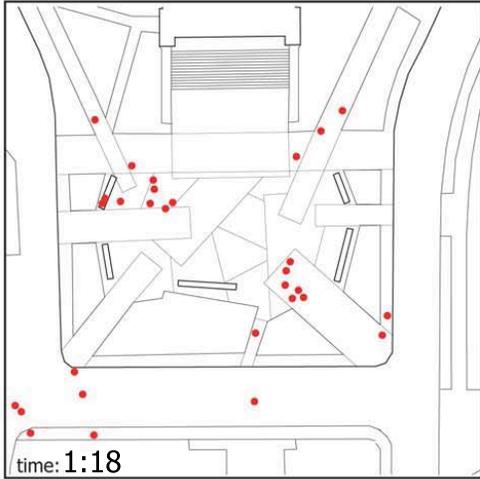
Method 2: Tuesday, April 1st 2008



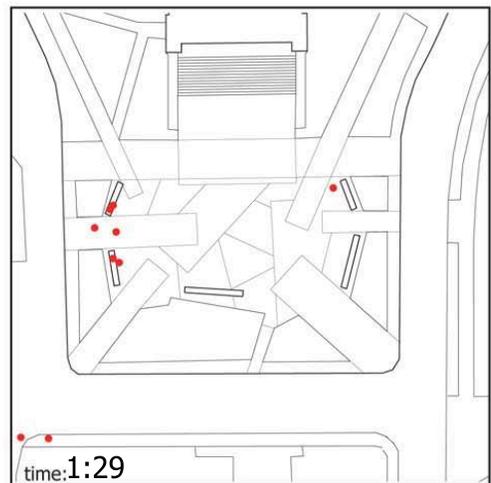
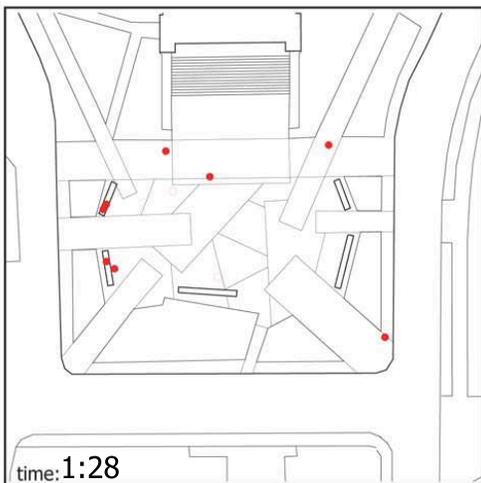
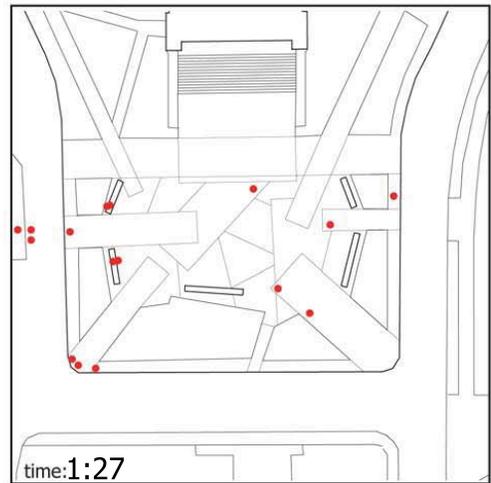
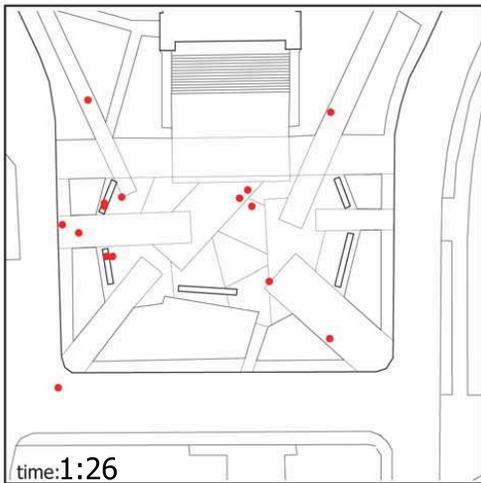
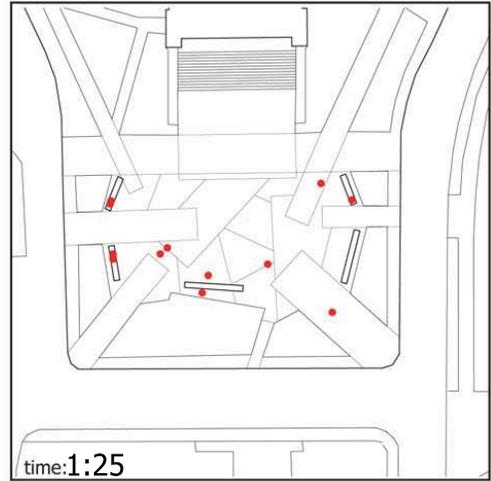
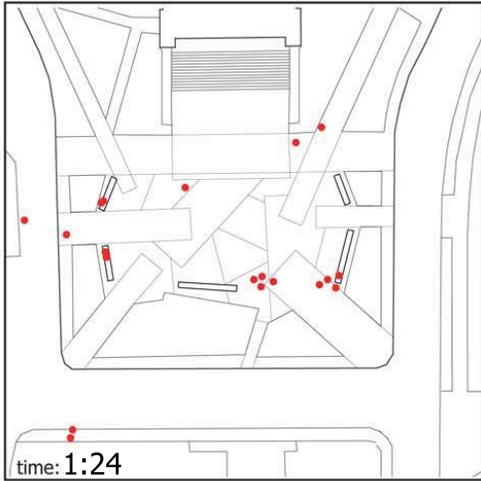
Method 2: Tuesday, April 1st 2008



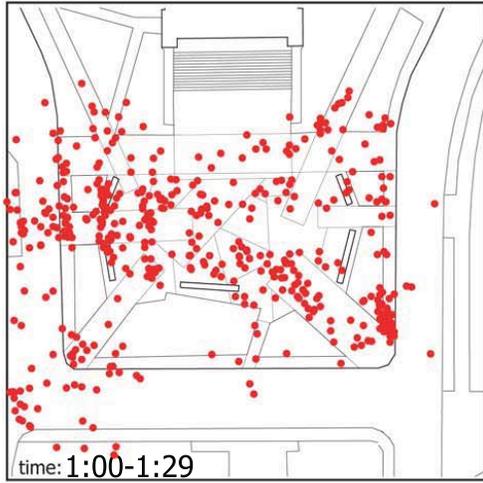
Method 2: Tuesday, April 1st 2008



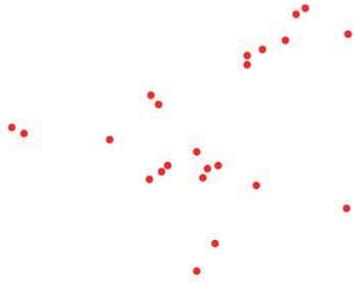
Method 2: Tuesday, April 1st 2008



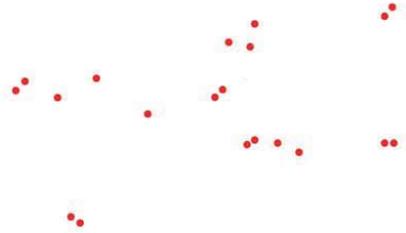
Method 2, Combined: Tuesday, April 1st 2008



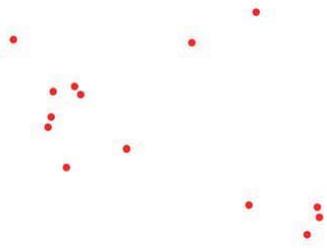
Method 2, No Plan: Tuesday, April 1st 2008



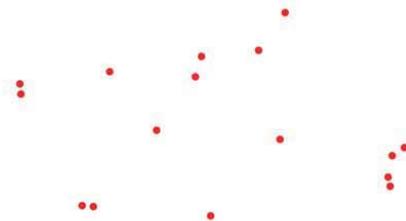
1:00



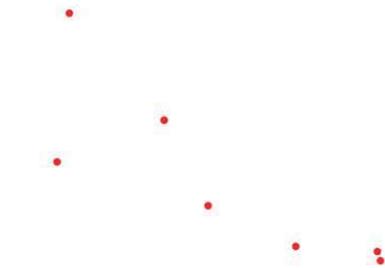
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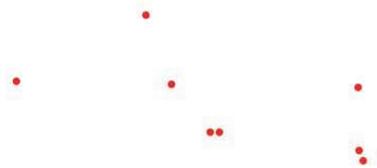
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1:03

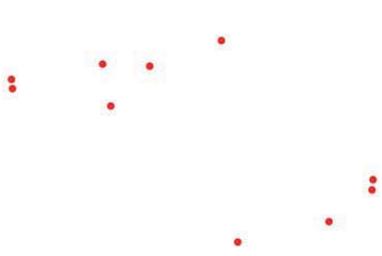


1:04

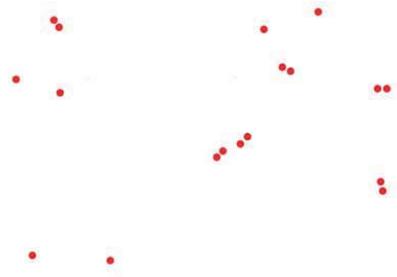


1:05

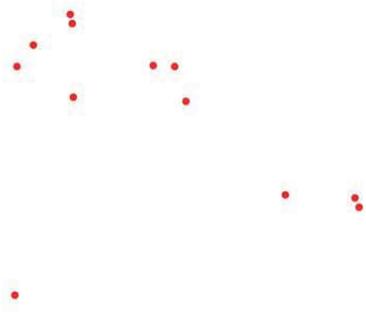
Method 2, No Plan: Tuesday, April 1st 2008



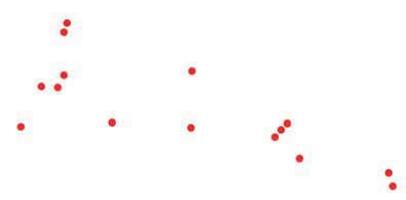
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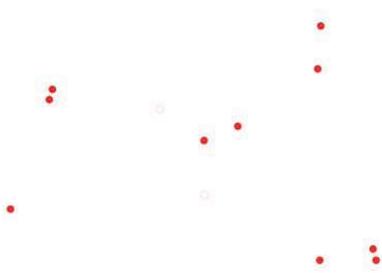
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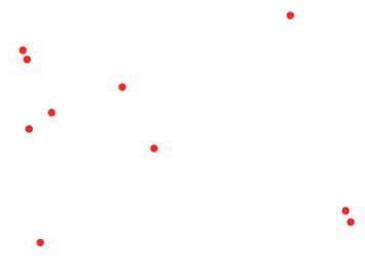
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1:09

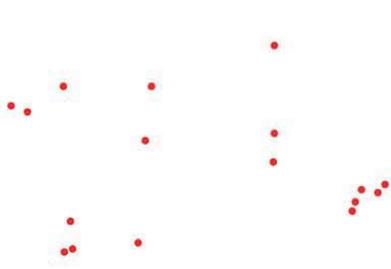


1:10

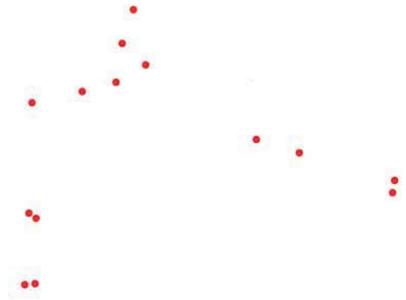


1:11

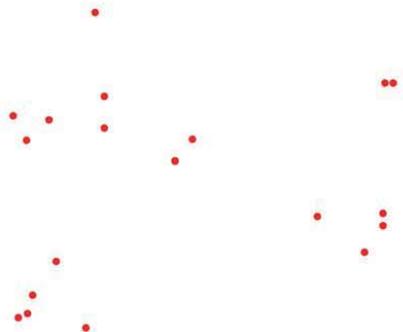
Method 2, No Plan: Tuesday, April 1st 2008



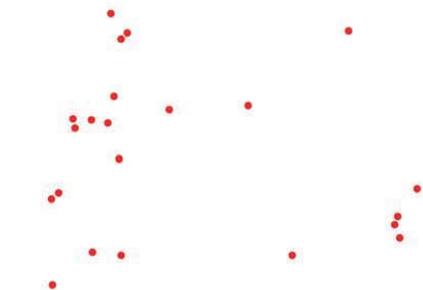
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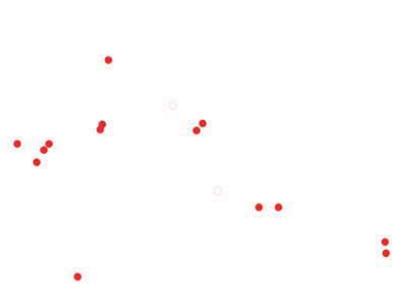
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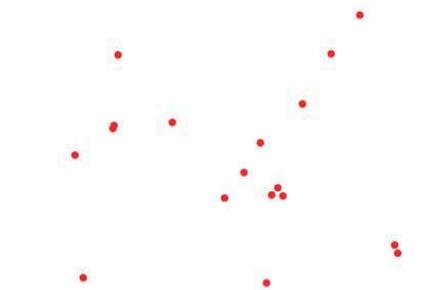
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1:15

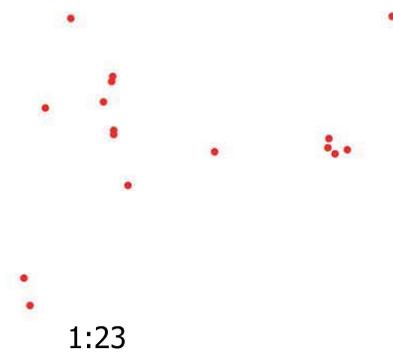
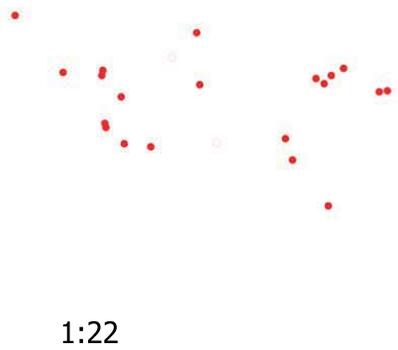
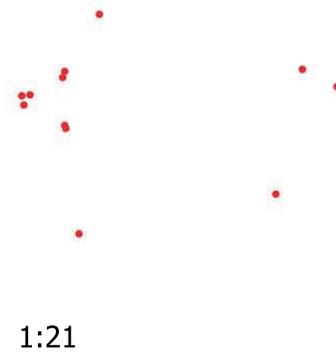
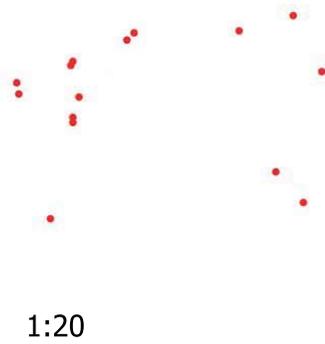
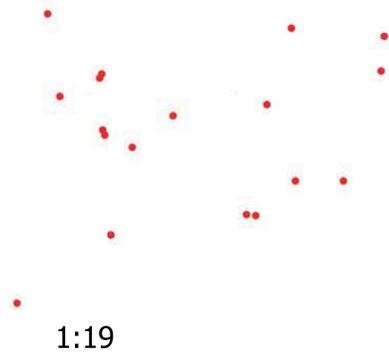
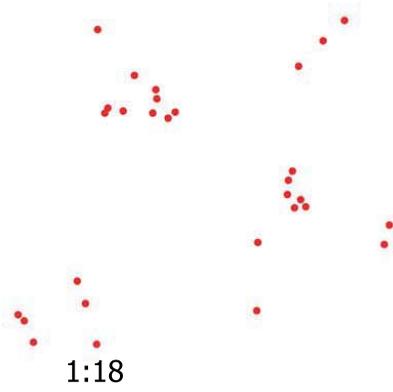


1:16



1:17

Method 2, No Plan: Tuesday, April 1st 2008



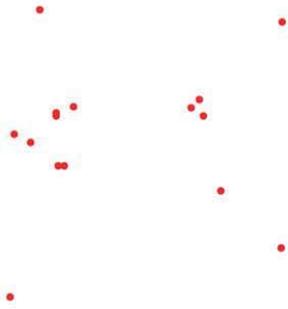
Method 2, No Plan: Tuesday, April 1st 2008



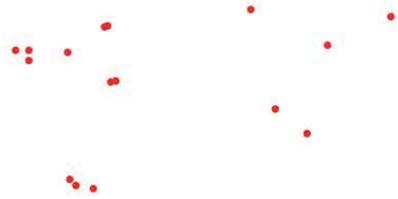
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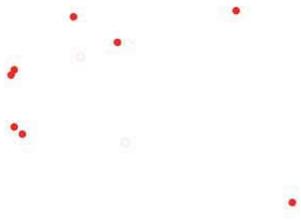
1:25



