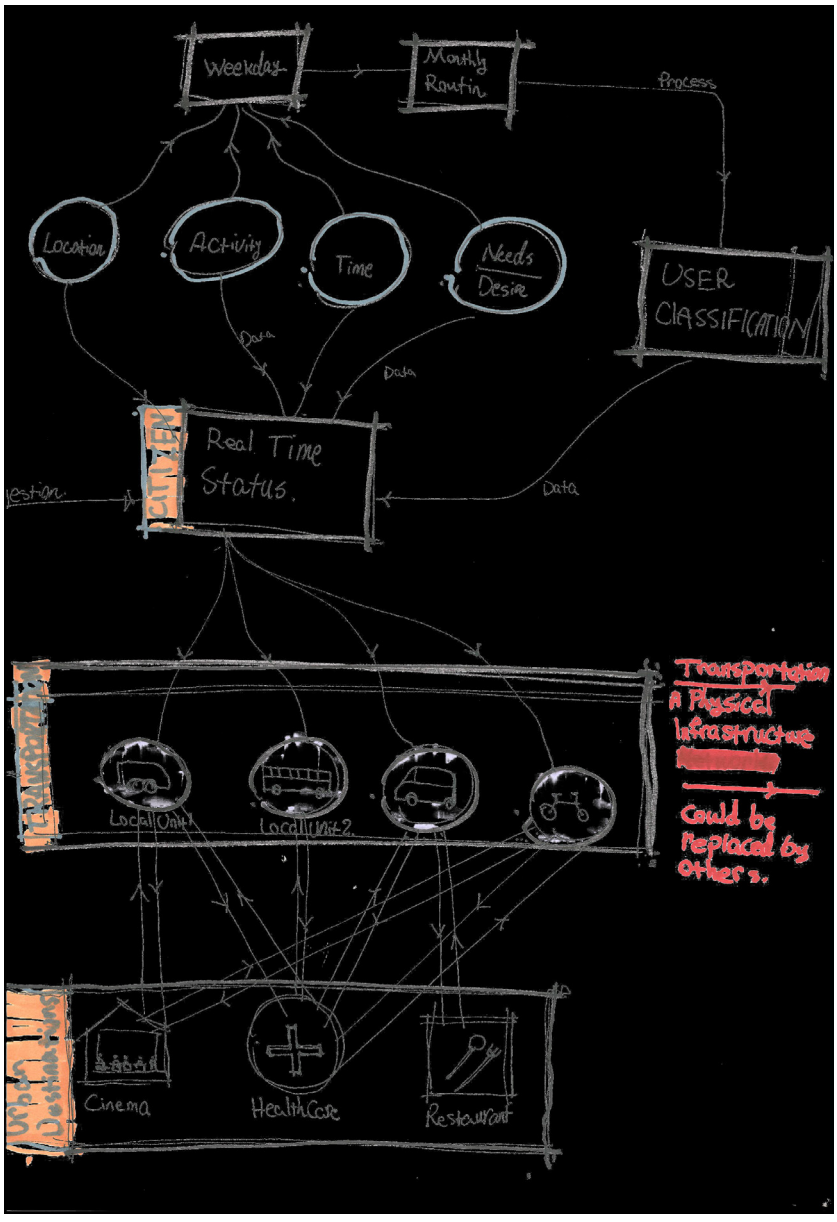
Framing the Issue through an Experiment

This research started with joining specific social values with various technological concepts. The primary aim was to ask and imagine, how would that be possible, if the future technologies in cities work for social good? While humans are surrounded by artificial intelligence and big data, what do these technologies have to offer to all people in cities? The first step was designing an abstract model to frame the question in a better way.

The design was based on computational urban networks such as Uber. The choice of studying Uber was because of its success and pervasiveness around the world as a private large scale urban infrastructure. Uber benefits from its innovative surge pricing technology in which rates are being determined not only based on distances but also based on weather condition, number of available drivers and passengers who seek a taxi. Subject of transportation was not an important factor, rather understanding the mechanism was important. This abstract design was based on a concept of manipulating surge pricing in order to offer a personalized pricing based on background of user's personal life activities and transportation patterns, whoever is less privileged, would receive better prices if they would accept the offers of the system, which was self-initiative in finding destinations and activities for passengers. So it was not only a transportation system, but also a life supporter which cares about quality and quantity of user's activities. The model was attached to a scenario for particular imaginary users. This early experiment shaped to ask a question, «Is merely changing the goal of such systems enough to enhance their functionality for middle class?



