

Introduction

The Urban Performances term is derived from the 'representational space' concept, which is part of the spatial triad defined by Lefebvre [Lefebvre, 1974] and reinterpreted by Iain Borden [Borden, 2001b] through the analysis of Skateboarding, space and the city. The assumption is that spatial practices and representations are - the things people do, and the patterns and physicality they create - for disrupting abstract space. The "potential energies" of groups act to transform and create new social spaces. According to Borden, experience and representation are here returned to action, to new activities in which they are embedded.

The supposition is that relating to the urban realm, the idea of an activity in space is the key to understanding the representations and experience of space, and due to these actions or performances -we become true subjects in time and space, not simply users or experiencers of, but produced by, and productive of, the architecture around us [Borden, 2001b]. This relation of architecture (or city) and users (or experiencers) has been further developed in Bernard Tschumi's theories suggesting that architects should consider the everyday actions of people in the design of their buildings, and these actions - rather than 'functions' in the modernist era - are disjunctions between form and use, that the architect is able to promote as design tactics [Tschumi, 1996].

These assumptions are based on the social production of space, in how space is a cultural production bound up in daily life, social activities, and personal rituals. According to De Certeau, it is the everyday spatial actions of common place people that derive their experience and knowledge of the city. Everyday life is for him an action, a language that is not remote from but embedded in common practices in the city.

This topic is related to the space syntax framework, due to the intrinsic social matter that is embedded in its theory as well as in its research methods. In Space Syntax Theory the space is understood as an intrinsic aspect of everything human beings do, and the experience of the space is related to movement, interaction and visual fields. Each of these ideas describes different aspects of how we use or experience the space and they are all related in a geometric language that reflects human behaviour. [Hillier, 2005].

The questions this paper intends to answer are: What is the relation between the spatial morphology and the different kinds of

Space, Events and Urban Performance

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This report investigates different kinds of Urban Performance in the Southbank of Thames Path in London, UK. Urban Performance is defined here as the expression or manifestation of different social groups in the city space regarding the appropriation of a specific place for its spatial practices. The aim of this paper is to investigate how urban performances are linked to spatial and syntactic properties of the area. This topic is intrinsic in the space syntax theory due its fundamental relation between spatiality and human activity.

The research method used were, direct observations (related with human movement), spatial analysis in terms of performer's isovists and syntactic analysis through visibility graph.

The report concludes that the urban performances in Thames Path is determined by the human co-presence in the space, due to this strategic points chosen along the path by the performers are strongly related with the visual connections in the system.



Performances on the Thames Path?
Are the different kinds of people and behaviours shaped by space? and How can a space act as a place for urban performance?

The research methods consist of direct observations which include the mapping of static and movement behaviour on the Thames Path, and a survey of potential attractors, active facades and path widths. Each of the performances found along the path are classified by its kind of activity and position in space. The results obtained from the field work were overlaid with spatial analysis in terms of isovists in each performer place and syntactic analysis through visibility graph (VGA) focusing more closely on the problem of visibility.

The Isovist is defined as an area in a spatial environment directly visible from a location within the space [Turner, Penn et al 2001] while the Visibility Graph of the environment is defined as the graph of mutually visible locations in a spatial layout. Through this representation we can obtain numerous measures of both local and global spatial properties that seem likely to relate to our perception of the built environment. [Turner, Penn et al 2001]

The findings shows overlapped layers of data contrasted with spatial and syntactical analysis that shed light on a relationship between performers' use of space and visibility control of its surroundings.

Methodology

The observations were carried out during each weekend during one month. These days were selected because even though the Thames Path is used throughout the week by tourists and locals, the weekend corresponds to the highest rates of movement in the week. The study was done in 6 areas defined by its main urban attractors and all the data was first recorded in DV CAM with 5 minutes of record in two or three points for each area and then the data was post-analysed and transcribed in Mapinfo Software that is a GIS, Geographical Information System that provides a way to map and analyse urban as well as geographical systems.

Five (analogue) methods were applied in each area:

1. Static snapshots, recording the static use of public space by people who were not behaving as urban performers.
2. Traces, recording pedestrian movement identifying the movement paths taken by them.
3. Facades, a brief survey was done mapping

active and passive facades to understand the relation of attractors and services with urban performers.

4. Detailed data, mapping the position of benches, trees, to have a complete view of the environment in which performers act.
5. Performer's position mapping the position of each one of the performers found during the observations, and then classified according to the activities or groups to which they belong.

Spatial Analysis (digital)

To analyse the position of the performers in the space and their interaction with other groups of people, one isovist was draw for each one of the performers and then compared with a net of isovist drawn every 100 m along the axis of the Thames Path.

The aim was to compare the covering area of each isovist with the 'biggest' covering areas along the Thames Path, looking for visual relations between the performers and its possible spectators as well as the relation between the performers and the surrounding areas.

