20 x 20 x 20 x G20
design vignette 01
due 22 sept 2009

"Beneath the paving stones - the beach"
- anonymous graffiti, Paris 1968

activating environments
fall 2009 / eric paulos / cmu / hcii

In this design vignette we will expore an urban design constrained within a 20 x 20 x 20 foot cubic volume themed around the G20 summit. The vignette can be deconstructed into three critical components: (1) site selection, (2) mico-urban archeology, and (3) artifact design. In this project there will be little time for formal user testing and evaluation. The focus of this vignette is on the rapid generation of design concepts based on site geography, landscape, actvities, and the public. You will need to not only communicate those designs but take a stand, detail, and argue for the adoption of a single urban interactive design.

Like real world designs you will be operating under a series of constraints: setting (public urban), space (20'x20'x20'), time (3 weeks), and topic (G20).

On 25-26 September 2009, Pittsburgh will play host to the Group of Twenty Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors better known as the G20 Summit. The G20 is a group of finance ministers and central bank governors from 20 economies: 19 of the world's largest national economies, plus the European Union (EU). Collectively, the G20 economies comprise 85% of global gross national product, 80% of world trade, and two-thirds of the world population. The G-20 is highly influencal over the management of the global economy and financial system.

SITE SELECTION

Each group must select a site no more than 20' x 20' x 20' within the city of Pittsburgh near a G20 venue. The site we would like you to consider is what might be referred to as an in-between space, an interstitial space, leftover space, or non-place. Site requirements:

- Must be within 10 minute walking distance of one of the G20 venue locations: David L. Lawrence Convention Center, Phipps Conservatory & Botanical Gardens, The Andy Warhol Museum, the Pittsburgh High School for the Creative and Performing Arts and Rosemont, the working farm of Teresa Heinz Kerry
- Must be a public space (*i.e.* it must be publicly accessible, not part of a private business)
- Must be free to access
- Must support some level of pedestrian or vehicular activity
- Must be reasonably bounded and specific (*i.e.* not "along Main Street" but rather "the area of sidewalk on the west side of Main Street bounded by the benches and newspaper rack).

Examples include a train station, bus stop, bike rack, park, farmer's market, alley, waterfront, plaza or square, or a crosswalk.

MICRO URBAN ARCHEOLOGY

It is rare that we are allowed to inspect the urban fabric in such detail, to spend time looking at ground that is usually brushed over, eyes averted, trafficked but not seen. The first part of this vignette focuses exclusively and intently on investigating, documenting and analyzing your chosen site. You are required to document and describe you site using all of the following:

- photograph your site one a weekend and weekday
- capture 2 minutes of video 2 times within a 24 hour period from a fixed location at least 8 hours apart
- photograph one surface in close up detail and create a tiled (8.5x11") print of the surface at 1:1 scale of not less than 1 x 1 square meter
- use forensic photography (include scale, orientation) to record not less than 5 unexpected objects or things
- use forensic photography to record not less than 5 traces of time, wear and use that were unplanned
- hold three 30 sec audio or video interviews with a person or passerby regarding the site. Have they ever noticed this site? What does it mean to you? Do they walk / ride past this site everday? *etc.*
- measure and draw your site in plan, section and include a location plan
- include at least one government and/or commercial (zillow, *etc*) or other offsite but online information that looks at or captures a representation of your site in some non-physical terms
- take one measuring device of your own choosing and record/measure that metric on site and add to your site drawing. Suggestions include, Geiger counter, sound, levels, light meters, wireless signals, moisture, etc.
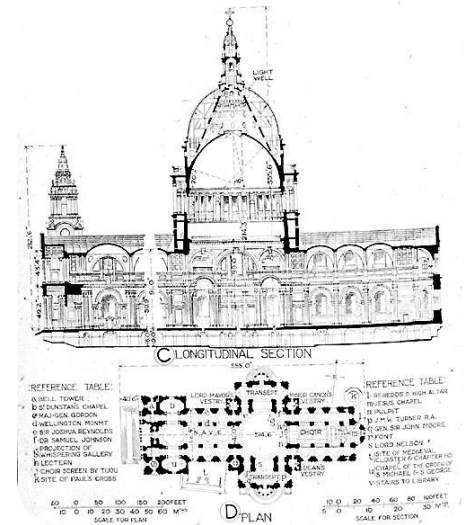
In your documentation consider including information that is relevant to an extensive understanding of the space, its orientation, its proximity to landmarks or directional markers, its dimensions and proportions, its infrastructure, its history, its cultural heritage, its broken added or adjusted sections (*i.e.* new concrete, building repairs, or additions *etc*), any relationship to external systems (*i.e.* place of manufacture of street furniture, manhole covers, lights, garden varieties, *etc*).