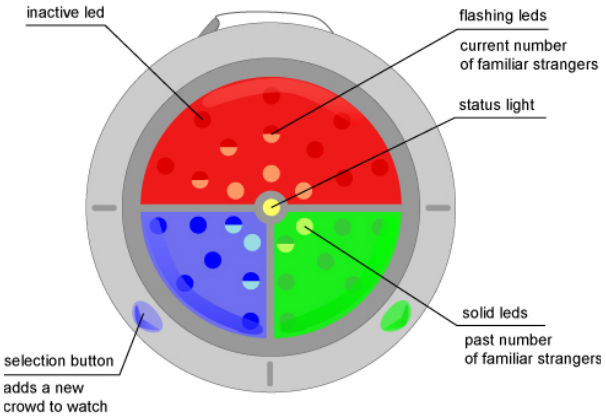
Using this abstract design lead to following contemporary city management models to have a better understanding of them. While the main raised problem regarding these models have been on their top down approach discussed in the last chapter, the research moved towards investigating bottom up approaches as a response to this debate.

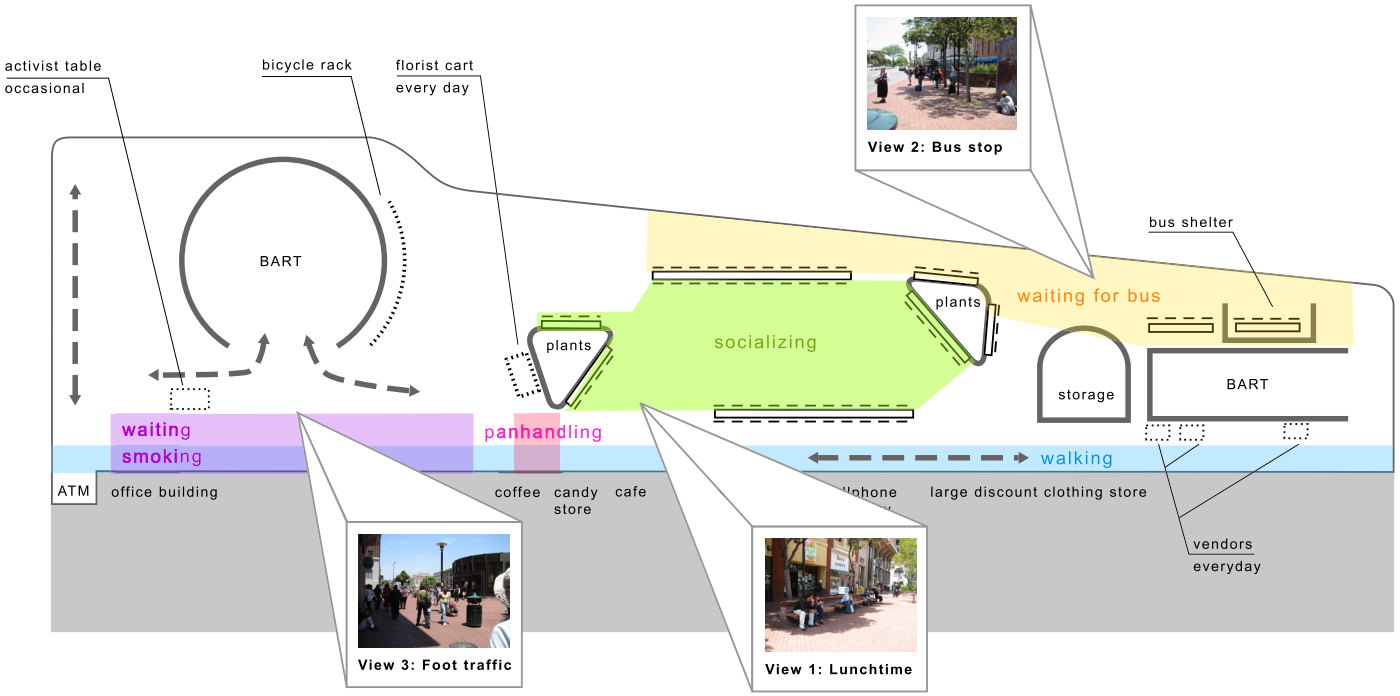
Case Study - Alien Staff

Moving on from top down approaches lead to focusing on local solutions, understanding people and focus on communication. The first case study in this area is «Alien Staff». In “Alien Stuff,” an art project by Krzysztof Wodiczko, the instrument is a story telling platform for immigrants who are separated from society. A prerecorded video at the top, with a loudspeaker and some objects in the middle of handheld device, together help its operators (immigrants) to broadcast their stories of difficulties to the others (Wodiczko 1992). The project criticizes the situation of segregated people and their inability to communicate with others. «Alien Staff» does not attempt to solve any solution but tries to turns the attentions towards a problem. This strategy stands as opposed to solutionist problem solving approaches disscussed

Case Study - Familiar Stranger

«Familiar Stranger» is a combination of several research and experiments which lead to a communication device based on sexploring a particular plaza. This method of development for a concept which is not local, is the most important aspect of their research. «Familiar Stranger» is based on studies of the earlier research of familiar stranger notion. The researchers of this project argue that «it is the people with which we share urban spaces that dominate our perception of place.» Sometimes these people are friends, family and colleagues. More often, and particularly in public urban spaces we inhabit, the individuals who affect us are ones that we repeatedly observe and yet do not directly interact with – our Familiar Strangers.





Two main methods are used in this research: Site observation and survey. Site observation have been produced a map of activities› in the urban plaza.

Surveys have been designed to firstly ask people if they know any «familiar stranger» in that public space and secondly to evaluate people›s qulity of experience. Thus this correlational study asseses the impact of the first one on the latter.

