Project 02 assignment: site analysis

Objectives

This assignment is intended to help you build a solid site analysis, which will be the base for your concept and design. You will work on this site analysis before/ during our trip to L.A. (documenting the site) and the following week in studio ( synthesizing). We will then have a pin-up on Monday, March 8th.

A definition

[Site analysis]
from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia:

Site analysis is an inventory completed as a preparatory step to site planning [...] which involves research, analysis, and synthesis. It primarily deals with basic data as it relates to a specific site. The topic itself branches into the boundaries of architecture, landscape architecture, engineering, economics, and urban planning.

Site analysis is an element in site planning and design. Kevin A. Lynch, an urban planner developed an eight cycle step process of site design, in which the second step is site analysis, the focus of this section.
Considering the above definition, the first step to develop a site analysis is to gather the most information possible about the site. It involves searching its past history, the future development projects (like Grand Avenue masterplan) and of course document the current condition of the place (consider: history, topography, scale & density, pedestrian flow, landmarks, colors, light, day & night settings, smell, noise...) Thus you are expected to research at the library, on the internet, and document in a detailed way your site visit in L.A. You will then work on combining all this information in a consistent way, emphasizing what you consider key elements to the site and thus defining your approach of this project.

The following excerpt of City sense and city design: writings and projects of Kevin Lynch (by Kevin Lynch, Tridib Banerjee, Michael Southworth) is an interesting example of how one can possibly approach a city/ part of a city when one wants to analyze it. It is intended to evoke some of the elements you may want to consider for your own site analysis -you shouldn’t limit your investigation to those- and to allow you to begin questioning your site.

After reading this, you should prepare the site visit by questionning/ listing what major elements you want to look at, onsite: defining guidelines for your site visit, you will then complete these basics by documenting anything else you find interesting/ intriguing/ characteristic... onsite.

When we are back from L.A, you will have to work on synthesizing all the elements you gathered: it is a process of selecting, ordering, presenting the information. This process is a key component of your project, orienting your future design. By choosing the characteristics of the site you will focus on/ reveal in the site analysis, you are already beginning to direct your project towards some problematic(s), letting some others aside.

site analysis

The annex document contains a series of pictures, showing a variety of site analysis (mostly, architecture students works). They are illustrating different forms your own analysis could take. Again, these are only a few examples, mentioning elements that can be crucial to a site, showing ways of presenting the information you want to convey in a consistent manner... They should help you initiate a reflexion, the aim being to find your own way of analysing the site and then defining your project.
perception and daily use of it. The physical form of a city has a sensuous impact that profoundly conditions the lives of its people, and this is often ignored in the task of city-building. By attempting, in our imagination, to make a world city habitable, we may discover policies that could humanize the real metropolis.

The cities we live in have many admirable features, at least in the affluent, highly developed countries. The incidence of disease is low and the material standard of living higher than it has ever been in mankind’s history. The modern metropolis provides unprecedented opportunities for education and entertainment. For millions of people it offers new ways of life that seem far more attractive to them than the old ones from which they are breaking away. Nonetheless, the metropolis has begotten problems that are monumental and notorious. Many of these are social and economic problems, but not the least of them is the harsh and confusing physical environment that has been created, which in itself aggravates social and personal problems.

Imagine, then, that we have been required to develop a sector of the hypothetical world city and to ameliorate as best we can the conditions it sets for the quality of life. What could we do to make it a more human place? What physical deficiencies make the great metropolises we know less than satisfying as places in which to live?
[These] interpretative drawings of a proposed expressway route are intended to represent the complete, sequential experience of motion, space, light, texture and orientation in an abstract, shorthand way. The roughly triangular route has been straightened out by breaking it at the corner intersections, so that it can be read as a continuous linear sequence. The drawings at left represent the sensations of space, motion and view for a clockwise trip around the route. Widening of roadway signifies ascent; narrowing, descent. The small black arrows beside the route indicate the apparent motion of the visual field at various points; where a single important object is being referred to a dot is appended to the arrow. The long arrows point toward particularly interesting landmarks several of which are named. The drawings at center are cross sections that show some of the characteristics of the space being traversed (enclosing surfaces and so on): here a half-dot indicates the elevation of the traveler. At right is an even more abstract notation, which merely shows the location and timing of major visual events, or the level of general visual density, without further specification. Basic visual rhythm of this particular route is set by recurrent intersections, each followed by a double climax of visual intensity.