1:26



1:27

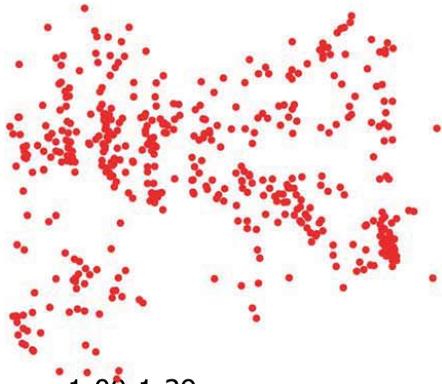


1:28



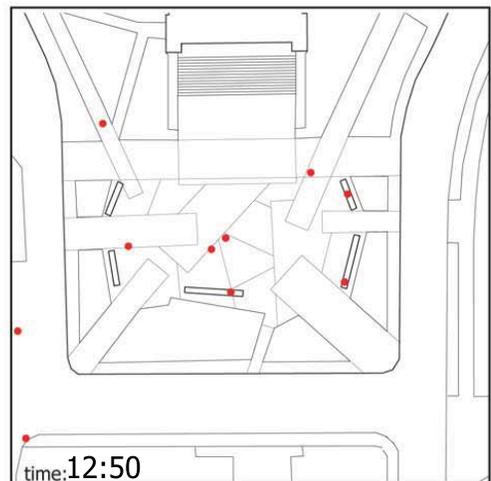
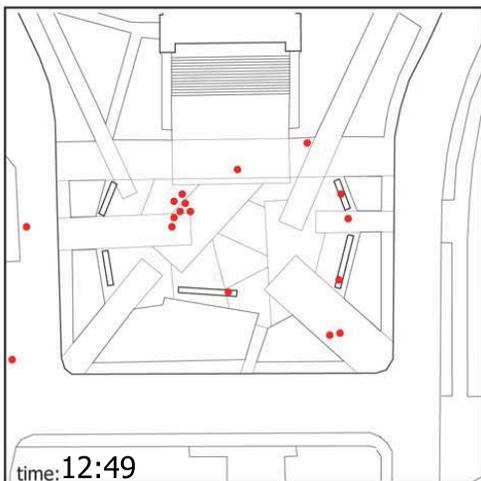
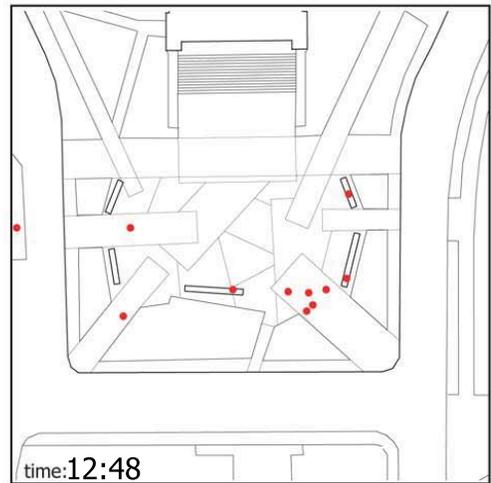
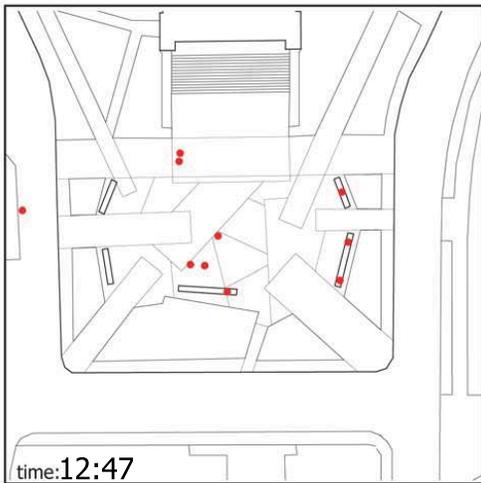
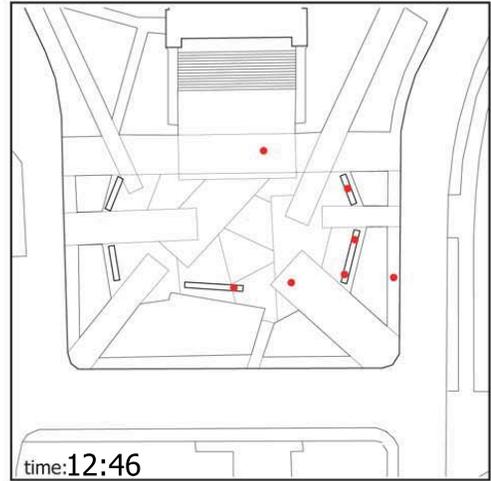
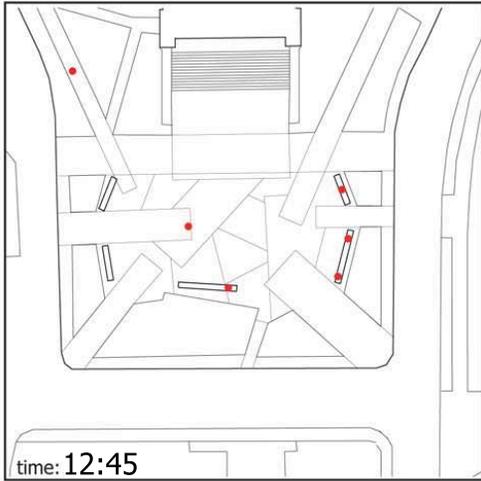
1:29

Method 2, Combined, No Plan: Tuesday, April 1st 2008

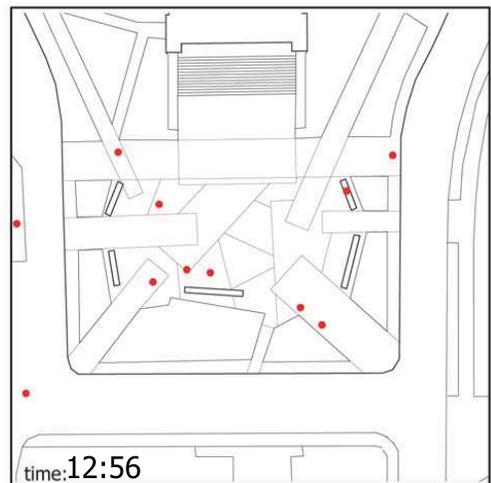
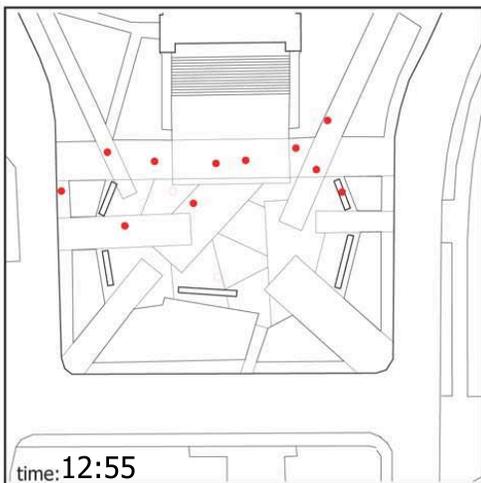
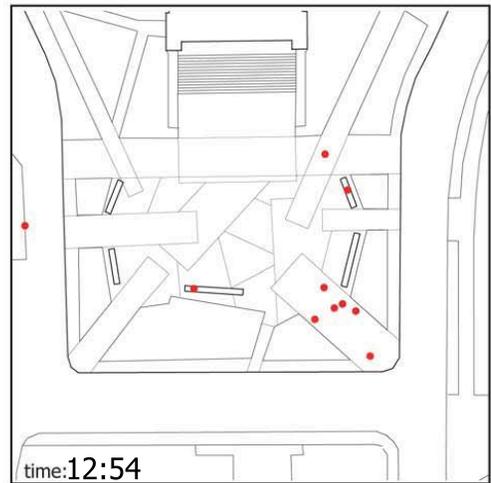
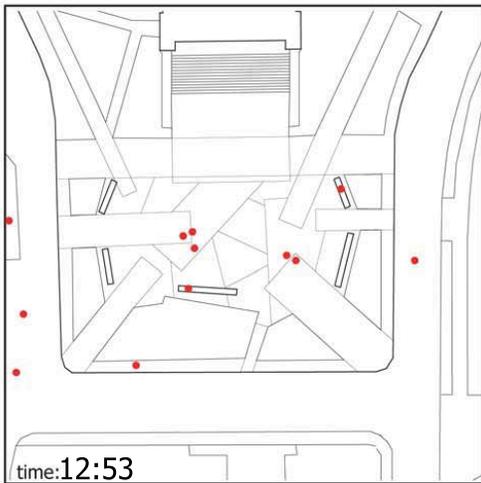
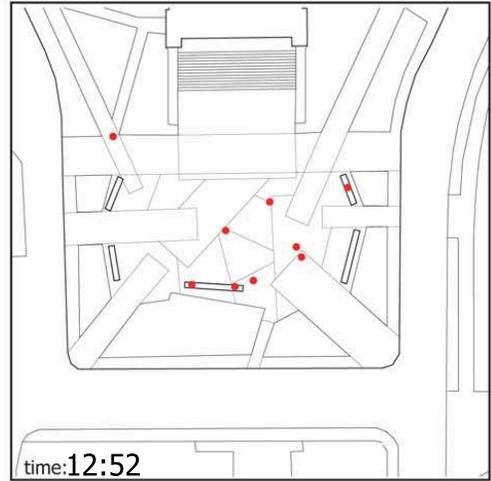
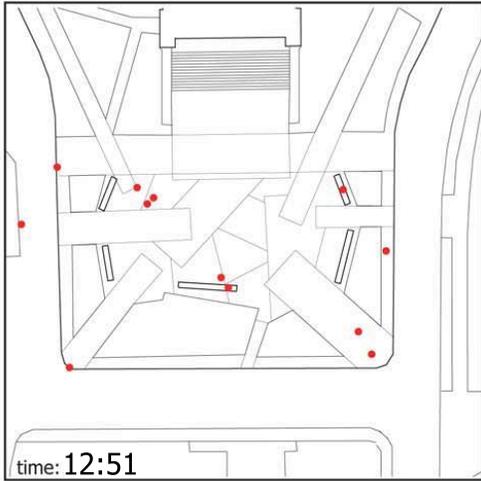


1:00-1:29

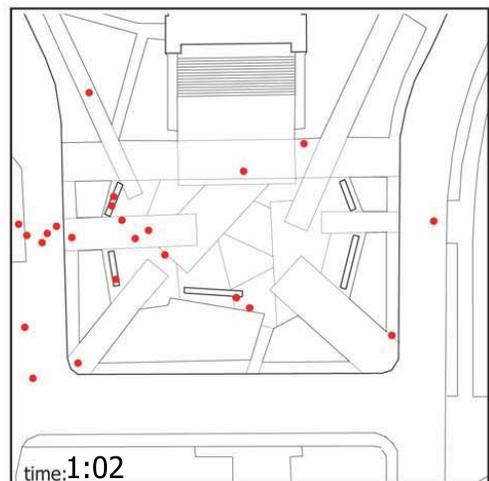
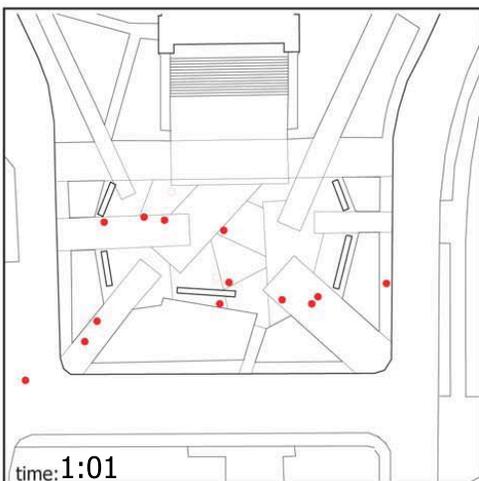
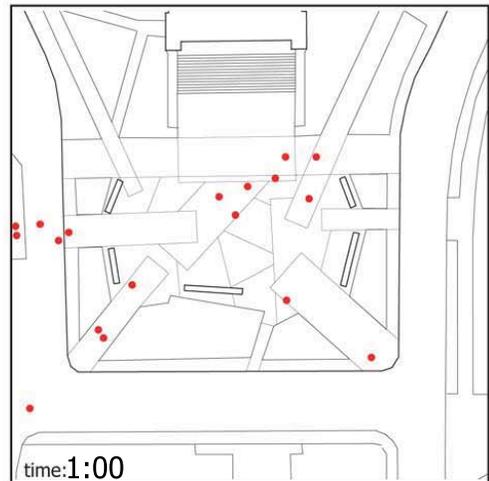
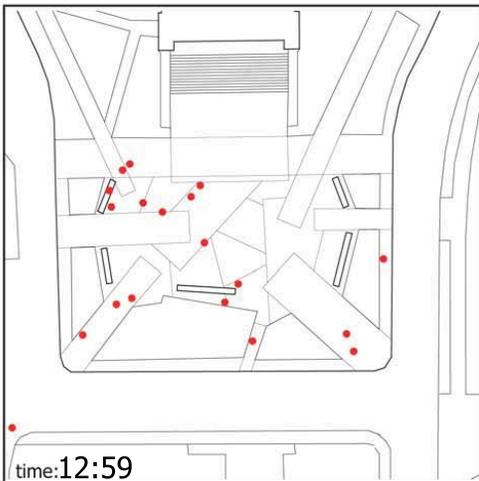
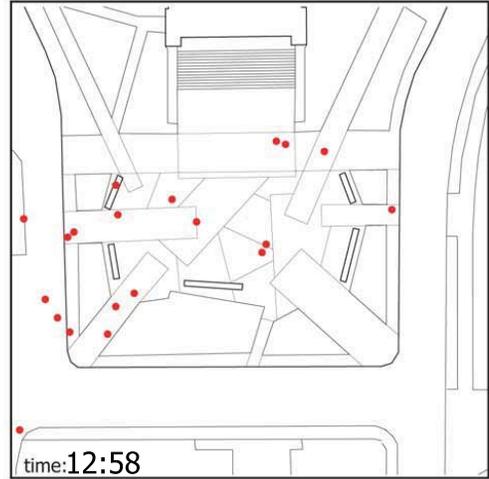
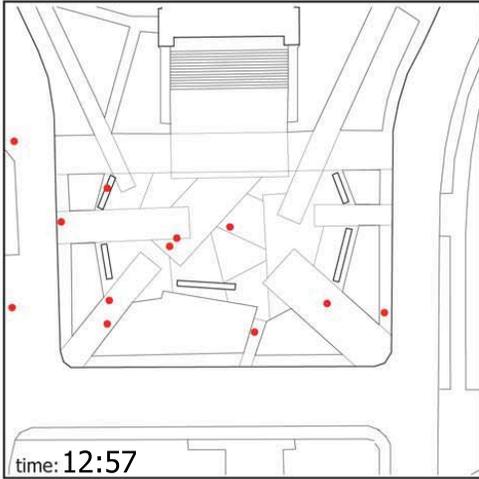
Method 3: Tuesday, April 8th 2008



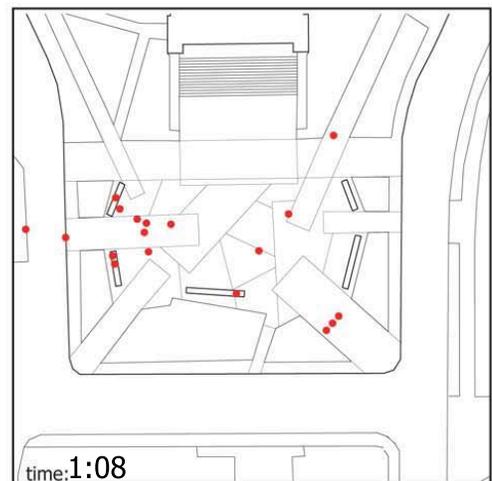
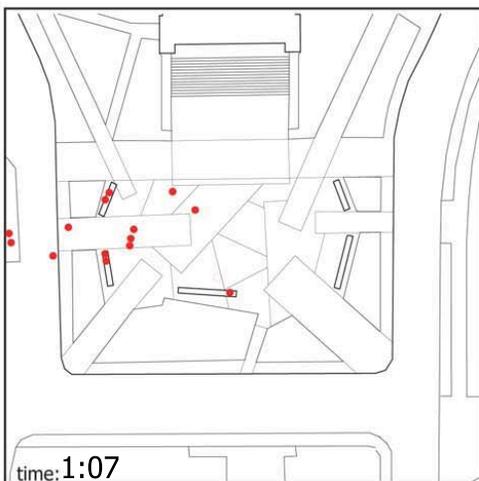
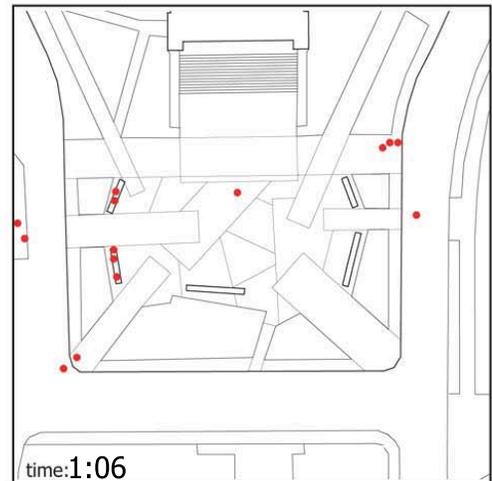
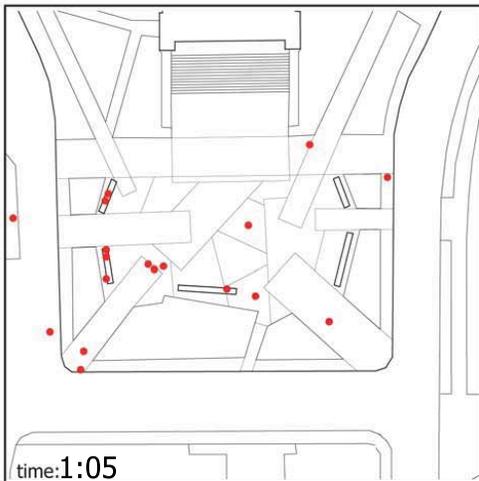
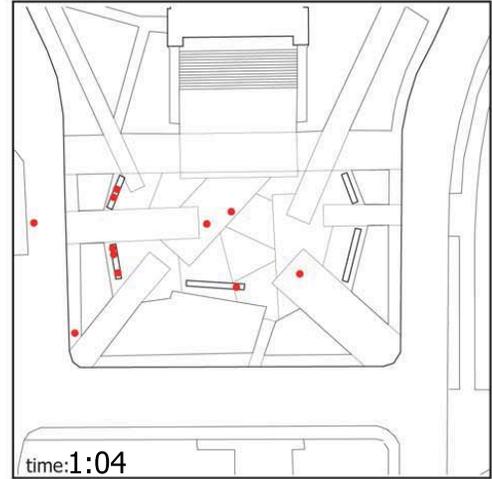
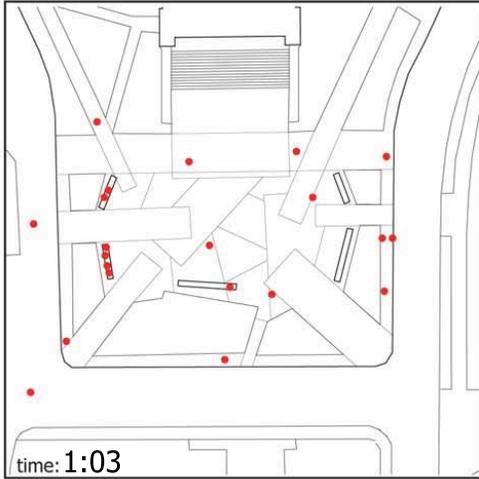
Method 3: Tuesday, April 8th 2008