FAMILIAR STRANGER PROJECT

Intel Research

This is an optional survey designed to let us know a little more about how you feel about public places. Answer as many questions as you feel comfortable with, and if you want to tell us anything more about how you or other people use public space, please feel free to use the back of the page.

About Constitution Plaza

How often do you visit Constitution Plaza?

- ○ every day
- ○ every weekday
- ○ a few times a week
- ○ only on the weekends
- ○ rarely

How much time do you typically spend there?

- ○ walk through
- ○ 15 minutes
- ○ 5 minutes
- ○ 30 minutes or more

How do you use the plaza? (check all that apply)

- ○ just passing through
- ○ work nearby
- ○ lunch
- ○ public transportation
- ○ shopping
- ○ hanging out
- ○ meeting up with friends
- ○ other _____

What are three words that describe this plaza?

Your neighborhood

What is your zip code?

How well do you know your neighbors?

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

avoid them close friends

What are three words that describe your neighborhood?

Which public space (like a park, plaza, restaurant, street) do you feel **most** comfortable in?

Which public space (like a park, plaza, restaurant, street) do you feel **least** comfortable in?

Thanks again for your help! We're looking for participants to interview further. If you think you'd be interested, please write down your contact information below. Intel Research respects your privacy and will not disclose, sell, or distribute your submitted information to any other individual or group at any time. People who do provide contact information for follow-up will be entered into a raffle for a $100 gift certificate at Barnes and Noble bookstore.

Name _____

Age _____

email _____

other way to contact you _____

_____

Questions?
Contact us at (510) 495-3093 or
elizabeth.s.goodman@intel.com

FAMILIAR STRANGER PROJECT

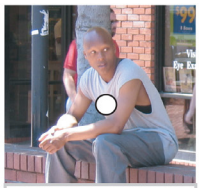
Intel Research

Instructions

If you recognize any of these people but do not know their names, please write an "R" in the corresponding blank circle and use the connected box to tell us why you recognize them or anything else you want to tell us about them.

