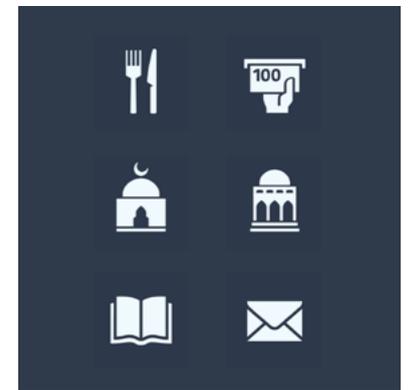
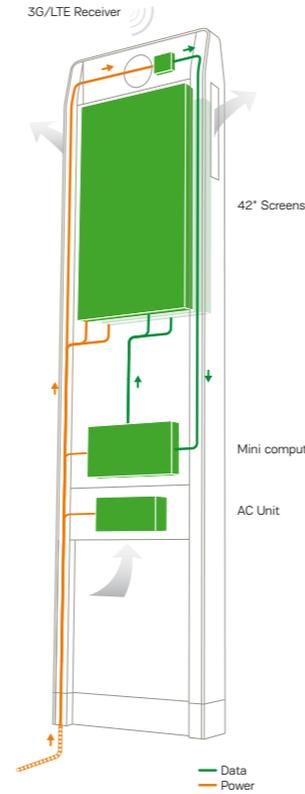
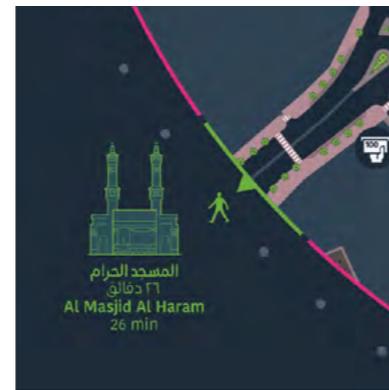
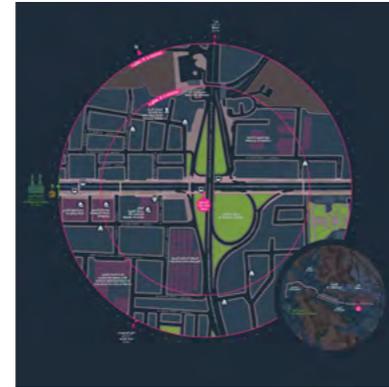


Category: **Future Concepts**

Project: **Qibla, Mecca Smart Wayfinding System**



What was the challenge?

One of the goals of Mecca's City Council is to cut down car use and upgrade its main street, the Holy Mosque Road, to make it more walk-able and pedestrian friendly. A new highly technologically advanced city wayfinding system was commissioned by the city as part of the major refurbishment. It had to be a traditional wayfinding product without ignoring the fact that the city is visited by millions of pilgrims from all around the world during Umrah and Hajj, The latter brings 3 million visitors to Mecca in just five days.

The Meccan identity had to be part of the product while introducing a modern approach. The system had to be able to cope with many nationalities, had

to feature easy to understand maps and signs had to be able to change destinations swiftly due to the two natures of the street: everyday life, and the pilgrimages. In spite of the interaction with part of the pilgrimage process the system is not placed at the main religious gatherings.

What was the solution?

Thanks to the information from the Urban Observatory of Mecca six main languages were to be used. A Hexalingual system was designed for the totems in Arabic, English, Urdu, French, Farsi (Persian) and Turkish. To deal with six different languages and the need to change destinations at different times of the year a fully digital system was chosen. The system will be easily updated via LTE from a control room.

Heads up, was chosen as the best map orientation solution for ease of use and also as a compromise between North orientation and Qibla orientation, in the Islamic world the proper way to orientate a map is to take the Holy Mosque as a reference. A special element on top of the signs shows the Qibla (Prayer direction). To cope with the harsh conditions in Mecca, all signs will be fitted with Air Conditioning units that will cool down the digital screens, the LTE receivers and the mini computers handling the information received from the control room. Exposure to the sun is also one of the main concerns. Glass covering the screens and maps will protect from UV light. Maps will be easy to replace as sun light will deteriorate them sooner than in other climates.

What was the effect?

After several tests and demonstrations the City Council approved the initial design and would like to make it a city wide system in the future. The scheme is currently under valuation by other stakeholders.

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