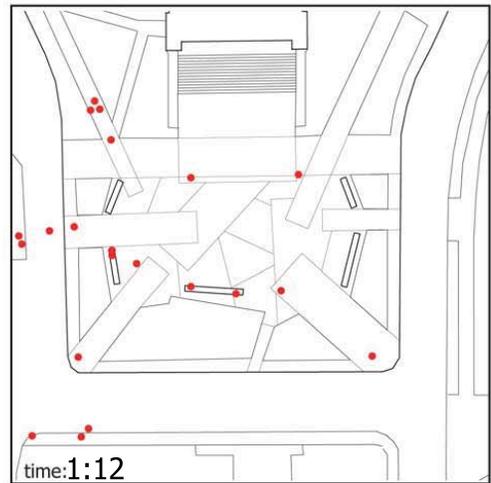
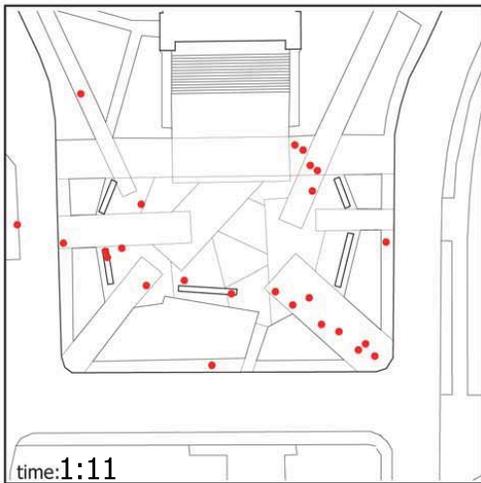
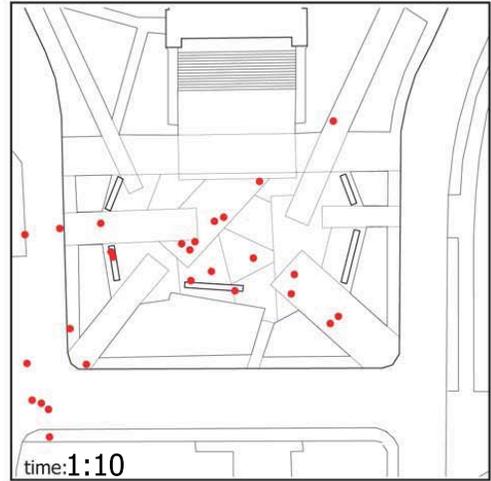
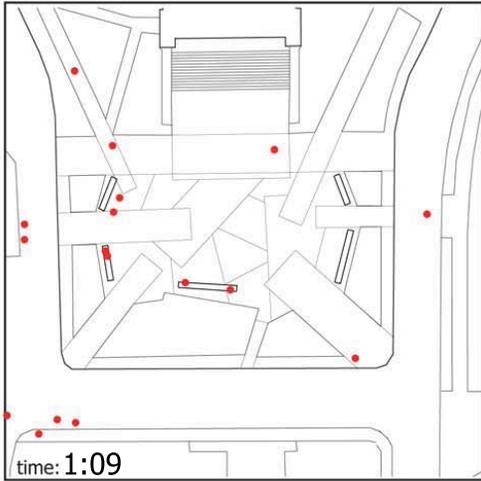
Method 3: Tuesday, April 8th 2008



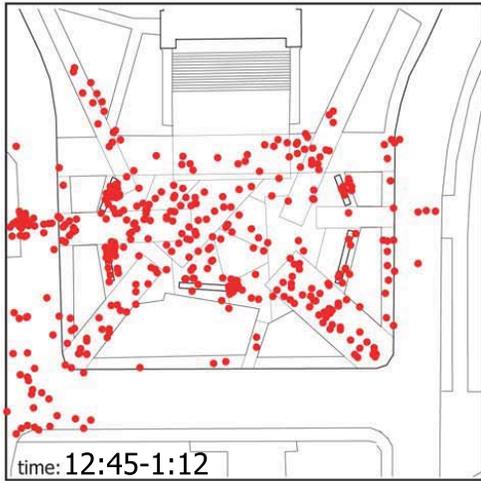
Method 3: Tuesday, April 8th 2008



Method 3: Tuesday, April 8th 2008



Method 3, Combined: Tuesday, April 8th 2008



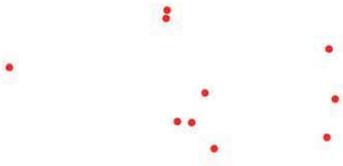
Method 3, No Plan: Tuesday, April 8th 2008



12:45



12:46



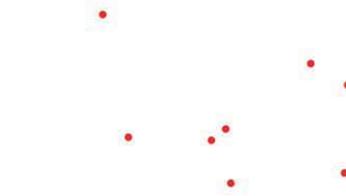
12:47



12:48



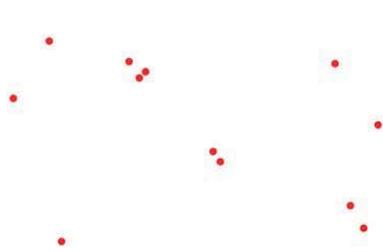
12:49



12:50



Method 3, No Plan: Tuesday, April 8th 2008



12:51



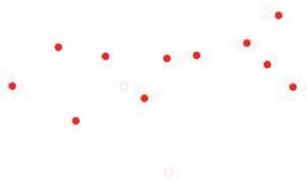
12:52



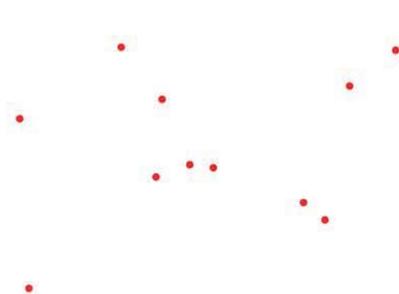
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12:54



12:55

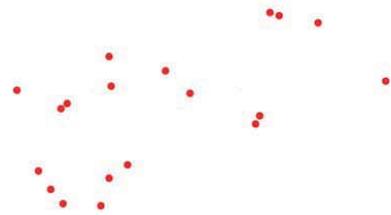


12:56

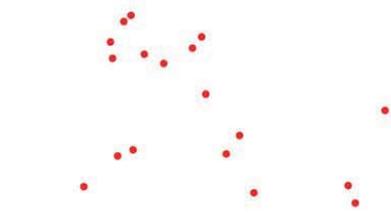
Method 3, No Plan: Tuesday, April 8th 2008



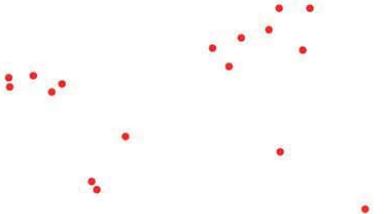
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12:58



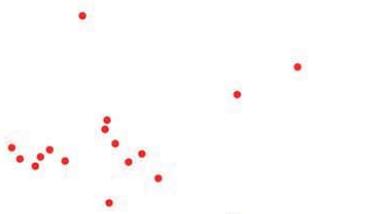
12:59



1:00

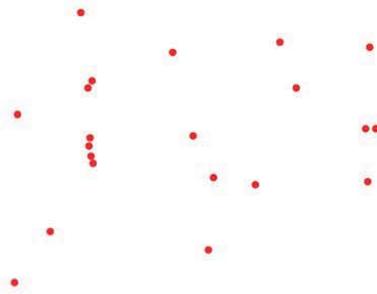


1:01

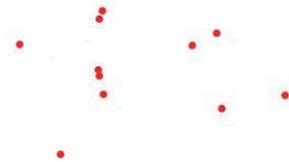


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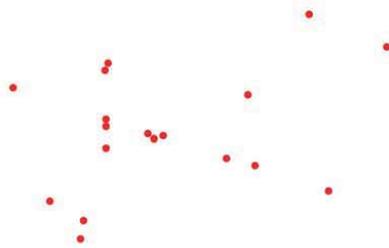
Method 3, No Plan: Tuesday, April 8th 2008



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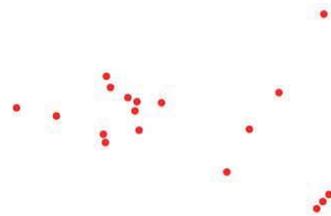
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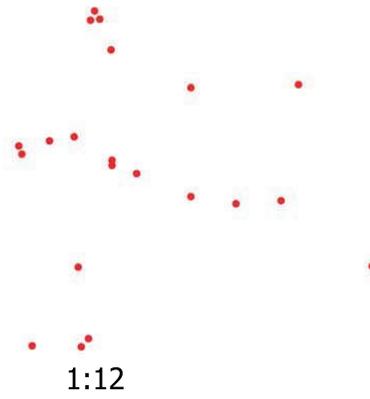
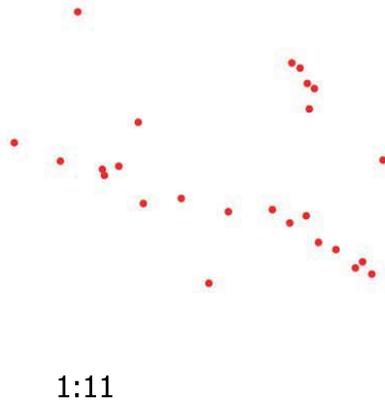
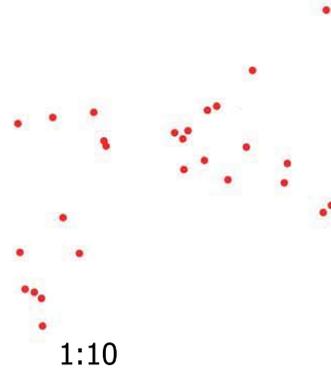
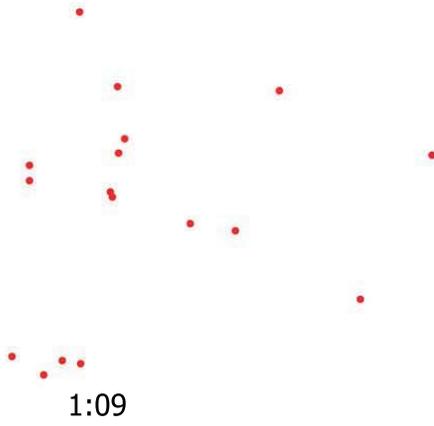


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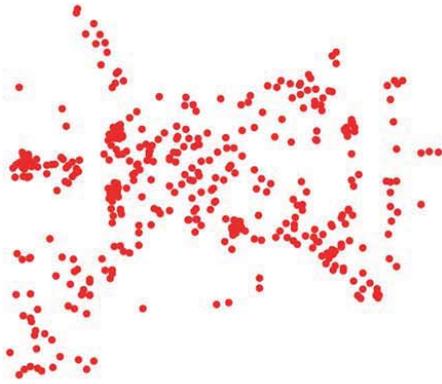


1:08

Method 3, No Plan: Tuesday, April 8th 2008



Method 3, Combined, No Plan: Tuesday, April 8th 2008



12:45-1:12

Corrections

There are many parts of developing a research methodology that I would have done differently in order to produce more accurate and detailed results.

Unfortunately, the following list of changes would need to be implemented for further and more precise data:

- I would have recorded data at a specific time, every Tuesday, for at least 6 weeks to get a more consistent understanding of how the space worked daily.
- I would have recorded temperature changes over all of the weeks that the observation went on, to get a better idea about how temperature affects people in public outdoor spaces.
- I would have kept the intervals of time that photographs were taken consistent, perhaps even more often than 1 minute intervals (though this ensured that no person would be counted twice passing through the site).
- I would have developed the appropriate methodology, and then from that point used that functioning methodology to record data and analyze trends.
- I would have used an automatic time-lapse camera that would more accurately keep the interval photographs.

Despite the errors in recording data, this process was truly an experience in developing an appropriate research methodology for observing human behavior in public outdoor spaces. The process, though certainly flawed in consistent, specific data collection, produced significant results and observations that mirror some of William Whyte's observations.

General Discussion of the Recorded Data

Tuesday-Thursday classes are generally released at 12:55, and begin again at 1:10 or 1:25. This would explain the more significant numbers of people observed between the 12:45 and 1:30 gap that was studied through the 2nd and 3rd Tuesdays sessions (see Appendix, ii). This would also explain the more directed patterns of movement that takes place after the 1:00 PM mark. The temperature of the site,

increasing (though only slightly over time) may correlate to the number of people using the site, or lingering in the area. This could also be attributed to the increased familiarity with the new site as the weather gets warmer. Frequenters of the Cornell University campus may become more familiar with the site as the weather gets warmer, and therefore, visit the site on a more regular basis that may also explain the increased number of the people frequenting the site. The data does not explain this factor. However, the site is clearly getting used more, which means that more people are being exposed to or exposing themselves to the plaza. It is beginning to become a reference point in experienced minds, and a place to be.

Observed Data

The observational data collected between photographs were expressive of the essence of the site. This partnership of the photographed and observed data reveal the essence of the new Bailey Plaza site. It is important to understand how it functions and how people function in it to determine the success of the as-built plaza and determine how people understand the site. The observations were recorded in the methodologies in the appendix, ii. The original questions about this site were answered through the set of observations that were collected.

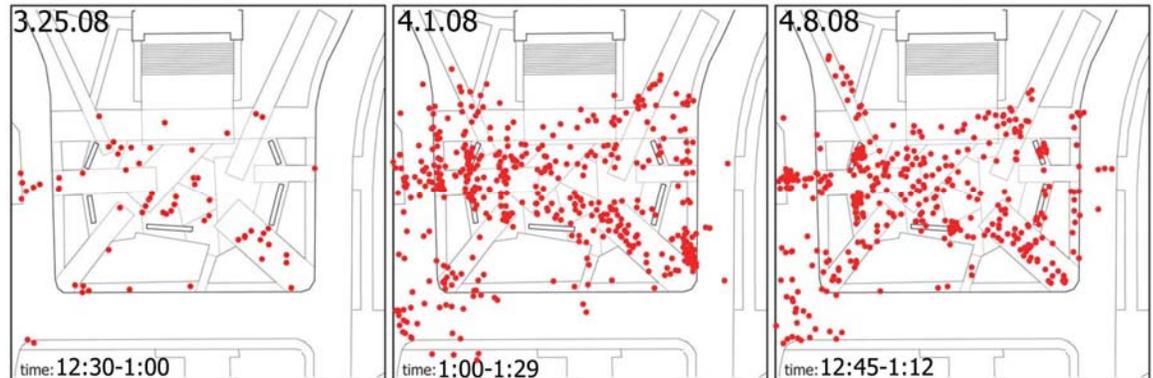
Questions

- 1). What is the number of people passing through the site and their positioning compared over time.
- 2). What is the density of people on the site at certain times.
- 3). What are the main corridors of movement?
- 4). How is the site used?

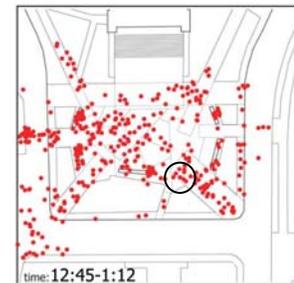
Answers

1.) *Number of People:* The number of people that passed through a site recorded at five minute intervals for 30 minutes was documented in the chart in the Findings section. People appeared to frequent the site more as the temperature increased and spring progressed. The warmer and sunnier weather appeared to make people pass through and pause in the site longer.

2.-3.) *Density and Movement:*



The recorded data above demonstrates that the density of people at any given period of time takes place at certain site locations. These sites are either at the middle of a bench or at approximately two feet from the edge of a bench. Travelers tended to pass through the site most frequently from the path at the lower right hand corner to the middle path on the left hand side. The most amounts of people throughout time were generally in the middle left hand side of the plaza, suggesting that this is a highly significant corridor on this part of the Cornell University campus. People tended to be drawn to certain paving lines and locations on the plaza. They walked in particular at the left hand side of the lower right hand corner of the plaza (see right).