If you know the names of any of these people, please write a "K" in the blank circle and use the connected box to tell us how you know them or anything else you want to tell us about them. Questions? Contact us at (510) 495-3093 or elizabeth.s.goodman@intel.com

Example



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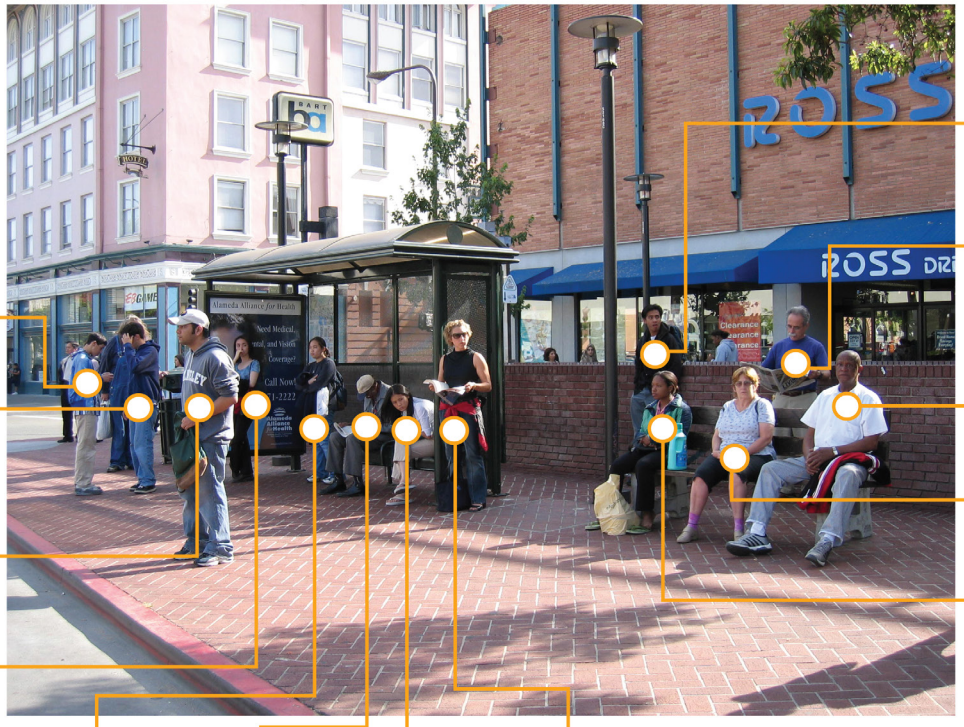
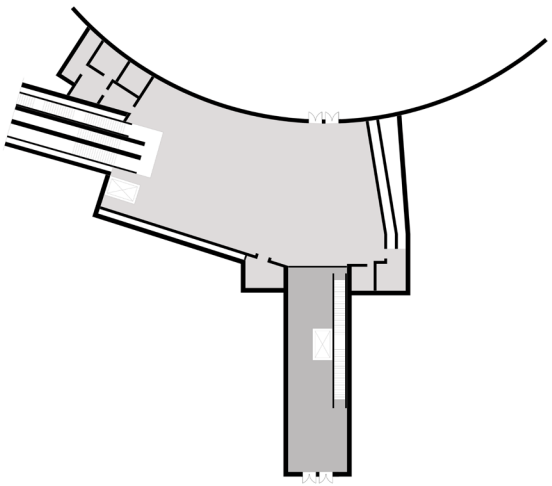


Site Significance

University Station is the intersection of many different flows: Bus sops, train station, shuttle and cab stops. As an important and relatively busy station in Buffalo, it gathers people from different social levels and neighborhoods at different times of the day and night. It is also next to South Campus of University at Buffalo. Architecturally, three different levels of the space sometimes gather people and in some cases divide them without leaving any chance of forming a connection.