The goal of this first part of this exercise to see more in a 20 foot cube of urban territory than you would normally notice, to see its implicit and explicit relationships to other urban territories and commercial systems or systems of governance, land title, deed trust, ownership, usage, *etc*. The goal is to uncover the richness of this site, by simply looking closely, documenting, and analyzing. From these recordings you will be able to determine where steps need to be taken to uncover and activate this site. Principally, your role is to observe, record, and become intimate with the site you have chosen, noticing every nook and cranny as a possibility for future design territory. You will hand in all of this documentation and present subsets of it in your critique.

ACTIVATING-20

By now you have a very clear picture of your site. It is well documented, and precisely described in physical, behavioral, and temporal dimensions. The slate is now open for your design intervention.

Using the details of the micro urban archeology of your site as a starting point, we are interested in developing both a position from which to consider technology, the city, and the contemporary framework of the G20 to guide the way in which we activate it.

During the previous G20 in London, President Obama agreed to host the next meeting of the G20 and personally selected Pittsburgh as the host city. One reason for selecting Pittsburgh is its historical success in managaing financial crises.

> *"The goal of the Pittsburgh G20 Summit will center on the new economy and the green economy, and Pittsburgh as a great poster child in becoming a leader in this economic transformation."*

Using the above as a provocation, construct a response (affirm, negate, debate, critique, *etc*) that allows you to propose a technological design solution that will activate your space in at least one of the following ways:

- highlight civic or economic "transformation" within the city of Pittsburgh
- provide a mechanism on your site for "participation" in the G20
- educate citizens about the G20 Summit

Your final design proposal may be interactive or passive but must be adequately justified by your previous micro-urban archeology. Your design should respond to your detailed analysis of the existing site as a starting point, developing from there into a fully 4D strategy. It should incoporate technology and be additive to the site. Without taking on city hall or requiring a PhD in political science or philosophy, your design should consider the context broadly. While providing an interface for "citizen" users, do not exceed the physical limits of your 20'x20'x20' site. How can you see this as an opportunity to recalibrate our ideas of what the urban might be or might encompass with the introduction of technology? Your final design should be a place, perhaps strange and new, that we would all like to visit.
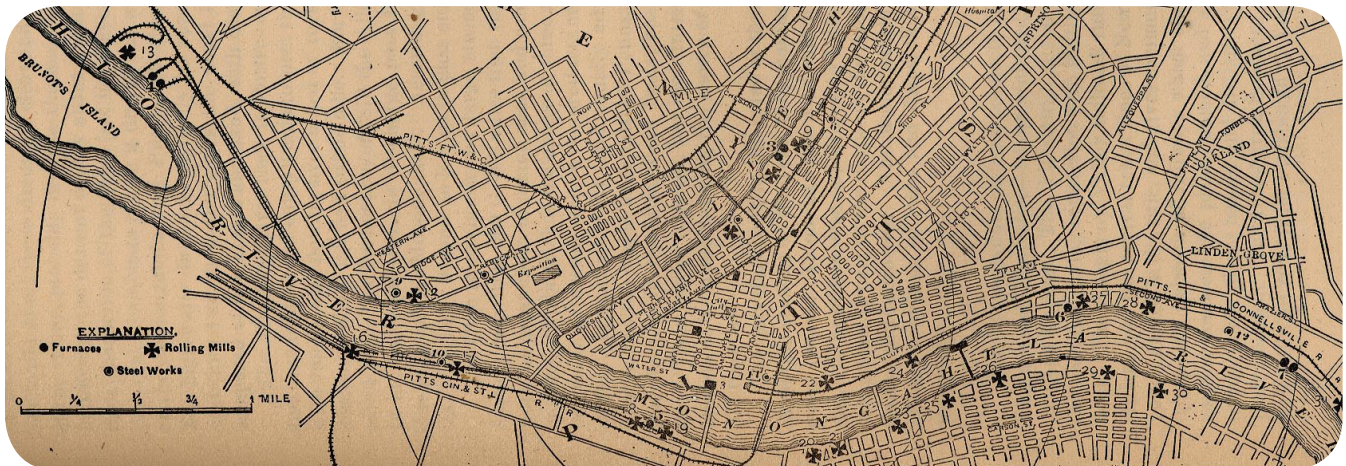
Your final critique will consist of 10 minute presentation of a selected subset of the full required documentation:

- a title for your project
- one paragraph of text describing your project
- your micro urban documentation
- design process documentation (intermediate designs, sketeches, ideas)
- a physical description of your proposed solution (size, location, *etc*)
- an envisionment of the experience of interaction with your design solution (PhotoShopped storyboard, Flash animation, video, *etc*)
- an poster captuting the essense of your project. Posters must be printed on paper (11" x 17") and mounted on black board (17" x 23"). This is a poster, not a novel or a product specification; text descriptions should be brief.

You will be graded on the quality of your site selection, micro-urban archeology, and final design. The communication of your design process and justfication will be key.

Your proposal may ultimately encompass a range of responses, from delight, joy and "wonderment", to the infomatic possibilities of social exchange, commentary, participation, civic engagement, and critique that goes beyond mobile phone location applications and public wireless access points.