4.) *Site is used for:*

- Passing through to class via foot traffic
- Waiting for another person (lover, friend, etc.)
- Reading
- Resting (laying on benches, sitting on benches)
- Place to pause for using phone (text and calling)
- Place to warm up (the sun soaked benches or the abundant sunlight available to this open site)
- Chalking for future event information
- Social network (running into acquaintances, friends, etc.)
- Pausing

Link to William H. Whyte:

The interesting part of making these observations was the fact that many of them (in hindsight) support William Whyte's observations. A few particular observations are discussed similarly in William Whyte's book *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*.

- 1) *My observation: Lovers sat in the most public and frequently dense areas of the plaza*

"Lovers are to be found on plazas. But not where you would expect them. When we first started interviewing, people told us we'd find lovers in the rear places (pot smokers too). But they weren't usually there. They would be out front. The most fervent embracing we've recorded on film has usually taken place in the most visible of locations, with the couple oblivious of the crowd (Whyte, 19)."

- 2) *My observation: People seemed attracted to areas of the plaza that other people were at*

"As we have seen, people have a nice sense of the number that is right for a place, and it is they who determine how many is too many. They do not, furthermore, seek to get away from it all. If they did, they would go to the lonely empty places where there are few people. But they do not. They go to the lively places where there are many people. And they go there by choice-not to escape the city, but to partake of it (Whyte, 100)."

- 3) *My observation: People were attracted to the water feature as well as the sun-warmed benches*

"It is white sound [water] and masks the intermittent honks and bangs that are the most annoying aspects of street noise. It also masks conversations. Even though there may be others nearby, you can talk quite loudly to a companion-sometimes you almost have to-and enjoy a feeling of privacy (Whyte, 48)."

"Cool weather can be good for sitting, too. It is then that a space open to the radiant heat of the sun's rays can make the difference between sitting comfortably and not sitting at all. People will actively seek the sun and, given the right spots, they will sit in surprising numbers in quite cold weather. The more northern the latitude, the more ardently they do so (Whyte, 45)."

4) *My observation: People in conversations stand in the center of busy movement*

“People didn’t move out of the main pedestrian flow. They stayed in it or moved into it, and the great bulk of the conversations were smack in the center of the flow (Whyte, 20).”

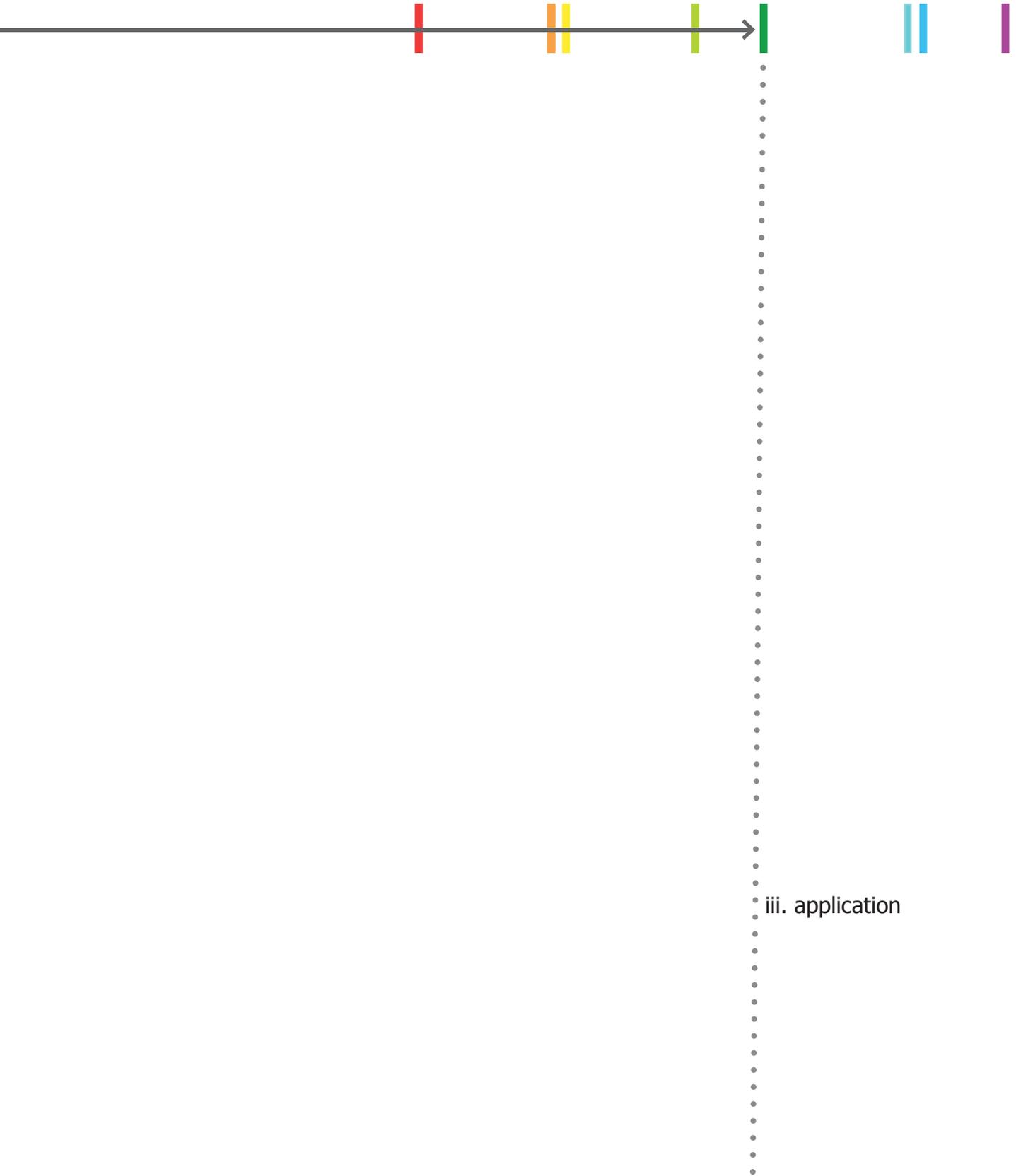
“Standing patterns are similar. When people stop to talk on the plaza, they usually do so in the middle of the traffic stream. They also show an inclination to station themselves near objects, such as a flagpole or a statue. They like well-defined places, such as steps, or the border of a pool (Whyte, 21).”

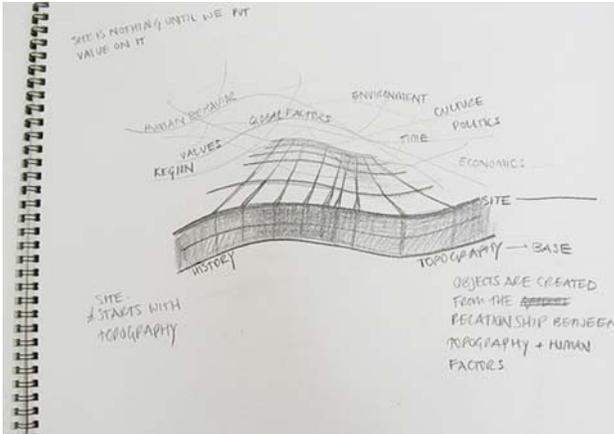
Conclusions

This process of exploring the link between human behavior and design is an incredible experience for a designer. Especially pleasing are the observations that the designer can make just by watching people act over time in space and their validity affirmed by the great people-advocate and researcher, William H. Whyte. The process outlined in the previous pages should serve as an example for the development of a method to observe and to understand the essence of a place and the way people work in the space.

There were significant challenges to this discovery process. It was difficult to find a consistent method that I could repeat without slight discrepancies. It was time consuming to develop a method, and left little opportunity for analysis. This is just the beginning to learning about how research of space is done.

This rich process will add depth to any design practice. These understandings are obviously necessary for a designer to know how to make a place that people want to be in. If more designers challenged themselves to look beyond their ego and their perception of what a space should be, more places would be more successful.





Context: Illustration by the author

Introduction

The following project is a journey in the application of theory to design. It was a self-lead process, representative of four years of undergraduate study. It reveals my strengths and weaknesses com-

ing our of my undergraduate degree. The project is a great example of the process a designer goes through to approach designing for place.

Designing a site is not about the things that you put in the site, but about discovering the context of the place it is located in. Designers are often discovering an area for the first time when assigned to a project. In order to know the appropriate treatment for the site, the designer must get to know the site intimately. This can be done by experiencing the place in person, though time is usually limited. This is a great opportunity for observation from the five foot perspective which will inform the way the site will be experienced by the body and mind, but there needs to be more observation. Students are taught to analyze soil, weather, demography, and other site elements which help the general understanding of how the site functions in the larger sense.

Site analysis seems to end at this juncture; the designer learns what they can about the context, and then proceeds to focus their attention back on the site. This is a critical moment in design. The decision the designer makes to stop learning about the site, is the moment that the project stops being about the site, and becomes about

the designer's ego. Sometimes it's too hard to keep studying the context, when the opportunity to manipulate land is so available and ready for you to change! Context is not just simple and sterile site analysis. Context is organic; it is the play of land use off of soil type, human values against transportation systems, and the history of an area against implications at a global scale. Context is about relationships, and is the key to the essence of place. It informs what the site should be.

To a fault, landscape architects are smitten with site. The specifics of construction, plant size, soil type, and drainage, all with the ultimate goal of the 'buildable' site. Sites inevitably need to be built, in order to have any positive effect on community (earthly and human), but if the process is rushed, the built site will never reach its greatest potential. Not enough time is given to analysis (notice I do not say 'site analysis' because it implies that the site is the only important part of the project) which leads to homogenized human landscapes; the complete antithesis to terrior and place, known by Edward Relph as placelessness. "...placelessness-that is, the causal



Site Location: www.maps.google.com

eradication of distinctive places and the making of standardized landscapes that results from an insensitivity to the significance of place (Relph, preface).”

My senior landscape architecture studio project was a five week project about a rich in context, post-industrial site in the struggling city of Rochester, New York. The site, Genesee Steel Company, is located at 1460 Lyell Ave, Rochester, New York. It is in the industrial sector of Rochester, in an area made up of strip mall hair dressers, obscure churches in run down buildings, McDonalds, and few homes in need of great care. It is a landscape that if you were not told the specific address, you would be able to assume that it was located about homogenization of landscape!

The site of the Genesee Steel Company runs parallel to a functioning north-south railroad track, raised about fifty feet off of the ground. It is surrounded on the



Site Context: Image by author

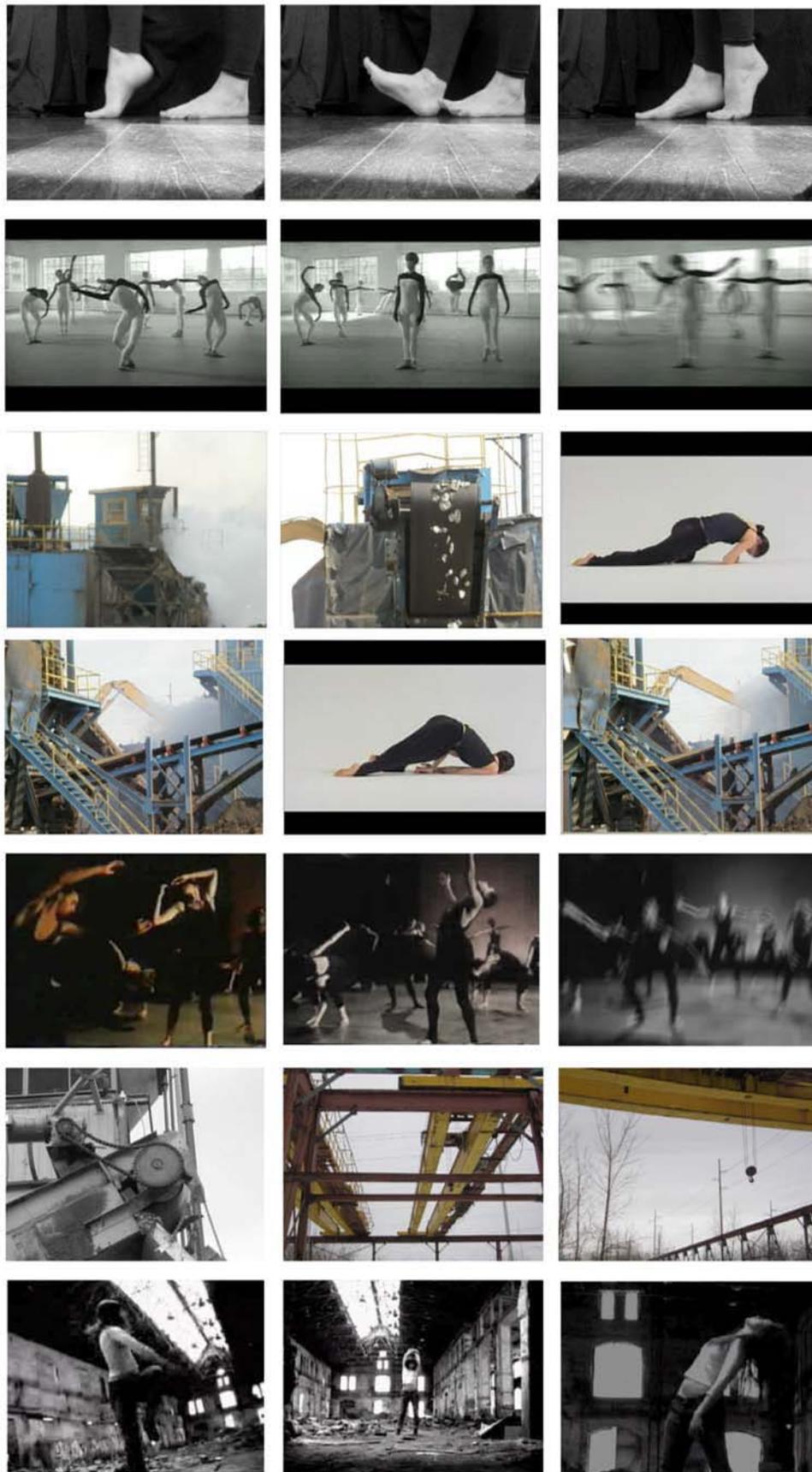
north and south by abandoned factory buildings. A thin drive on the east side flanks the site and allows access and a separation between the site, and a still functioning industrial warehouse to the east. On the west of the raised railroad track is the Genesee Steel Recycling Center. The railroad berm is an amazing barrier between the two sites. The site remains relatively silent, as the steel recycling center is inhumanly loud. A slight buzz of industry and cars from Lyell Ave can be heard from the site, but it is mainly quiet and still. The site is made up of three long tracks of steel infrastructure, raised approximately fifty feet into the air. These impressive steel structures are rusty brown, with spots of turquoise enamel, reducing in size by the will of the tireless elements year after year. It is assumed that these large scale steel tracks

were used to move steel from the factory to trucks for shipping. They now are ghosts of the once virile industrial sector of Rochester. The ground plane consists of young scraggly trees and brush, and waste products of industry; old rusting vehicles, mounds of tires, steel I-beams, derailed steel carts, and rotting wooden planks. In the summer, the ground plane is transformed into a vast forest of brilliant and unpenetrable green canvases.

My first impression of the site was the existence of movement and pause. Ancient, rusting trucks were parked indefinitely; steel beams were eternally settling into the historically abused soil; the wheels of steel carts rusted in place-never to move again; everywhere, the slow stopping of a once industrial wonder. There was a lack of movement of the human body in and within the site at this once functioning steel manufacturer site. Only structures and nature are present at a site once built by human hands. The site is now stark and uninviting; almost dangerous in the scarcity of human life. The concepts of movement and body, both the presence and lack of each helped to determine what this site could someday become.

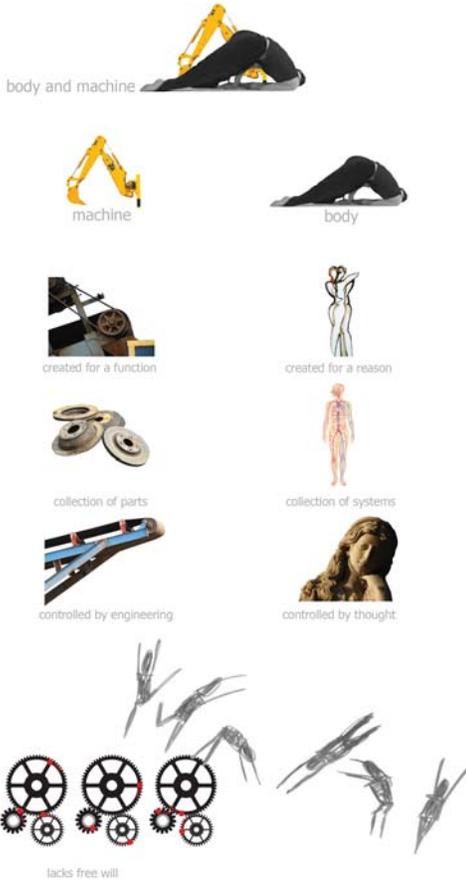
Analysis

The first assignment was to create a site analysis in a mobile and visual form, a movie that defined the area and site;. I was struck by the relationship between body and machine from the site. My movie became an expression of how body and machine are intertwined; comparing and contrasting one's movement in relationship to the other (see images on next page). The end of the movie introduced a third element of nature (in form of the sound of birds chirping), which I concluded was the link between the body and machine. It was the ground where body and machine could



Body and machine movie stills: movie by author

meet and relate to each other, i.e. landscape architecture. The movie was a poetic expression of the movement and pause of the human body through dance, and of the machine through production. Sound was a large component of the movie, as industrial sounds were at times cut over a clip of people dancing, and the eerily expressive music of DeVotchKa cut over a machine from the Genesee Steel Recycling Center



Body and Machine: Illustration by author

needed to put a program in this space that would help the community around Lyell Ave; the high-crime community made up of fast-food chain restaurants, billboards, and failing hair salons. This neighborhood, in the middle of a failing industrial district, was supposed to be fixed with an urban-style café or plaza space. These cliches were frustrating and demonstrated the eagerness of landscape architects to remove

grinding a car into miniature pieces. It was surprisingly easy to convey a sense of place using a palette of sound, movement, and pause.