Analysis of Current Physical Status

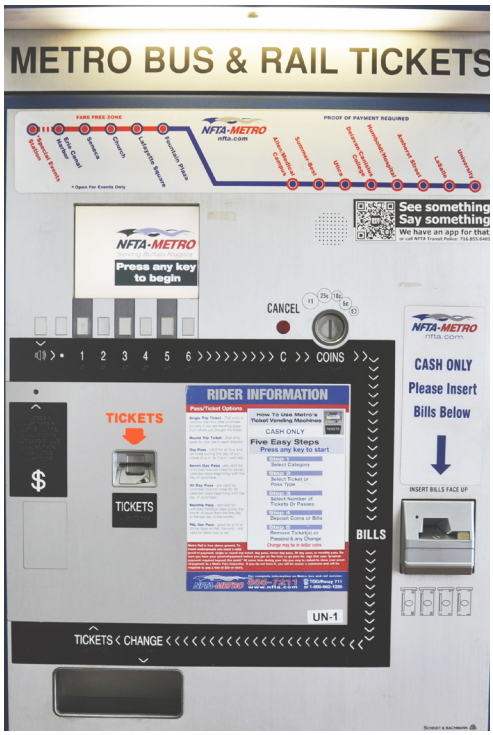
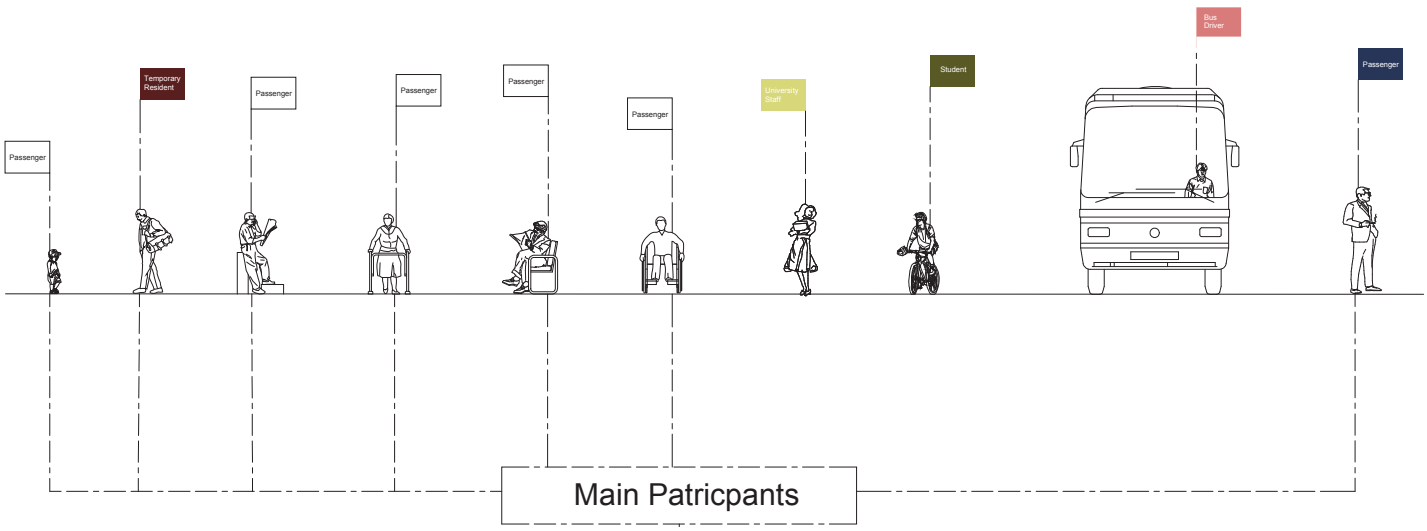


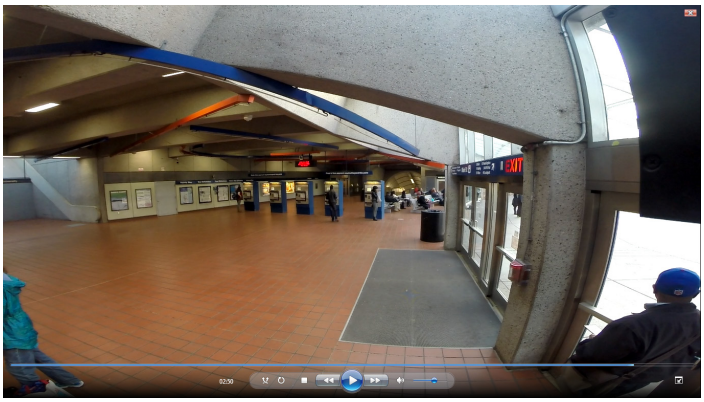
Photo documentation shows how various facilities exist in the station, if they are working or not, and how popular they are.

