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Project Description

For our project, we wanted to investigate the links between air pollution, the economy, and health awareness. We chose Xujiahui as our site due to its active changes in AQI, growing economic activities, and the lack of health awareness surrounding this area. We have photographs, videos, interviews, and AQI screenshots woven together in a three-part video as our final product. The first part is background information on AQI in Shanghai. The second part is an interview with a construction worker, and the third part is a subjective view based on our own observations of the site while filming. The juxtaposition between the construction worker's knowledge about the current Shanghai construction industry and our observations was the main focal point of the project, and we wanted to highlight the (missing) link between the government and the general public. Our inspiration stems from the field trip we took to Xujiahui with our class. During that trip, we discovered numerous construction sites and noticed the amount of noise it created, as well as the high level of AQI in relation to these construction sites. In creating a narrative, we wanted to use the AQI monitors in the Xujiahui area (which documented the air quality) to serve as our 'surveillance camera' in viewing the Xujiahui area through statistics such as varying levels of PM2.5 and PM10. With our video, we hope to raise awareness for the urgent matter of climate change and for our audience to understand the impacts of ongoing economic activities in their homes. Therefore, our project aligns with the concept of geocinema as we portray it in a monitoring fashion through the AQI monitors located in Xujiahui, and connected it with the bigger picture of investigating China's economic boom in relation to society.

The concept of geocinema for me involves seeing a specific geographical location from a new perspective, and I think our project conveyed that idea through examination of the fluctuations of AQI levels in Xujiahui through the AQI monitors. Working on this project was an interesting experience because I have never worked so closely with geocinema nor thought of filmmaking capturing urban landscape in a surveillance way. I was particularly intrigued in creating a storyboard for our site and orienting our film around it, which made me see Shanghai in a new light. On our individual trips to Xujiahui, I were able to observe the people on the streets and their indifference to the ongoing constructions around the area. Through closely examining the pollution and its overall impact, it was interesting to see how the construction workers move swiftly through their job, since Chinese constructions are usually known for their efficiency as China quickly develops. One difficult part of the project was gathering data and going through all the footage and statistics, since we had a lot to work with. Luckily, we divided the work amongst the three members of the team and efficiently created this short film. Overall, I think our project effectively portrays the idea of surveillance in connection to climate change.