From the exploration of visual motion, I broke down the relationship between the body and machine. I tried at this point to determine the appropriate program for this site; I could not. Most fellow senior students, at a class discussion of program for the site, were able to throw out ideas such as “park”, “café”, “playground”, or even “plaza”. The discussion went on concluding that the class

themselves from fully understanding a site. I left the discussion disheartened.

Through the process of analyzing the body and machine, I realized that this project demands and emphasizes the context of the site, suggesting that it would be wrong to design just for this site, and just for this alleged fringe ‘community’ of Lyell Avenue. No park, café, jungle gym, or plaza is appropriate here. What became clear through the site visit was that this area is in disrepair because of something greater than its boundaries. The location at the fringe of a once built-for-production city is now a place for marginal uses that do not fit in the city fabric, and are unwanted in the suburban neighborhoods. These areas of our cities are in the most critical need of design and planning attention. Not every outskirts of a city center needs to be standardized, the pieces unfit for other locations pushed to the side; forgotten, yet ironically aggressive in their gradual proliferation.

Perhaps the best way to define the scope of this project is a quote by E. Relph, “A place is not just the ‘where’ of something; it is the location plus everything that occupies that location seen as an integral and meaningful phenomenon (3).” I began to break apart land use maps and piece them back together again, revealing delicate relationships between uses and communities. The relationships were elegant and as I placed opposing pieces together, the city started to make sense. The land use maps were obtained from the city of Rochester’s website² and broken apart through Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator.

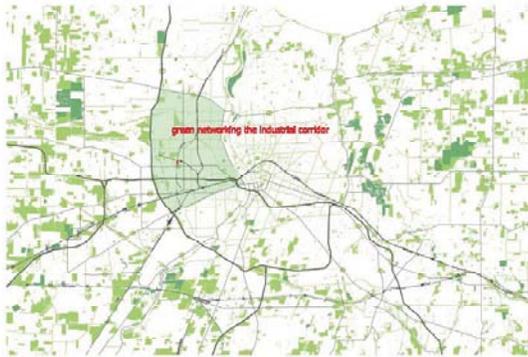
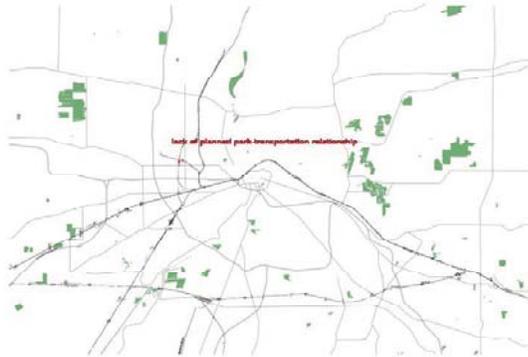
²(http://cityofrochester.gov/dcd/Planning/Planning_Maps.cfm)



Transportation: Illustration by author

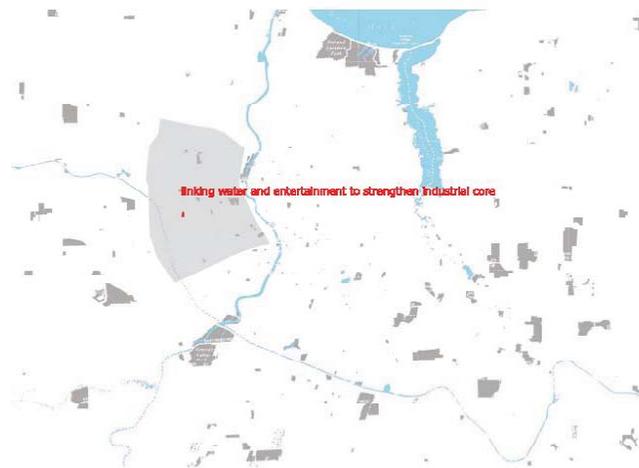
TRANSPORTATION:

The transportation system was interestingly related to the industrial core of Rochester, and inevitably the site. The major highway and interstate systems tend to avoid completely intruding on the suburban neighborhoods, and are clearly directed through the industrial corridor. The railroad system even more clearly emphasizes this phenomenon, directing most of its centrality at Rochester's industrial sector. After overlaying the selection of transportation components, it became clear that the perceived center of activity is Rochester's city center, but the actual center in terms of transportation and movement is the city's industrial core which includes the area around our site.



NATURE: Nature: Illustration by author

The presence of nature in Rochester is surprising. Organized park space is small and limited generally to the outer suburbs of Rochester, whereas the vacant land completely envelops the city and suburbs. This suggests the need for a greater emphasis on open space systems which could potentially link the disparate city districts.



Performance and Water: Illustration by author

PERFORMANCE:

Entertainment and event space are important in the city of Rochester, known for its many activities. Larger entertainment locations are related to water space, another natural phenomenon. Given the location next to water, the industrial corridor could be used to connect performance and movement of the body to the water systems.

Rochester appeared to be a fragmented city, in need of something to link the areas, and ensure that all demographics and income levels are accommodated. Access in the city was lacking in a space so spread out. Open space was forgotten, and left to

vacancies; the empty and inconvenient nature. The idea of the flow of the body was missing from the site, and certainly from the city as a whole. There was a starkness in the city, an inhumanness in my analysis, but realized that I didn't know this city well



enough yet.

A series of analysis diagrams

I created were a study of the

annual events of Rochester. I

color coded an entire 2008

event calendar for the city of

Rochester from the city of

Rochester website³. The colors

correspond to the theme of the events (For example: reds are food related events, greens are nature related events, etc.)

I then decided to graph the events based on the month and date that they took

place to look at the rhythm and fre-

quency of events throughout the year

in Rochester. The day is recorded on

the Y axis, and the month that the event

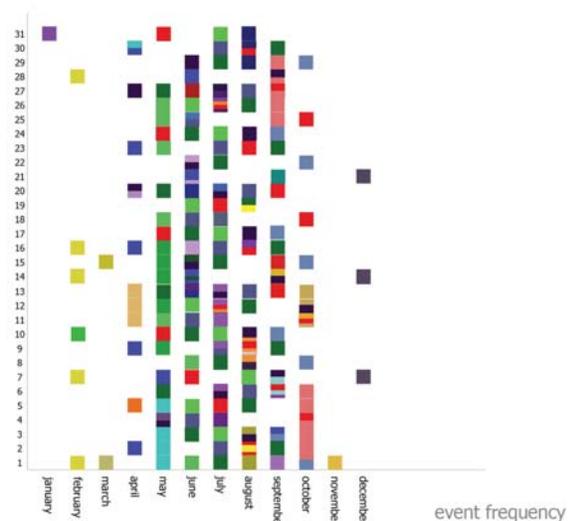
takes place is on the X axis. The many

cuts of overlapping events resembled

strands of DNA. Most of the frequency

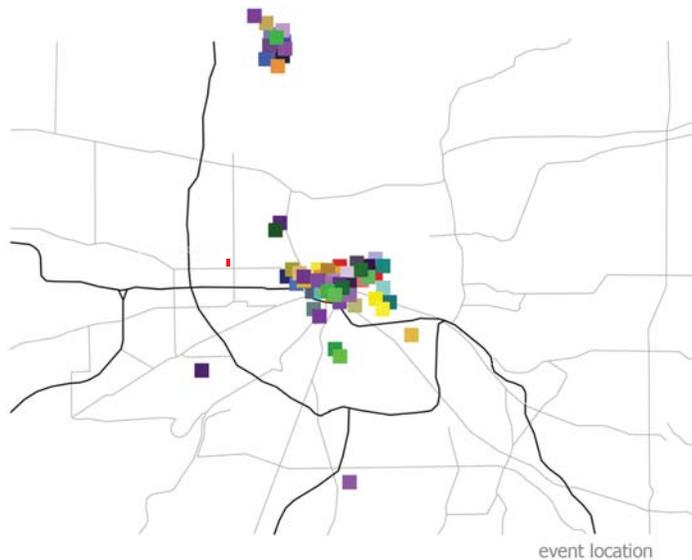
is concentrated between the months of

April and October, with not more than a three day gap between events.



³(<http://www.cityofrochester.gov/index.cfm?id=483>)

At this point, I was curious about the location of the event blocks on the transportation map of Rochester. Where are the events located? What does their physical location suggest about the values of the city and the familiar areas of Rochester? The event locations are most obviously centered on the core of Rochester. These events



spread out a little from the inner city boundaries, but most do not filter into the suburban areas. The second emphasized location for events is the area where Lake Ontario meets the northern side of Roch-

ester's suburbs. The two dense locations are interestingly connected via one of the main branches of the interstate system. The Genesee Steel site is significantly located on the path between the two event densities. This arrangement suggests the values, and focus of the city, being their location near a great body of water, and the inner city space. The problem with Rochester appeared to be the forgotten space inbetween the two highly valued locations.

Discourse Analysis

At this point, I felt it was important to learn more about the in-between spaces of Rochester. I began a study of the neighborhoods of Rochester, to get an idea about how people actually feel about the city and the way it works. The spoken word of

people who know an area can be the most telling about the essence of the place.

Using a map of the neighborhood sectors from the City's website (http://cityofrochester.gov/dcd/Planning/Planning_Maps.cfm), I manipulated the graphic appearance of the ten sectors in the town. I overlaid the standard transportation system over the neighborhood map to give a point of reference and relate to the other diagrams in the series.

In order to learn about people's opinions about Rochester, I consulted the internet. The internet is a new way of understanding landscape and place. It also serves as a location for the collection of anonymous thoughts, opinions, discussions, and forums. It provides a sometimes biased, yet candid, and truly human perspective on issues. Value systems are visually strewn across the internet landscape with transience, and the lack of concern for repercussion. The only way that would be better to learn about the values would be to work directly with the community itself, though that opportunity was limited in this five week project.

There were several blogs on the website City-Data that introduced me to the values of people in Rochester and their digitally translated understanding of the place they live in⁴. The forums began with questions from people new to Rochester about the best places to live for a certain demographic or with certain needs. The two blogs that I chose to follow began with the following questions:

- "We are moving to Rochester in a few months. Can anyone recommend the best neighborhoods near the U of R for a family with small children?"

- "I am planning to move to Rochester (if hired by the transportation authority) and I'm very nervous. I will be a single mom with three children and I need help finding a safe community to live in. Actually, I need all the information as soon as possible to help me in my move. Any information would be

⁴ (<http://www.city-data.com/forum/rochester-area/20220-need-know-best-worst-places-live.html>,
<http://www.city-data.com/forum/rochester-area/143037-best-rochester-neighborhoods.html>)

greatly appreciated! Thank you to all who can help and may God bless you and your family.”

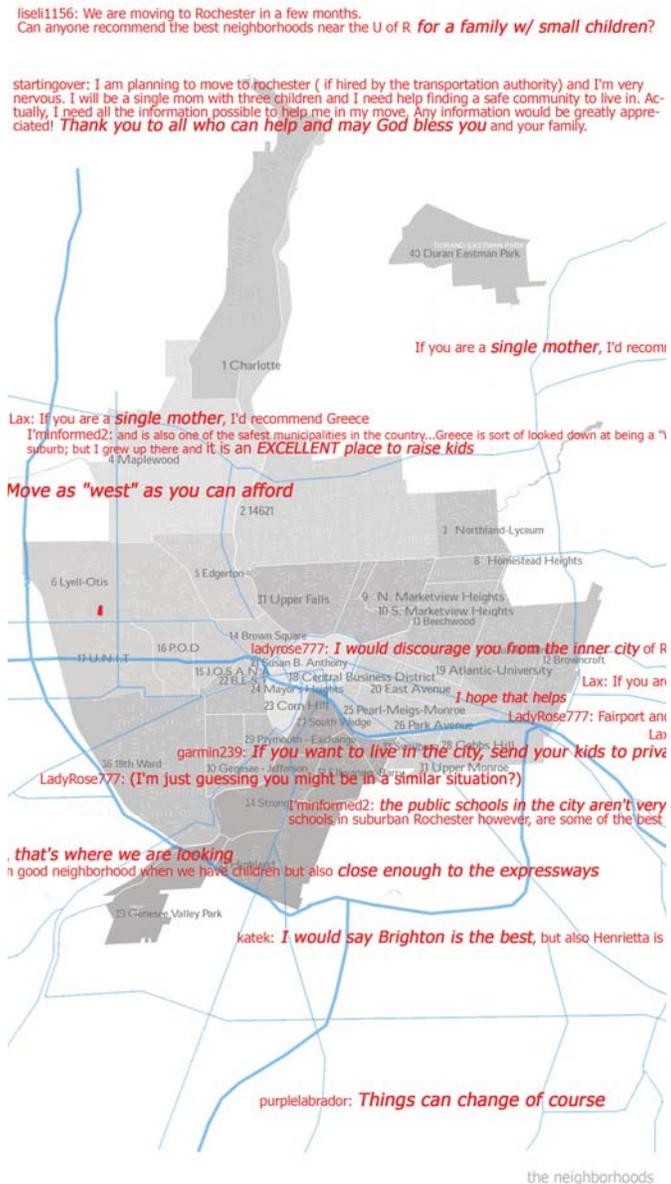
These questions bring up a number of important ideas about place. The first request defines the approximate area that they desire to be located. They then portray a relatable image of themselves, where in their vagueness, any human would understand the implications of their situation, “a family with small children.” These simple associations give so much information about the place that the family should be located in. The second request applies a similar method, so gracious at the end for help to find the perfect place that they send their deepest, most religious wishes out to those who can share advice. The religious reference reminds us of the deep connection humans have with place.

Matoré in 1962 writes, ‘We do not grasp space only by our senses...we live in it, we project our personality into it, we are tied to it by emotional bonds; space is not just perceived...it is lived.’ Space is never empty but has content and substance that derive both from human intention and imagination and from the character of the space.” (Relph, 10)

The responses to the questions were varied and passionate. People active in the blog/forum communities were eager to help the people (anonymous screen names representative of a person) new to the area. Arguments and defensiveness, even passive aggressive jabs ensued as some Rochester forums became more negative in topic. In the forums I followed however, the ‘conversation’ proceeded peacefully.

In order to map or graph these responses, I selected sentences from the forums that gave certain learned advice, and located them in the approximate area of discussion. Certain words were emphasized more than others if they represented stronger

statements or generalizations. The result was the formation of a narrative and rhythm of value systems of the city and suburbs of Rochester.



Neighborhoods: Illustration by author

Some of the overall conclusions that were drawn about the community's values were that new people should move as far west of the city as they can (I learned later from a representative of the Rochester Community Development Center that people are in fact pushing West because of the open and abandoned farmland that is being sold; a new community). People were discouraged from sending their kids into the city for the public school system, and encouraged to live in a suburb, because those are presumably perceived as the safer

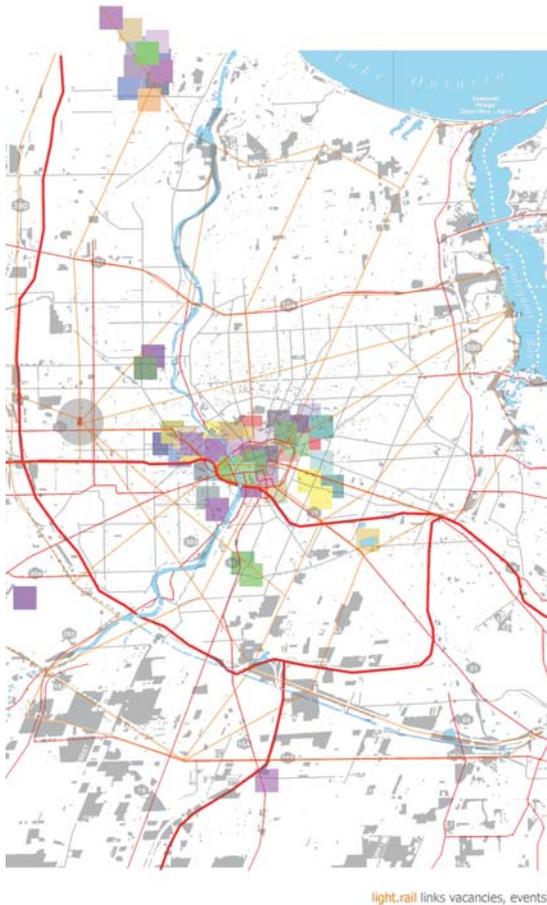
options. People also generally wanted access to the interstates for easy travel to other locations, assuming their access to a car. The areas of the north and direct west of the city (the industrial district) were not commented on. There was one reference to Lyell Avenue, complaining that a greasy, cheap restaurant used to be located on the street,

famous for something called a 'garbage plate.' Unfortunately, according to the anonymous contributor, the restaurant had moved or gone out of business, and complained that there was nothing left of worth in Rochester. This sparked a great many pages of angry responses, oddly addressed from many of the screen names that responded so sweetly to the two new community members' requests.