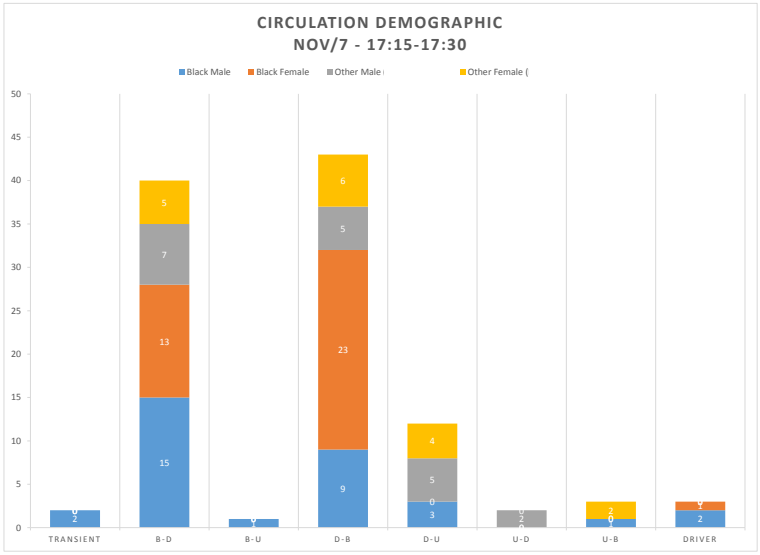
Site Observation Method

«Familiar Stranger» project emphasizes on the significance of site observation. «The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces» by William H. Whyte is a reach source of observation techniques. Main aim of this long study has been to evaluate qualities of urban spaces through observing activities of people in them. However, their observation method has been used in this research to mainly discover characters and their relation with the space.

