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Week 5 Critique

Ubiquitous Computing, Weiser, 1993 & Perspectives article for ACM Interactions,
Weiser 1993
"However the computer today is isolated and isolating from the overall situation, and
fails to get out of the way of the work".

I'm not sure that his vision of ubicomp is the correct one to be, well ubiquitous. Part of
the complexity of personal computers comes from the fact that they are so flexible and
powerful. Being able to manipulate objects through so many dimensions comes at a
cognitive price. Its as foreground as cleaning up your office. That is not to say that I don't
agree with Weiser's vision--I do believe that devices and computational resources should
be transparent and always accessable. But sometimes transparency cannot be applied to
the tasks I wish to deal with. What would ubicomp programming be like? Ubicomp word
processing? Even with a pen and paper, the device becomes foreground when you realize
that you'd like to move a hunk of text to a different place on the page. Word processing
for a touch-typist I believe is just as foreground until editing needs to come in. But the
most important act--writing from a mental stream--remains the main task with both the
pen and the keyboard. So in the future world where his vision is practical and
implemented, do traditional interfaces have a role? I believe so, and it comes through
well thought-out interfaces that get out of the way by design.

The coming age of calm technology, Weiser & Seely Brown, 1996

In way, this paper argues that well designed interfaces should be able to move into the
periphery and center, as I stated above. However, Weisner seems to focus more on the
physicality of information and devices and their respective diversity within the
environment. This continues with his deconstruction of the personal computer. Again, I'm
not sure that the future does not allow for personal computers to be apart of the
computing landscape. I agree and believe that his vision of ubicomp should propagate
and live on, and that everyday objects should know about each-other and their roles when
it makes sense. But to say that personal computing will be antiquated almost goes against
human nature. People like to own objects that they are then free to do with what they
wish. And with that goes a context as well. People have offices--that is where they do
their work. If you were to apply his vision of computing to architecture, almost all rooms
might be in a sense generic and could support any activity. The rooms then could move
between periphery and centrality. But this denies associative emotions, feelings,
cognitive contexts that people like to associate uniquely. One reason is that it gives you
an opportunity to escape it all.