This study of human value unfortunately does not represent all people of Rochester. The people with time to write in blogs online can afford to do so and are most likely the middle income bracket of Rochester. However, what they do not say speaks to the entire demographic of the Rochester community. The underrepresented areas of the values map suggest that these locations are not recommended, or safe. These are more likely to be the places that people with middle income generally avoid; the commercial, industrial, and perhaps lower income areas of Rochester. It would be easy to focus just on the middle to upper income as a designer in this situation; they are the ones that have the voice are they not? But that is not what place is about. Place does not, or should not, discriminate; it is the designer's responsibility to recognize and accommodate all people. The data could be read one way, emphasizing specific areas of interest, but the areas that are not emphasized should also be critically analyzed to better know a place.

At this point in the analysis, I decided to overlay many of the elements and values that represent and make up the essence of Rochester. There is admittedly always more analysis and depth that one can go into, but sometimes time does not allow for any more exploration. The overlaid elements and the concepts of body, access, and nature came together through that diagram. I concluded that was needed in

Rochester was better access for the entire community; equally for all income levels, ages, and communities. The site was already located in a significant transportation center of the city, and in an area that can serve as an example for the regeneration of industry and forgotten land. Events and people needed to be linked, and they need a consistent, easy, and affordable way to access events and places around the city. The city should be seen as a whole; suburb and center alike. If the suburb and the city can be seen as inevitably one, perhaps more work would be done to remedy this divide between the two, rather being seen as one destroying or pushing the other away. This site and site analysis, and the opportunity to get to know the site better suggested that a new pedestrian transportation system was needed to link all that was considered

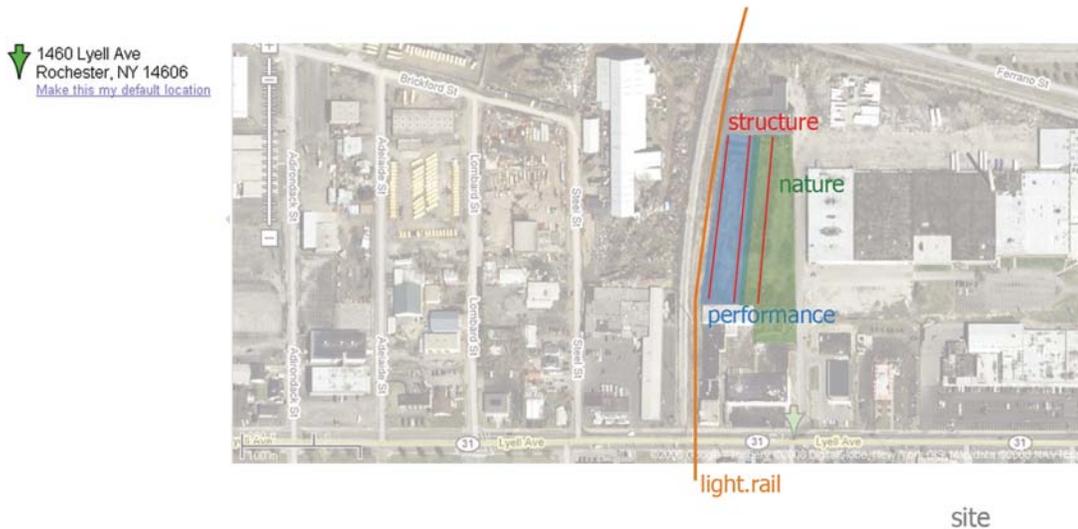


Light Rail System: Illustration by author

Rochester.

My recommendation for the area was an environmentally conscious and government subsidized light rail system that would link the fragmented areas of Rochester, specifically the vacant open spaces, in need of locational designs for the public to use (Orange line system in the diagram to the left). The government would pay for the light rail (in theory), or admission to the system would be calculated based on income level. The idea would be to increase access to everyone in

Rochester equally, encouraging the movement of people, money, goods, and experiences. The intricate system of light rail lines would vein through the country and city of Rochester, and be based at the site at 1460 Lyell Ave. The light rail tracks would run alongside the current railroad tracks flanking the west side of the site, and use the



The site: Illustration by author, using www.maps.google.com

current steel structural system to link rail tracks to the city beyond.

This site, now considered vacant, will serve two other purposes. It will be an example for the remediation of other vacant landscape sites, encouraging a stronger system of parks and natural space throughout the city. The space, within the unused structural beams, will also serve as an exhibition space for art about the body and space. This third aspect of the site will add another event location to the map and further connect the lake events to the city events. Justice had to be given to the essence of the site, the initial, experiential perspective that pulsed so strongly of body movement and pause.



site

Site Ideogram: Illustration by author

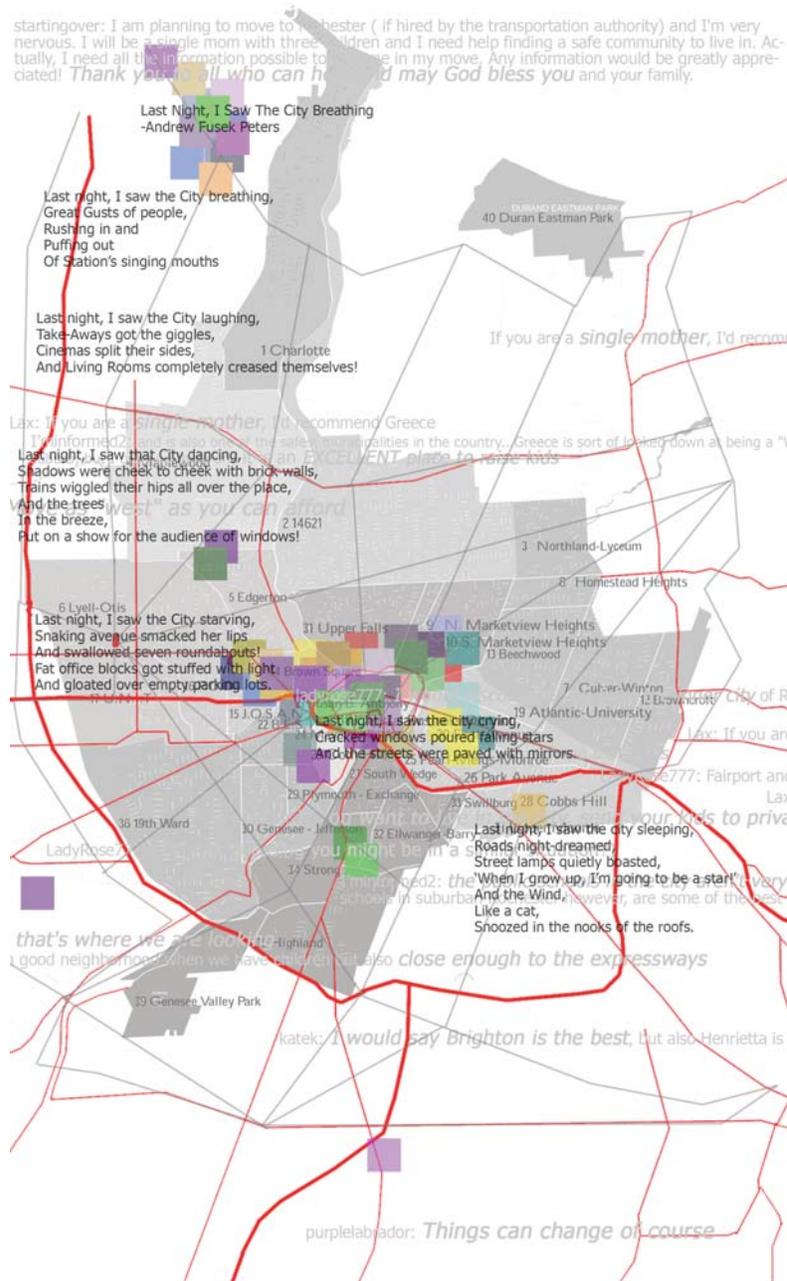
Conclusions:

The final board was to serve as an expression for the entirety of this understanding of place. Place speaks, is accessible, and so rich; designers just need to seek it out deeply in every project. A poem by Andrew Fusek Peters called, Last Night, I Saw The City Breathing, speaks to the idea of place as a humanly constructed, deeply spiritual and emotional space.

This poem was arranged to connect the forgotten and undervalued areas of Rochester, and to emphasize the motion linking the event centers; all located through our site. A site so seemingly insignificant at once, and in truth a connecting piece of the Rochester community. The final diagram was constructed to convey the poetic

lisell1156: We are moving to Rochester in a few months.
 Can anyone recommend the best neighborhoods near the U of R *for a family w/ small children?*

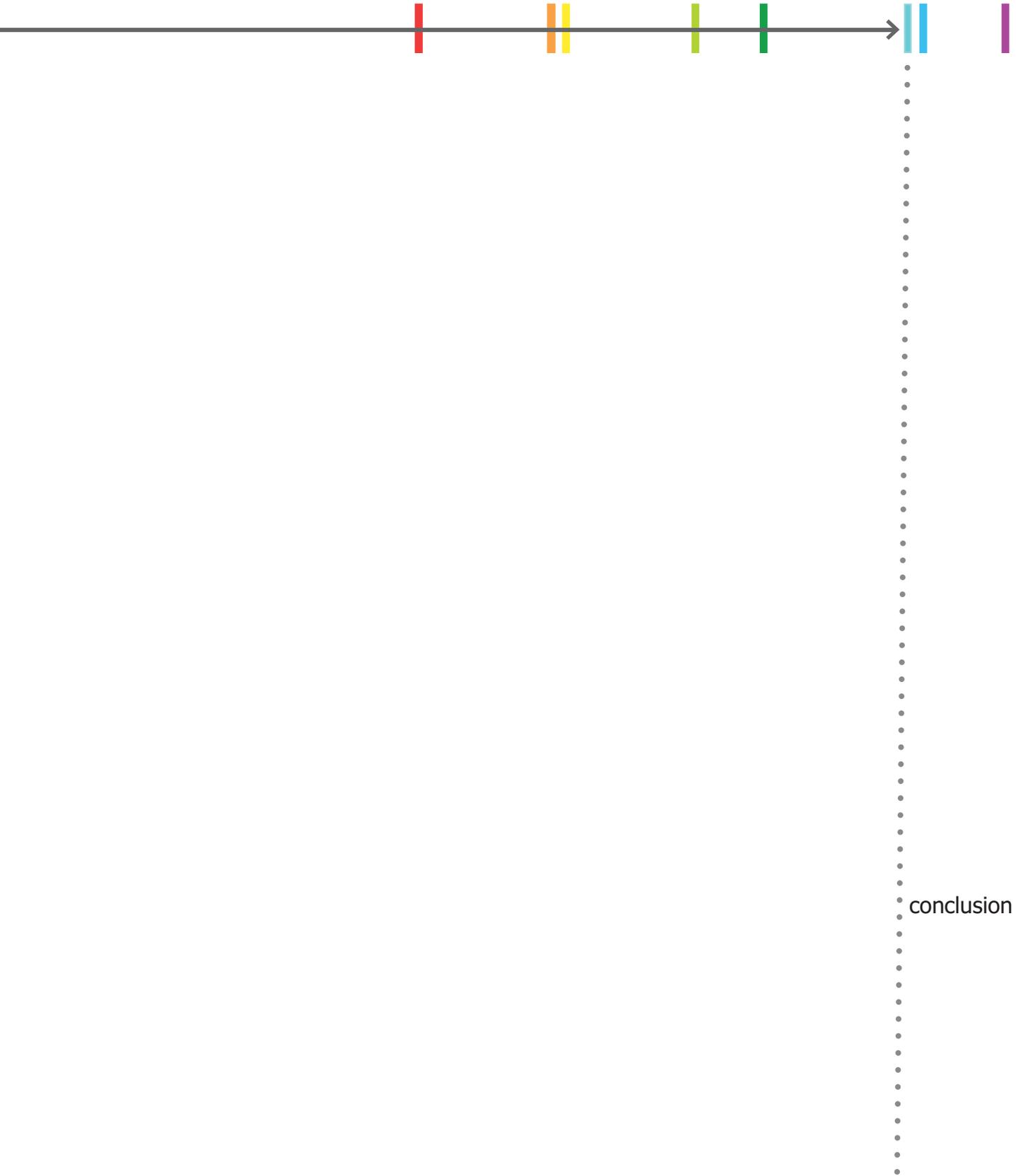
startingover: I am planning to move to Rochester (if hired by the transportation authority) and I'm very nervous. I will be a single mom with three children and I need help finding a safe community to live in. Actually, I need all the information possible to help me in my move. Any information would be greatly appreciated! *Thank you to all who can help and may God bless you and your family.*



narrative of rochester

nature of the project and of the many elements of the site coming together. The relationships each disparate element formed represent the place of Rochester and what can and should be done to design the actual site for place from such rich and telling context.

This project helped me to learn about the struggles that designers face when trying to consider place in their designs. The only regret I have with the project is that I never took it further to design the actual landscape site which would have represented the clear transition from theory and research to design. The intense analytical process however, introduced me to the reality of Rochester, which I never would have understood without the time I spent to look into it. It was a wonderful practice in place and place analysis.



Conclusion

Designers have a great responsibility toward place. Place is what defines our designs, and the viability and success of the spaces we create. There is nothing more important or necessary than to design to enhance the sense of place. The inclusion of human values, behaviors, and relationships into the design process will only make these new places richer and more meaningful to the designer, the client, and those who will benefit from them after they are built. If we are not designing for the human experience, then who are we designing for? Design has the potential to be the expression of the area, the people, of emotions, and can even be expressive of the passion of the designer; which is only appropriate if it is in the context of the site. There is nothing more special than a place that one can connect to and feel comfortable in. Designers have the honor and opportunity to be in the position to create places that have the potential to transcend imagination, and inspire.

This thesis aimed to show the necessity of understanding place for designers, and to suggest how a designer may go about understanding the idea of place in order to design for it. I see the future of this thesis being the further discovery of place. Place is the relationship between body and space, and the transcendent layers and layers of context that make up everything beyond the site boundaries. The answers and design solutions are available to any designer, only if they will look deeply to the context of each and every site. Place is what design is about, and it is our absolute responsibility as designers to make sure that we continue to create passionate, intuitive, and connective places. There is nothing greater than a space with meaning; a place.

Reflections

This thesis has been an incredible opportunity to learn about the idea of place. Reading contemporary and historic theories of place still reveal the necessity of considering it in design. The process of discovering human behavior through the methods of William H. Whyte has increased my awareness of human tendency in design. To culminate the journey, the application of the idea of context to place made the ideas I have studied more personal and necessary. This thesis has been one student's perspective and search of place in the landscape architecture field. It is only the beginning in my pursuit of place, and the making of meaning in landscape design.



appendix, ii

senior honors thesis
bailey plaza observation

METHOD 1

bonnie cate kirn
spring 2008

date: 3.25.2008	time: 12:30pm	*EVERY 5 MINUTES.
location: EAST BENCH.		
weather:		
temperature: 31°F	conditions: COOL, BRIGHT, SUNNY	
WINDS 20 ¹⁵ MPH, 45% HUMIDITY, 60% CHANCE of RAIN/SNOW/WIND LATER		
ground condition: CLEAR		
other (cornell events, attire, etc): 2ND DAY AFTER SPRING BREAK, PANTS + LIGHTER JACKETS.		

notes/sketches:

BENCHES ACTUALLY WARM ON THIS COOL + WINDY DAY.
PEOPLE NOT WALKING IN CENTER.

CLOSE TO BENCHES + SIDES.

GROUP UNGERED IN WEST CORRIDOR @ CROSSWALK
ACTUALLY PLEASANT - JUST WINDY.

PASSING THROUGH.

MAINLY INDIVIDUALS.

HEADS DOWN OR @ S' → "BEYOND PLAZA".

