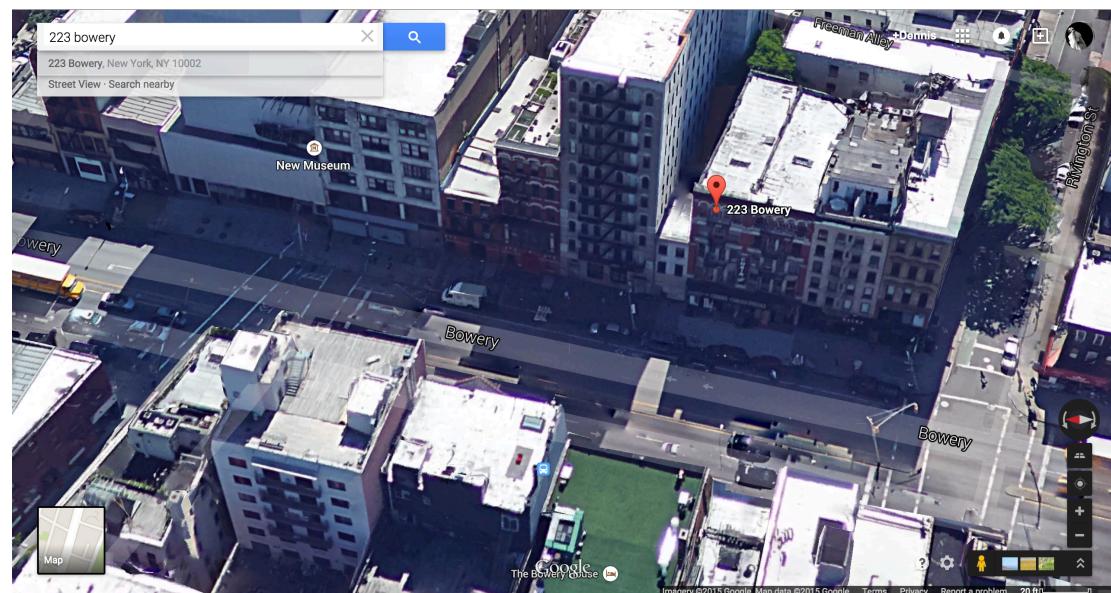
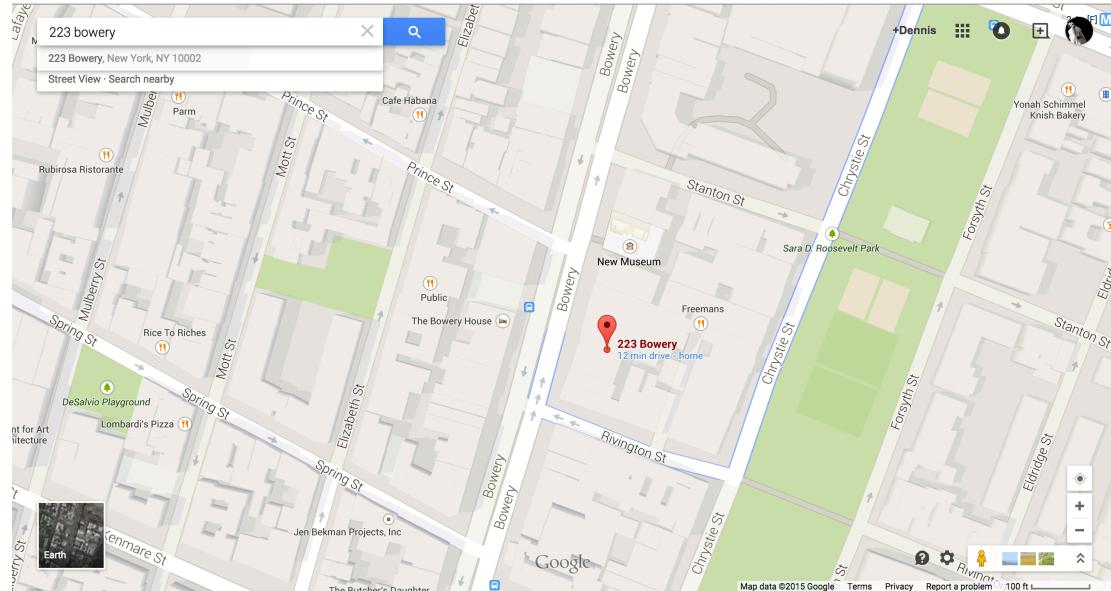


# ASSIGNMENT 1: URBAN OBSERVATION, DATA DIGGING

## Urban Observation

Location: Bowery between Prince & Rivington 223-225



Time: Saturday, 7/2/15 from 4:00 PM to 5:00 PM

Fairly nice weather with a lot of sunshine. Temperatures were not too low and the area was pretty lively.

