

ASSIGNMENT 1: URBAN OBSERVATION, DATA DIGGING



Bike share dock affording alternate use as a resting spot for late-night party goers in the West Village.

Urban Observation

Select a specific outdoor public site as your observation post, one which is unfamiliar to you, and beyond the university setting. Situate yourself in this post for 30-60 minutes, and observe and document what happens. Select a visiting time that will yield the best results, when users are present and active.

Create a diagram of the space, and use it to map the use of the site.

Photodocument the use patterns within the space.

Create a taxonomy of users and use patterns.

What intended and unintended affordances does the site provide?

Data Digging

Conduct secondary research to unearth information relevant to the site you observed. Investigate archives of published journals, books, documentary films, podcasts, as well as current media such as newspapers and periodicals. Look at written word, photographs, moving image, diagrams, and maps.

Skip over the expected, the predictable, and the familiar - search for information about this site that is unfamiliar, unusual, unpredictable, shocking, surprising, exciting or inspiring. Capture details about your site from at least three different sources and assemble your findings into a short essay 250 words or less. Cite your (three or more) sources using MLA style.

Create a three part PDF containing:

- complete site diagram with mapped site use
- original photo documentation of the site, with descriptive captions
- taxonomy of users and use patterns
- at least three secondary research findings, cited using MLA style

Email this PDF document to the instructor before the beginning of class to receive credit, and be prepared to give a short (< 3min) presentation of your context using your PDF as support material.