This technique was selected because it emphasises the existence of a vantage point, that is, of the individual observer and as such, it is proposed that its usefulness as a description of space resides in its ability to simulate the perception of space from the point of view of the individual. [Ribeiro 2005]

Syntactic analysis (digital)

In order to shed light on the syntactic properties of the space that can defined the Performers behaviour, it was selected to use a Visual Graph Analysis [VGA], processed through Depthmap [Alasdair Turner, Alan Penn et al., 2001]. This technique was chosen because of its ability to capture the effect of the spatial layout in the function and use of the space. VGA calculates the relation between visual patterns of integration that can be covered in open spaces and several measures can be extracted from its graph analysis. However, VGA analysis shows certain restrictions when it is used in big empty areas such as parks or plazas in where the borders are not well defined. In these cases it is difficult to obtain clear results because the 'big' areas 'concentrate' the connections values in the graph minimizing the effect of the surrounding areas.

Findings

Once all the data was gathered, each area was mapped with a set of information layers including each of the methodology steps. As a summary, the Static behaviour and performers/spectators use of space can be classified with the following triggers.

- Static behaviour or people meeting in public space (which are not related with performers), tend to gather in places connected with services (bars, restaurants, museums, galleries, halls, etc) and places with benches, tables or places to sit. In terms of visibility most of these places are related with wide views to the Northbank or to specific buildings in the other side of the river (St.Paul's Cathedral, Tower of London, Somerset House, etc.) The visibility between these places or in relation with the total area of the Thames Path is not an important variable in these cases.

- Performers/Spectators; most of the locations chosen by performers are due to visibility properties of the space and these properties vary in the exposure degree between the performer and the spectator. It is possible to differentiate between 'profit' performers, which are the ones who are looking for an opportunity to profit from their performances (human statues, musicians, painters.) and from 'non-profit' performers (skateboarders, bikers), who are the ones who want to show their movements but they do not look to profit from their performances. In this case the visibility with the whole system is fundamental for their interaction with other people.

- 'Profit Performers' usually look for a highly exposed place, where they can be seen from different points in the Thames Path in order to gather more spectators around their acts. They use places with wide angles of view and high integration values where they can see and be seen from a wider area.

- 'Non-profit Performers' are more related with tribal urban cultures or 'under cultures' this research show that skaters and bikers use a place where they can show their moves to the spectators or passers-by, QEH for example and this place has a wide angle to show their performances. But at the same time this place has a low level of control from the point of view of the spectators. In this case the performers can regulate their exposure degree and always have a place of control for themselves, far away from the crowd. Furthermore, in terms of movement is possible to argue that there are two different patterns in Thames Path:

- The first one is due to the cultural buildings and tourist places that attract people and create 'to movement' along the area, this pattern uses the formal structure of the system and feed the area through the movement between attractors (cultural or services buildings) and connectors (bridges).

- The second one is a more exploratory one that is reinforced by the Urban Performances. This structure is below the morphology of the system, as a hidden layer that is able to support and create new activities in the space. This second kind of movement could be argued that depends of the cultural manifestations or Urban Performances, which are shaping the spatial experience of the area. This exploratory movement relate with the spectators static behaviour that is produced by the urban performers increasing the interaction and co presence in the path.

Conclusion

This research has demonstrated a relation between different kinds of urban performances, how they are linked to spatial and syntactical properties of the space, and how the use of the space is strongly related to the visual connections in the system. In terms of tools and methodology, the results from the Isovists analysis has shown that performers tend to congregate in places with long lines of sight and wide coverage. As a tool to understand the visibility properties, the Isovist diagrams provide a fundamental graph of the potential angles of vision from the point of view of each performer.

VGA analysis has shown the areas on the Thames Path that are more or less visually integrated to the whole system and how these areas relate to different exposure degrees that the performers' chose. The connection between visual integration and visual control varies between each group of performers and passers-by which prefer more secluded areas for static behaviour. Beatriz Campos [2005] in a study of static behaviour in public spaces, establishes that "occupation tends to occur in isolated locations where the user is in control of his exposure to the public gaze without losing the ability to see" [p.552.] In opposition Urban Performers such as human statues, singers and painters have an active role in the space rather than the passive role of the user. On the Thames Path they look for a place that can be highly exposed to show their arts and these areas are highly visually integrated. The skater's use of space corresponds with the Campos study. Skaters choose a place beneath the QEH, where they can



visually control the area and change the degree of their exposure going in or out of the 'pool'. With this movement they invite the people to look into the pool and see the performance, but at the back of the 'pool', in the walls of the QEH, they have a secluded space of control.

Going back to theory, Borden argues that human statues or skateboarders act not only as performers or experiencers but they also produce the space they use, "disrupting the abstract space and creating a new social space" [Borden 2001].

It could be argued that the Urban Performers share the same triple 'enunciative' function proposed by De Certau. They locate themselves in a particular space; they perform and then interact with other spaces or subjects. The main difference with De Certau theory is that the appropriate space is not an unspecified place in the system, but a special place with particular morphological properties. At the same time, according to Borden the experiences are shared between performers and spectators transforming the space and giving new temporal meanings. (The space that was before the path in front of the Jubilee Gardens is now the place of the Human Statues and maybe next year will be the place of others).

In conclusion, the Urban Performances on the Thames Path are determined by the human copresence in the space, due to these strategic points chosen along the path by the performers. These are strongly related by the visual connections and morphological properties of the space. These spaces have the potential of creating human co-presence and social interaction, generating new meanings and potential new experiences.

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