* GREAT CHOICE of PLANTINGS → BRIGHT
REDS + YELLOWS ADD SO MUCH WINTER INTERSEASON
COLOR

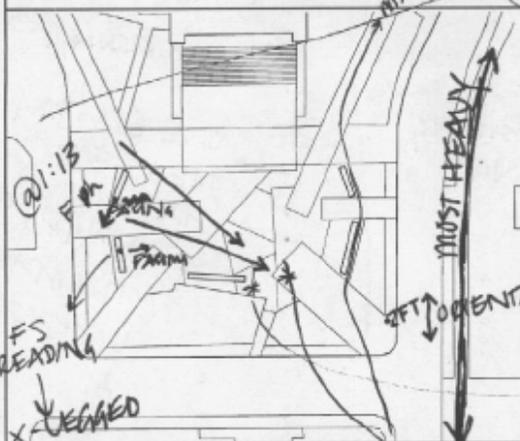
day#: |

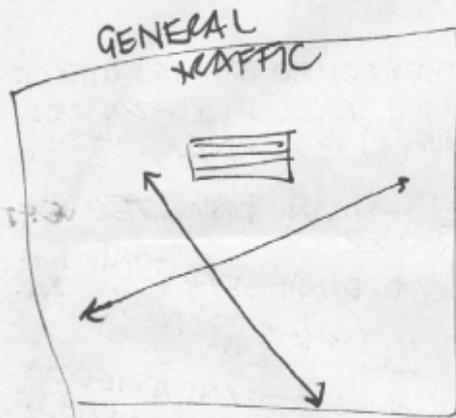
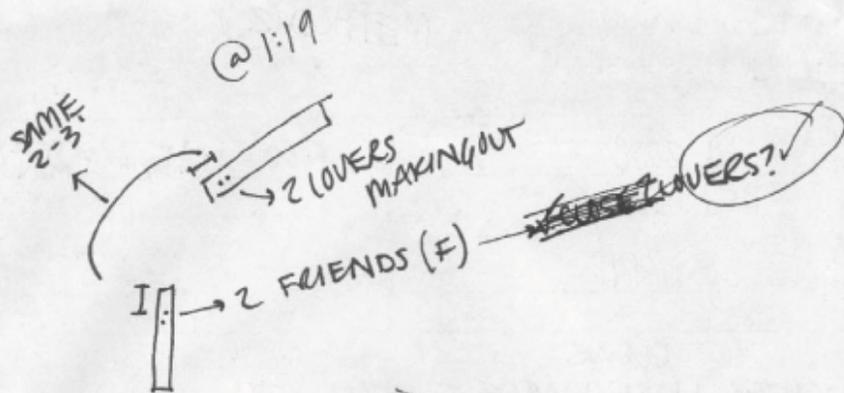
senior honors thesis
bailey plaza observation

METHOD (2)

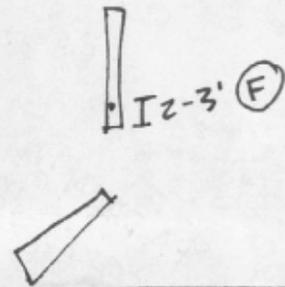
bonnie cate kirn
spring 2008

date: 4.1.2008	time: 1:00 - 1:15 PM EVERY MINUTE
location: KENNEDY	
weather:	
temperature: 49°	conditions:
ground condition: CLEAR	other (cornell events, attire, etc):
LIGHTER WARE, WARMEST @ CU YET.	

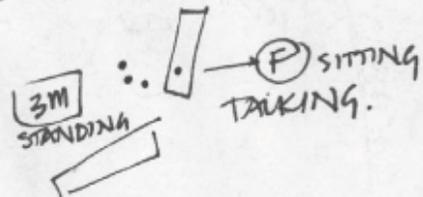
<p>w. whyte observation: m = male f = female s = sitting w = walking ph = on phone p = pausing t = talking e = eye level</p> <p>z's + 1's</p> <p>+ A DAILY LOG + DATA REVIEW</p> <p>need a SERIES of THESE - RECORDED MINUTE</p>	<p>personal observations:</p> <p>DO THEY FOLLOW PAVING PATTERNS? SO MUCH SPACE ON PLAZA WALKWAYS GROUP (2) @ CORNER →</p> <p>@ 1:10 → MANY FROM WHEEL LEFT CORNER.</p> <p>• PEOPLE DON'T SEEM TO NOTICE THE COUPLE EMBRACING. LOVECS</p> <p>@ 1:10 - COUPLE EMBRACING.</p> <p>* WERE THE PATTERNS AIMED TO HAVE PEOPLE FOLLOW? + IF NOT → WHY THAT PATTERN</p> <p>→ LOG EACH DAY. OBSERVATIONS.</p> <p>sketches/comparisons: ROTATING ↓ ↓ ↓</p> <p>→ LOG EACH DAY. OBSERVATIONS.</p> <p>2 COUPLES (2F, 1M + 1F) WALK TO FOUNTAIN TO OBSERVE - NOT ON. MAY BE FIGURING HOW IT FLOWS</p>
	
day#:	



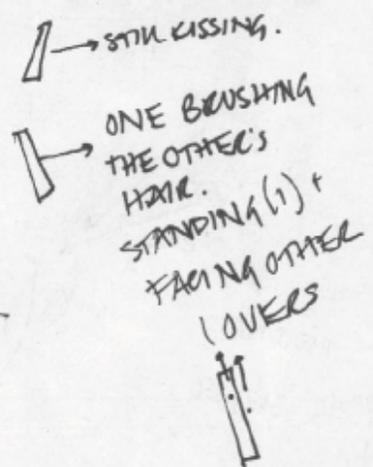
@ 1:20



@ 1:22



@ 1:28

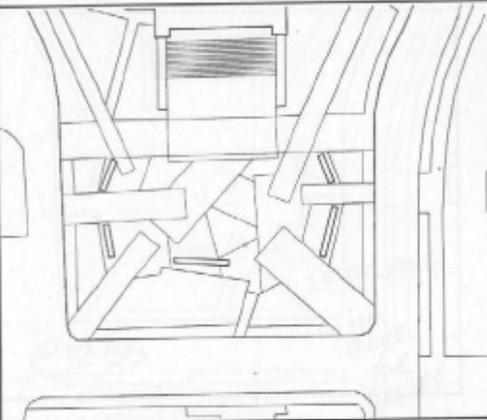


senior honors thesis
bailey plaza observation

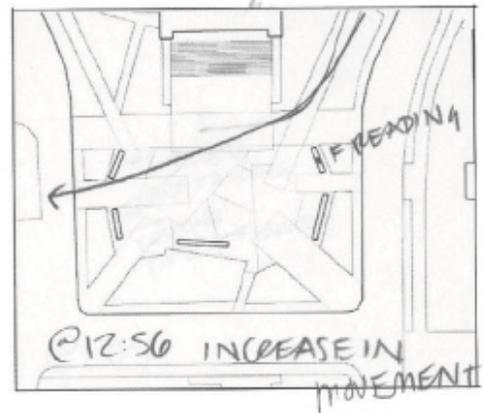
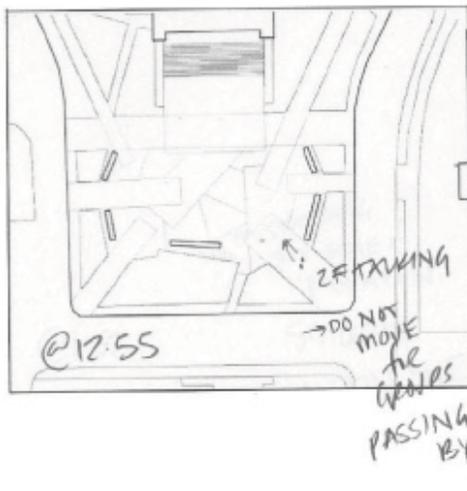
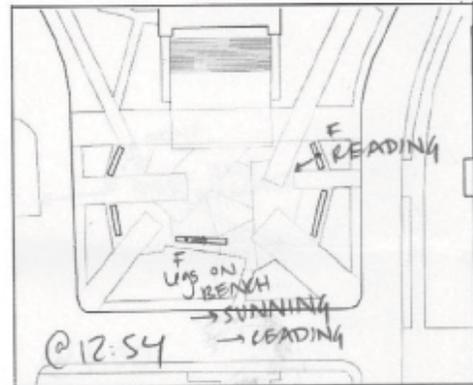
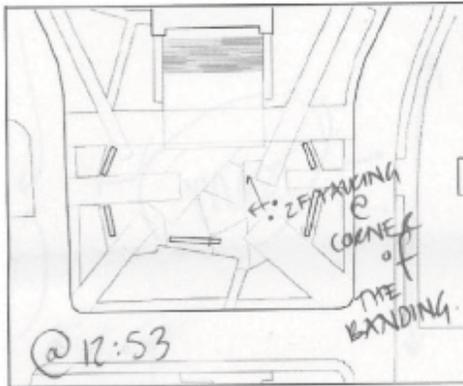
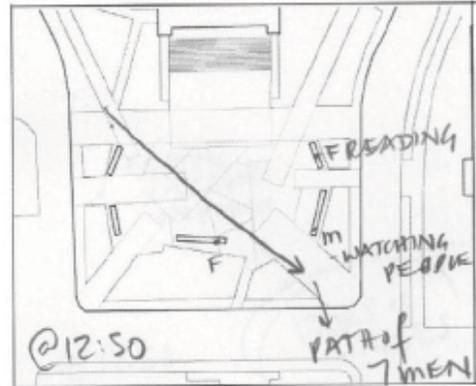
METHOD 3

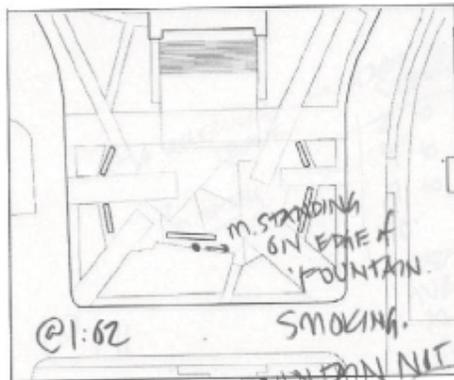
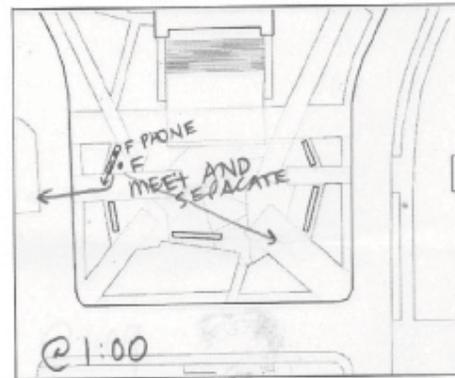
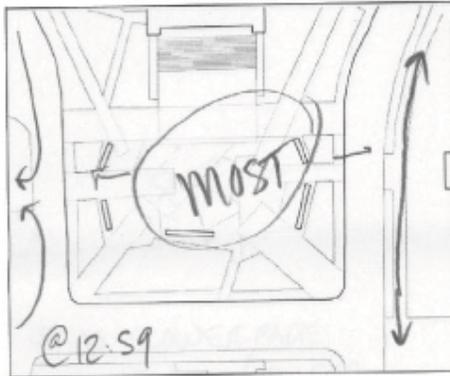
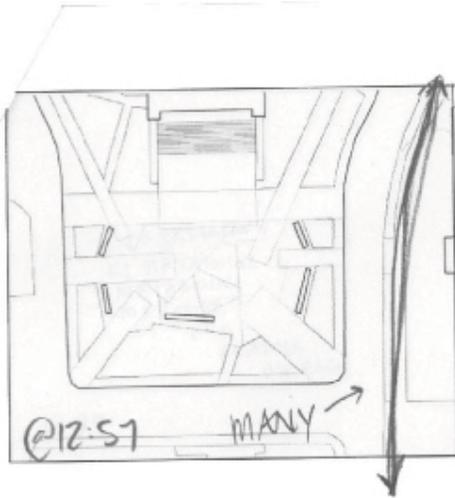
bonnie cate kirn
spring 2008

date: 4.8.2008	time: 12:45 pm - 1:15 pm
location:	
weather:	
temperature: WIND ABOUT 50°	conditions: PARTLY CLOUDY
LIGHT COOL WIND.	
ground condition: CLEAR	other (cornell events, attire, etc):
LIGHTER COATS	

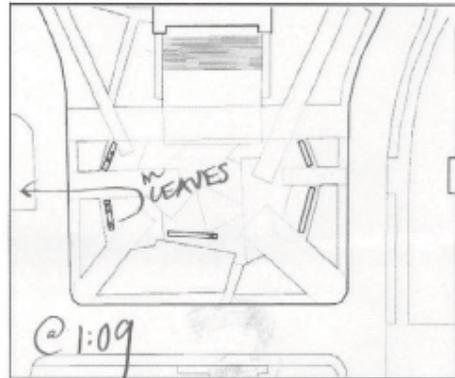
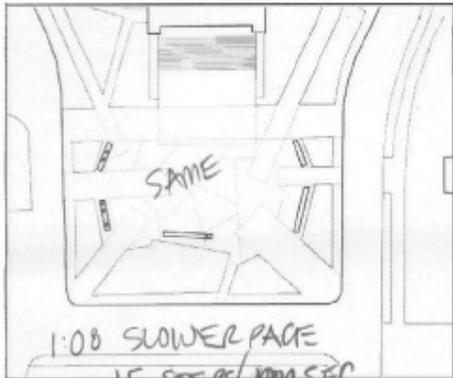
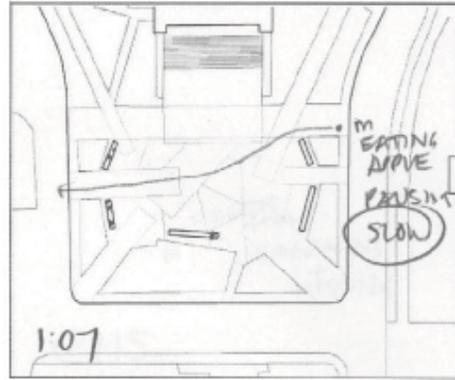
<p>w. whyte observation: m = male f = female s = sitting w = walking ph = on phone p = pausing t = talking e = eye level</p> <p>@ 1:02</p>	<p>personal observations:</p> <p>PEOPLE MOSTLY WALKING 2 STEPS/SEC. @ 1:02 1.5 STEPS/SEC. @ 1:08 A PLACE TO PAUSE + MEET</p> <p>↓ IMPORTANT BEGINNING FOR A SPACE</p>
	<p>sketches/comparisons:</p> <p>SEEM TO SPREAD OUT IN THIS OVER-LARGE PLAZA. WHEN + @ WHAT VOLUME IS THIS SIZE APPROPRIATE?</p> <p>@ 1:06 INCREASE IN NUMBER</p>

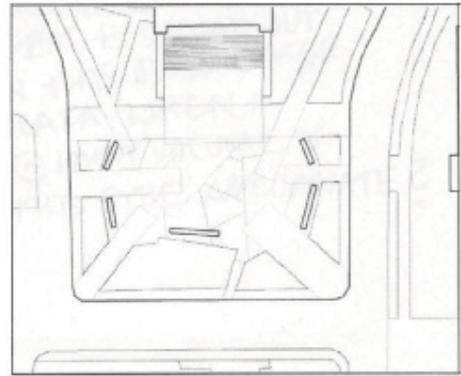
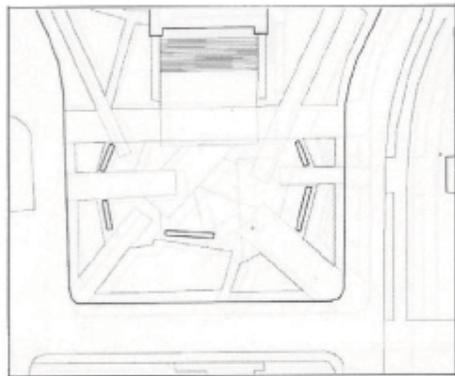
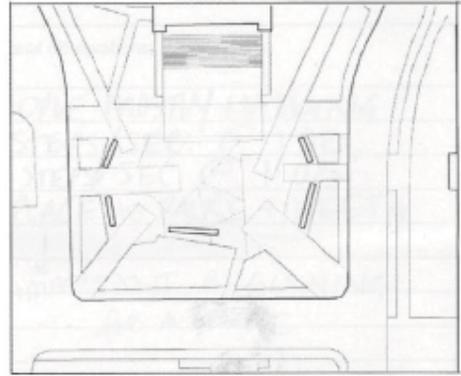
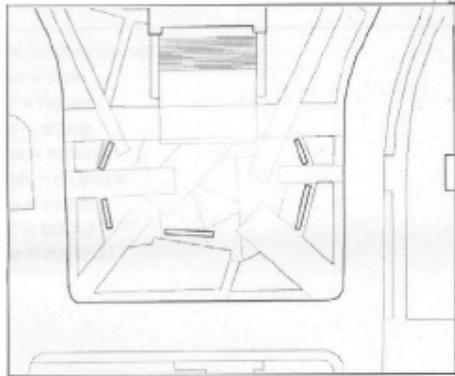
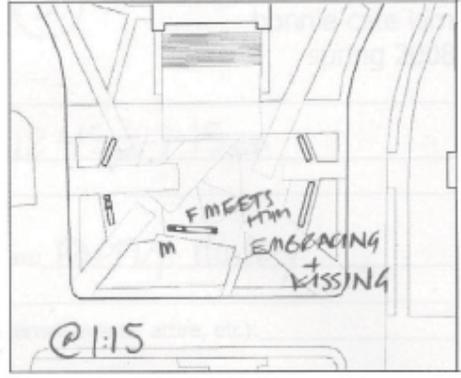
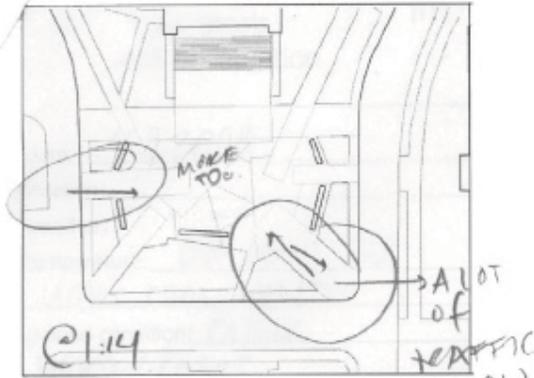
day#:





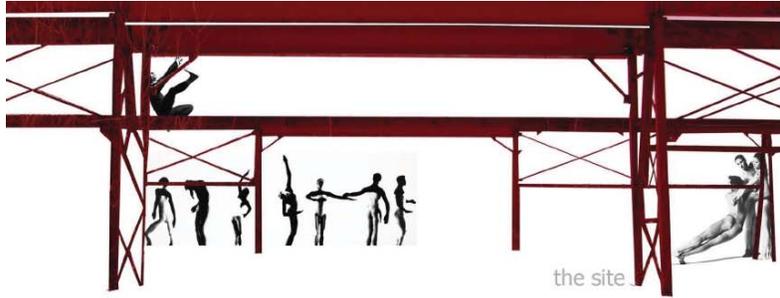
FOUNTAIN NOT ON "SAFE"
 PUTTING ASH IN FOUNTAIN







appendix, iii



the site



body and machine



machine



body



created for a function



created for a reason



collection of parts



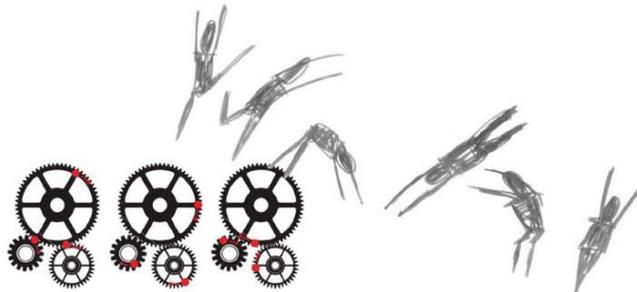
collection of systems



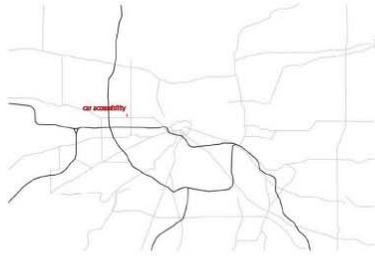
controlled by engineering



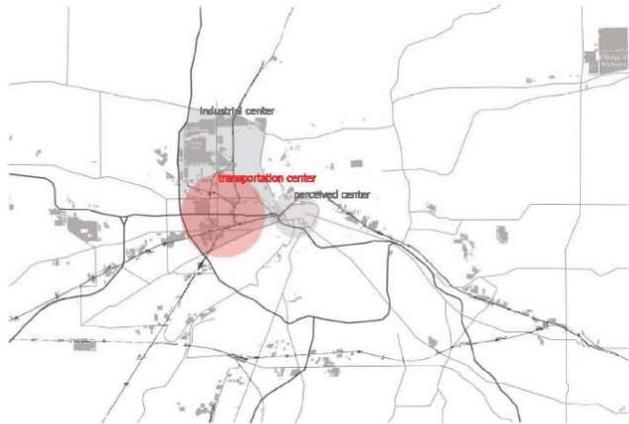
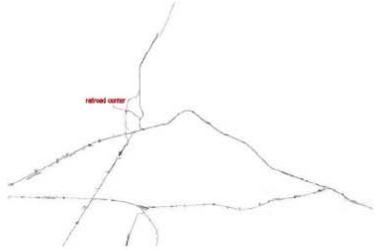
controlled by thought

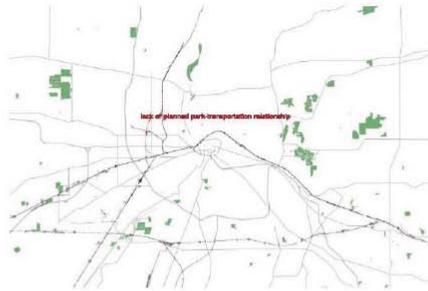


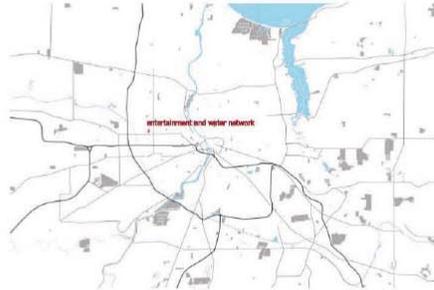
lacks free will

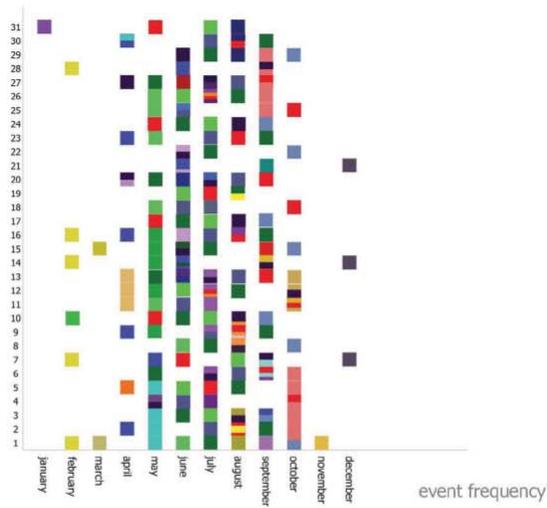


bonniekiRN
rochester, NY
4.15.2008

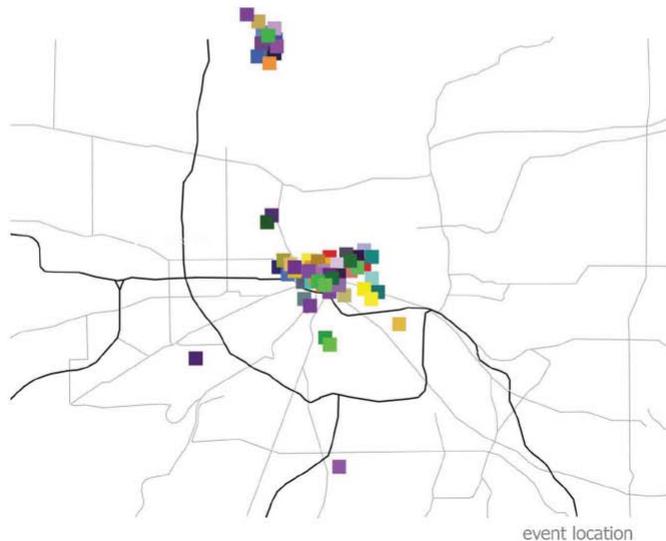






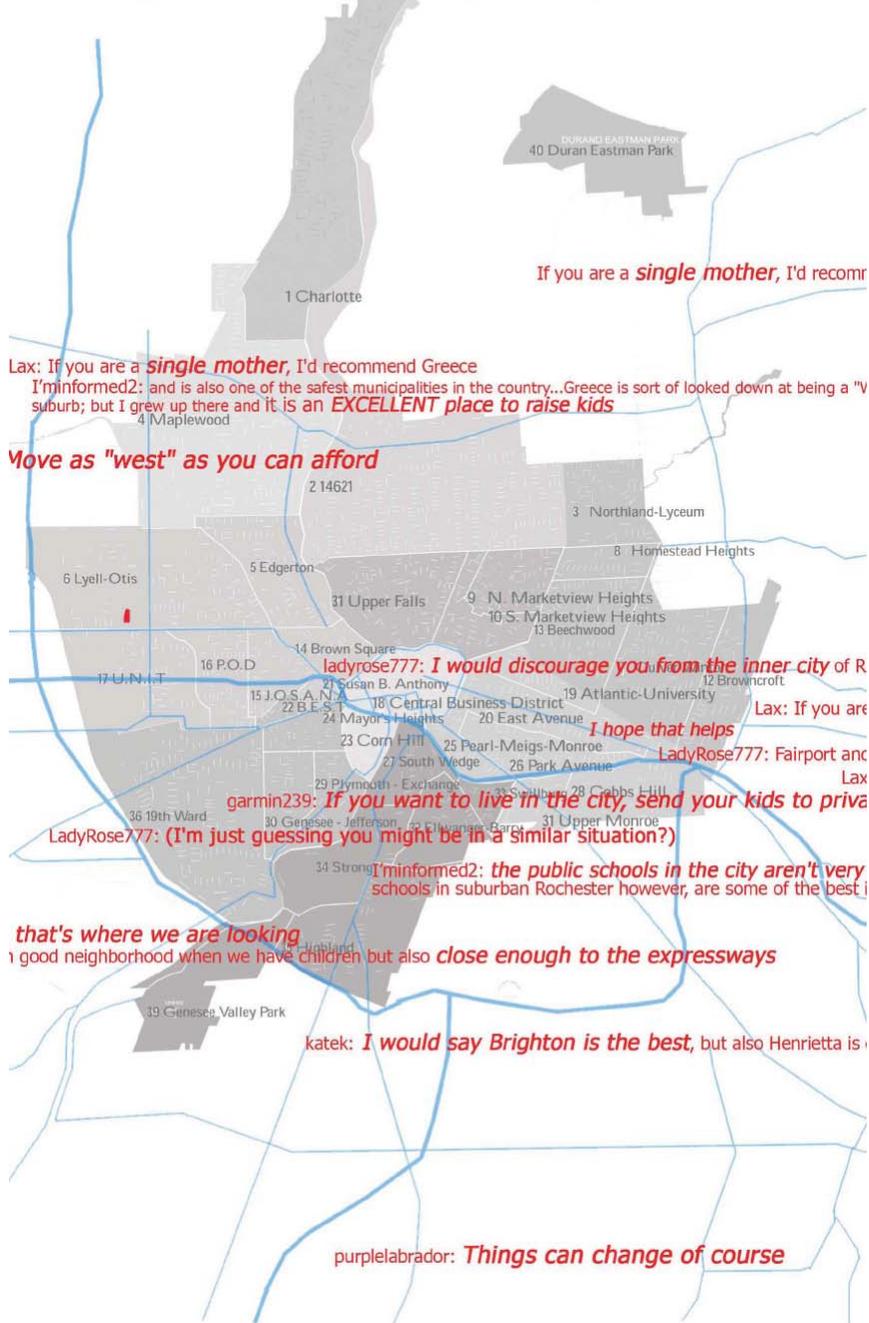


- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MAP INFORMATION SESSION BLACK HERITAGE MONTH CELEBRATION LAKESIDE WINTER CELEBRATION ISOY UNICA! ISOY LATINA! 2008 RALLY ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE BIG BAND DANCES HEART WALK RED WINGS OPENING WEEKEND MOMMY AND ME & PARENTS-TO-BE FAMILY EXPO GREATEST COMMUNITY GARAGE SALES and SUPER FLEAS HIGH FALLS FILM FESTIVAL CHEF'S DAY "AT THE MARKET" KITE FLIGHT TUESDAY NATURE NIGHTS FLOWER CITY DAYS "AT THE MARKET" LILAC FESTIVAL LILAC FESTIVAL PARADE FLOWER CITY DAYS "AT THE MARKET" ISRAEL 60 CELEBRATION "RIVER OF LIGHT" LASER & LIGHT SHOWS ADORE YOUR CITY WEGMANS CONCERTS BY THE SHORE BANDS ON THE BRICKS EAST END NIGHT LIFE FESTIVAL PARTY IN THE PARK! ROCHESTER INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL MAPLEWOOD ROSE CELEBRATION PARTY ON THE BRIDGE 6th ANNUAL JUNETEENTH CELEBRATION ROCHESTER HARBOR AND CAROUSEL FESTIVAL ROCHESTER MUSICFEST 2008 TASTE OF ROCHESTER 2nd ANNUAL FURRY SCURRY 10 K RACE AND 1 MILE DOG WALK | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> JULY 4 FIREWORKS SPIRIT OF AMERICA DAY MONROE COUNTY FAIR EAST END NIGHT LIFE FESTIVAL URBAN LEGEND RUN CORN HILL ARTS FESTIVAL RIBBIN' ON THE RIVER GAY PRIDE PARADE BARBERSHOP AT THE BEACH MAIN GAME ESL INTERNATIONAL AIR SHOW SWEET MUSIC AT THE LAKE PUERTO RICAN FESTIVAL PUERTO RICAN PARADE PARK AVENUE ARTS FESTIVAL EAST END NIGHT LIFE FESTIVAL 2008 ROCHESTER OMNIUM (3 events) CARFEST AND PARADE CLARISSA ST. REUNION DRUM CORPS ASSOCIATES EVENTS LABOR DAY PARADE BIG BAND DANCES—FALL SERIES SMOKE, FIRE AND COURAGE II CLOTHESLINE ARTS FESTIVAL PREFERRED CARE ROCHESTER MARATHON SAVOR ROCHESTER: 6th ANNUAL FESTIVAL OF FOOD ARTIST'S ROW NEW YORK HARVEST FOR NEW YORK KIDS WEEK ROCHESTER RIVER ROMANCE AND THE GENESEE REGATTA COLUMBUS DAY PARADE PUMPKINS IN THE PARK 5K RACE HOLIDAYS "AT THE MARKET" |
|---|--|



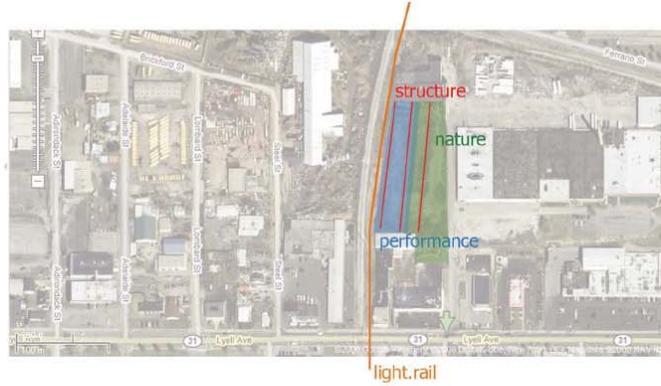
lisell1156: We are moving to Rochester in a few months.
Can anyone recommend the best neighborhoods near the U of R *for a family w/ small children?*

startingover: I am planning to move to rochester (if hired by the transportation authority) and I'm very nervous. I will be a single mom with three children and I need help finding a safe community to live in. Actually, I need all the information possible to help me in my move. Any information would be greatly appreciated! *Thank you to all who can help and may God bless you and your family.*



the neighborhoods

1460 Lyell Ave
Rochester, NY 14606
[Make this my default location](#)



site

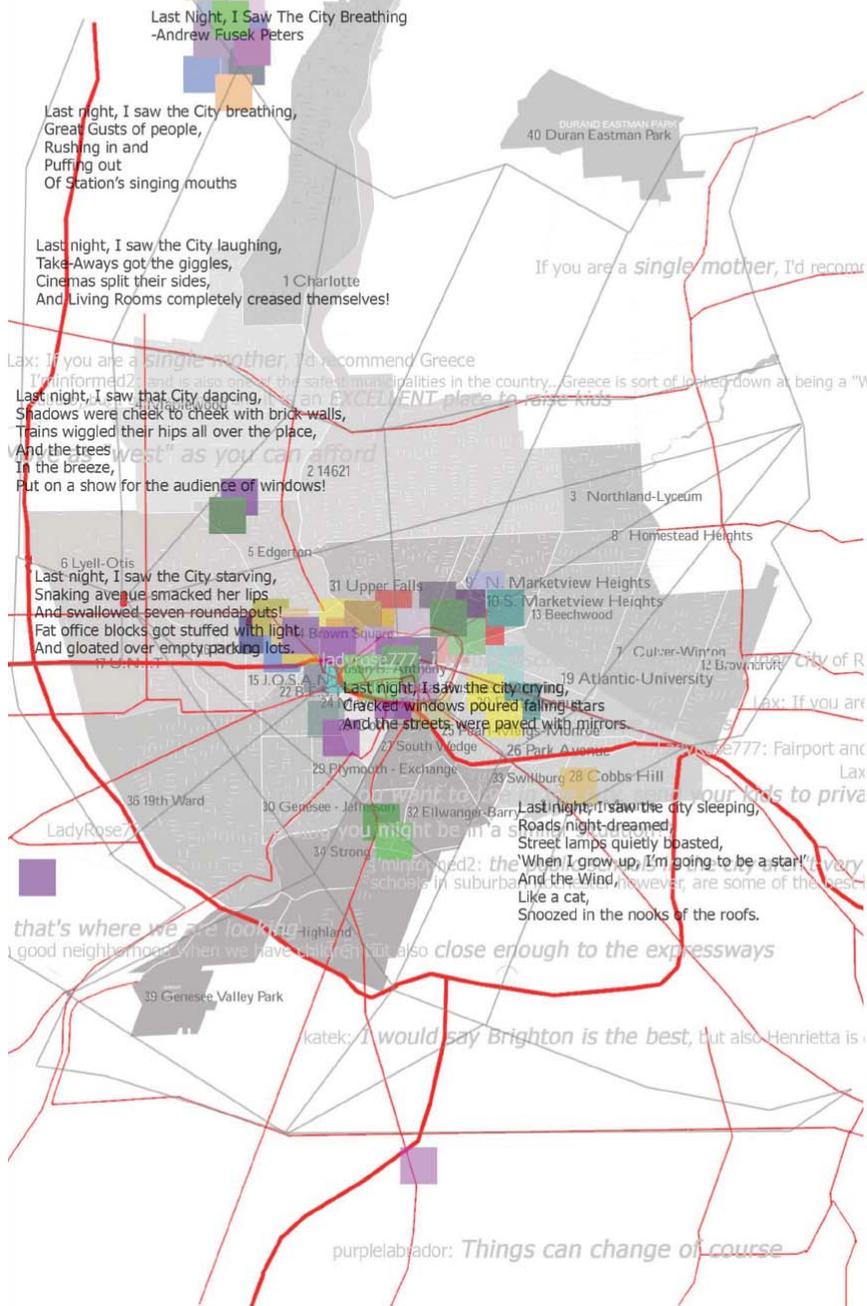
linking rochester through its people. what already exists.
through access, through performance, through nature



site

lisell156: We are moving to Rochester in a few months.
 Can anyone recommend the best neighborhoods near the U of R *for a family w/ small children?*

startingover: I am planning to move to Rochester (if hired by the transportation authority) and I'm very nervous. I will be a single mom with three children and I need help finding a safe community to live in. Actually, I need all the information possible to help me in my move. Any information would be greatly appreciated! *Thank you to all who can help and may God bless you and your family.*





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