Initial observation: Unusual group of people in an area that doesn't seem to provide an obvious reason for the meeting. Standing in front of a closed "chair table stools" shop called Chair Up. They seem to be in the middle of some casual conversations while observing passersby. I will call them CTS's from now on.



Thoughts: construction site right next to them, possibly construction workers on break.



After 30 min it doesn't seem like the construction workers and the CTS's are related.

Homeless people? CTS's don't ask for change or anything similar when people walk by. Two of them asked for cigarettes and some of them try to have some small talk with people.



Some of the CTS's seem to be frequently on the phone or portable radio and an empty shopping cart is located in the middle of the two groupings. Inside the shopping cart are plastic bags and a tripod (?). Everyone carries bag packs and plastic bags, but no one seems to be in a hurry. The women with the crutches walked back and forth and talked to several people. From time to time new CTS's come and have a small chat and then leave again after a while.

After a while of observing the surrounding houses, I thought that maybe the CTS's are residents, but there are no apartment entries on the side of bowery. Most of them are located on the cross streets, or the adjacent street. So this does not seem to be the answer either, to why they are gathering around.

4:34 PM, Group of people leave the Bowery Mission, which is situated right next to the CTS meeting and form a second group of people (BMP). No interaction is made between the two groups.



About 10-15min later, two coach busses arrive. Some people come out and go inside the mission. After a short while, all the BMP's leave with the coach busses.



DIAGRAM OF THE SITE:



The spot that is marked with red is describing the area CTS's are moving in. They are spread across the street and move back and forth. BMP's came out of the Bowery Mission and only stayed there for a short time until the coach busses arrived. Purple marks the spots I was observing from. Initially I was standing at No. 1, that's when I noticed the group of people. After a while I moved to No. 2 because I thought they might be related to the construction workers. After I realized that CTS's and construction workers are not related I decided to stay there because I had a good view. After the coach busses left, the women in crutches from the earlier photos asked my why I was staring and should "f\*\*\* off". After that I moved to No. 3 to wrap up the observation and left at 5:00 PM.

**Intended Affordances:** Since it is on the middle of Bowery with The New Museum & Bowery Mission right beside, obviously people walking in and out of those places. Probably some customers gathering when Chair Table Stools was still open. In general it is a pretty busy street with a lot of passersby.

**Unintended Affordances:** CTS's using the site as a gathering spot to rest, talk on the phone, listen to the radio, socialize, ask for cigarettes and do whatever they were actually doing.

## Data Digging

Ever since the Bowery came to life, 223-225 has been known as the Salvation Army Chinatown Shelter, where the homeless and mentally ill were able to find shelter in their deepest desperation. The 10 story high building has been the symbol of hope for many people out on the streets, but unfortunately that will be no more. According to the New York Times “the building was sold for \$30 million to developers who plan to turn it into an upscale hotel and luxury condominiums.” (Southall) With that deal a piece of Bowery history has been removed, but that was just the next piece on a chain of investor acquisitions that will soon remove every old relic from the face of Bowery to make room for the sake of profit. The same fate happened to the former Salvation Army’s neighbor, 219-221 Bowery better known as the 15 year old, family owned store named Chair Up that is infamous for selling restaurant interiors. Chair Up was one of the buildings alongside an eleven building portfolio that has been acquired by Milestone Equities in June 2012 for a whopping \$62 million according to Bowery Boogie, an online site “dedicated to covering the news and lifestyle of the Lower East Side neighborhood and its residents.” (Elie) With such an investment, it will be very unlikely for Chair Up to hold up with the requirements M.E. will set for the future.

Although pieces of Bowery history have been wiped away, people still return to the site like the old days, homeless people especially. The reason probably is the last remaining neighbor of that block, 227 Bowery the address of the Bowery Mission, which still stands strong against the fight of homelessness and helplessness. They still continue to provide shelter and food for the homeless, but with their neighbor being shooed to Bensonhurst, Brooklyn and the former Salvation Army being turned into a series of luxury condos and the hip Ace Hotel (Lazzaro), it will only be a question of time till the Bowery Mission can not hold up against the cash of the investors anymore, but where will the homeless then be and what will happen to the old Bowery?

### Works Cited

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