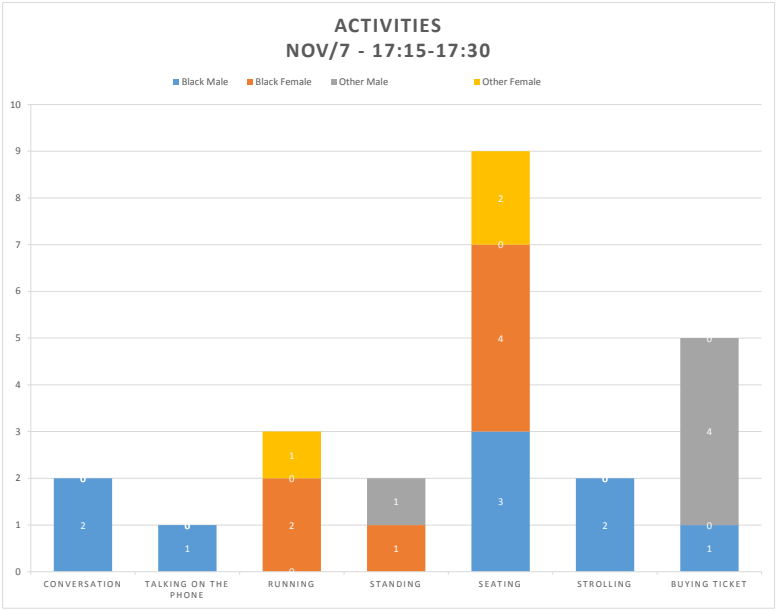


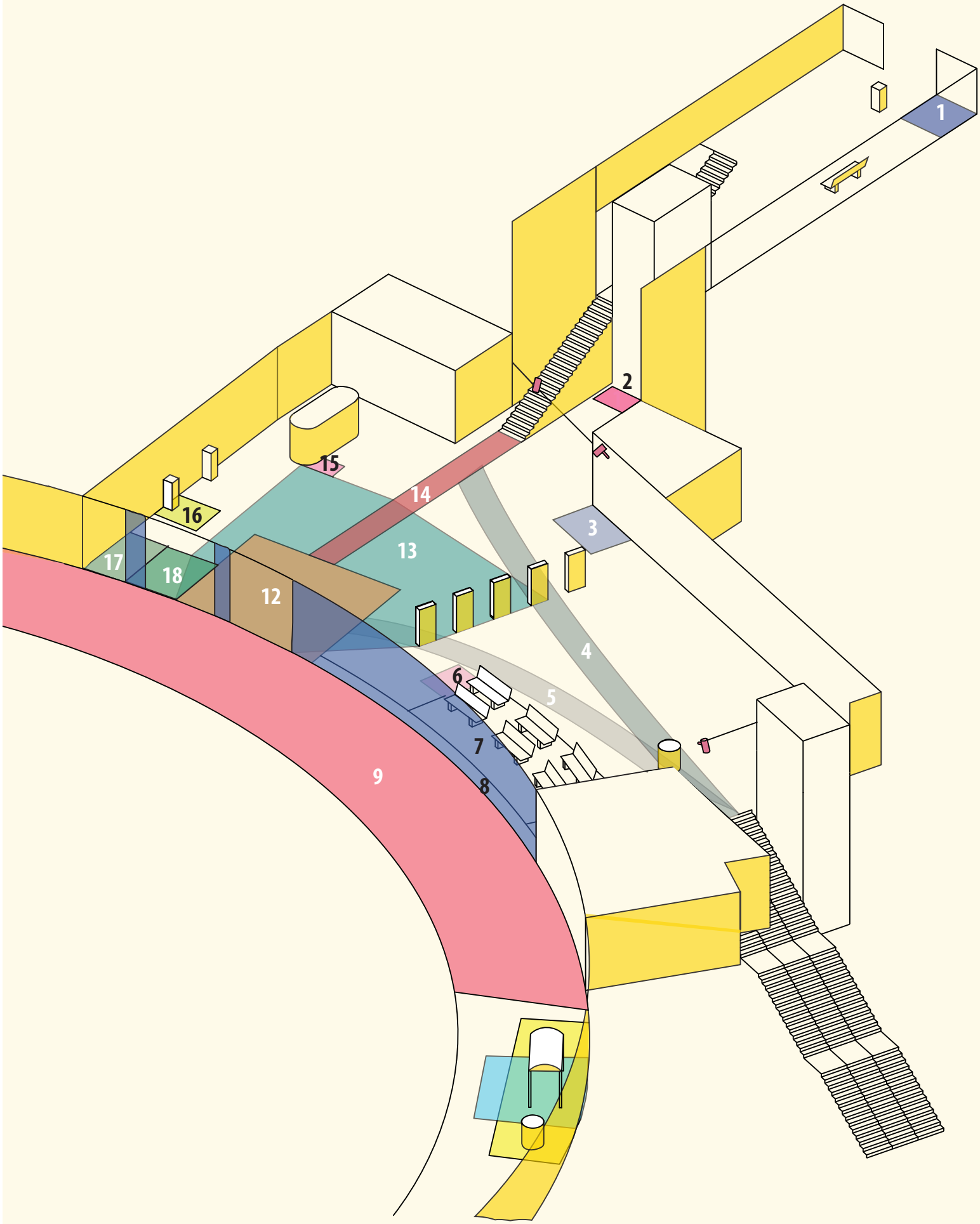
Zoom Out Observation:
Zoning of Activities in the Space





Two GoPro camera installed in University Station record circulation of the people. Then, the information of the video have been importet to prepared tables. Table sections include destination of people, race, gender, age, and different kinds of activities.

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Close-Up Observation:
Character Protoypes through Narrative

Alongsonde understanding how space and people work together, people themselves and their characters are important part of this research. Their significance in this research is considered as small data as opposed to big data. An aspect which is less important in today›s computational methods of urban development. How different from objective data gatherings, do these narratives change our perception of the cities?

Performs a show from outside for people who are inside, lasts seconds but reapeats again and again. Talks with himself and laughs. Disappears and appears after an hour.

She looks relax but doesn't sit, finally sits and then stands again. Waits a long time for a bus.

The kid is the only source of human noise at noon. He plays around and gets excited when sees other kids.

He is curious. Cannot avoid asking questions, presents his drugs. He has a small backpack, asks change from everyone and he is successful when he asks from people who are buying ticket. Smokes inside, says that people are selfish, he needs to smoke but NFTA prefers him to catch a cold, while they can make a smoking area. He is smart but not completely conscious. Has two characters, sees devil and is afraid. Escapes from shelters but he is worried of people stilling his sneakers at night where he sleeps. Other transients pass and say hi to him.