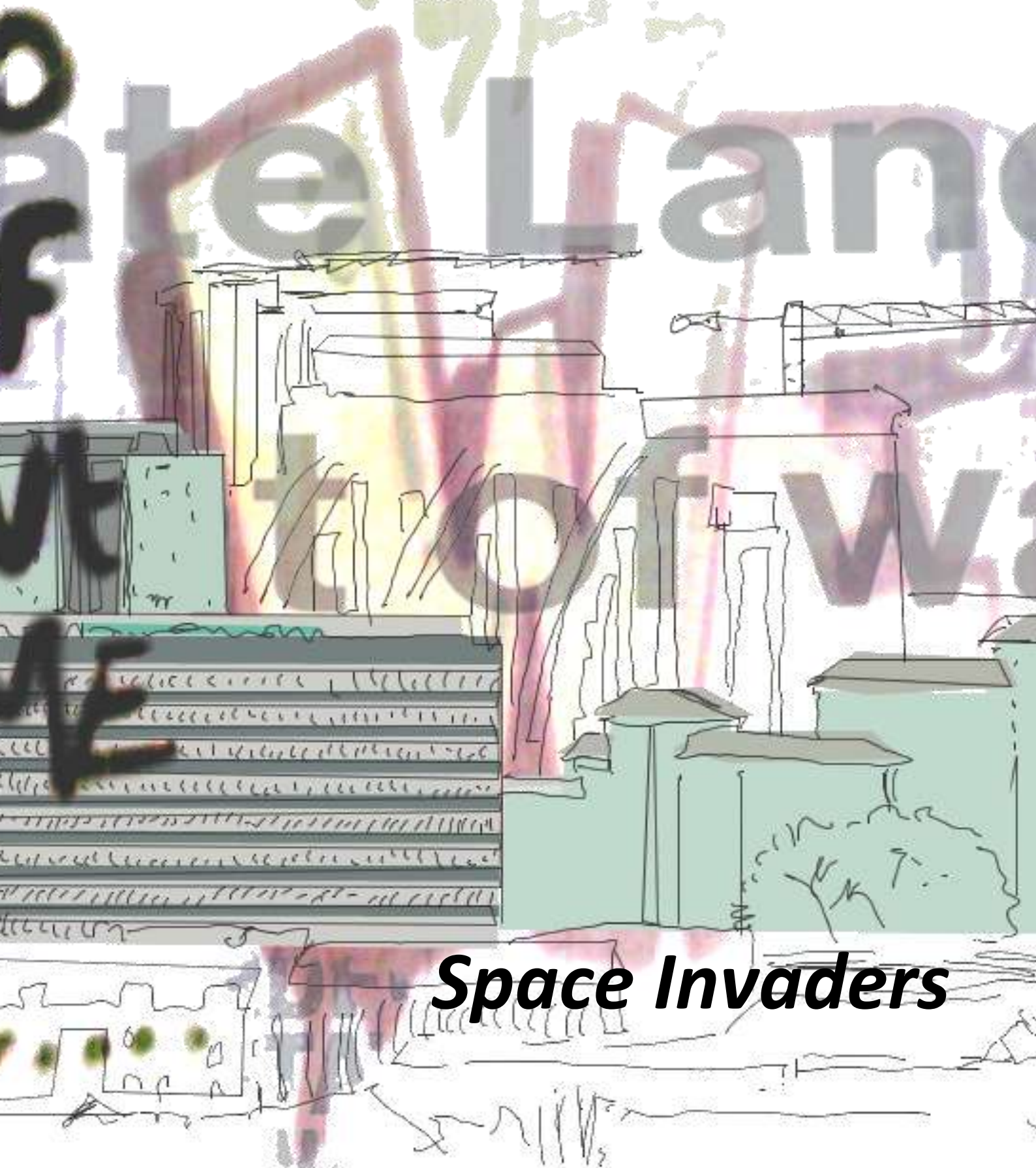


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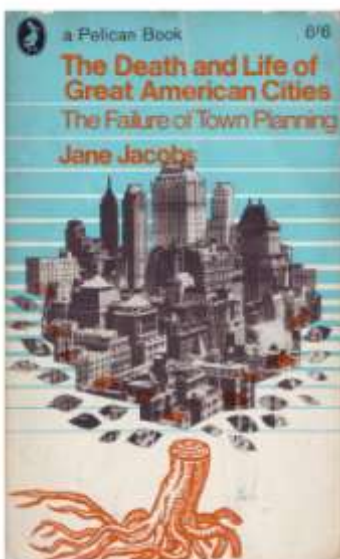
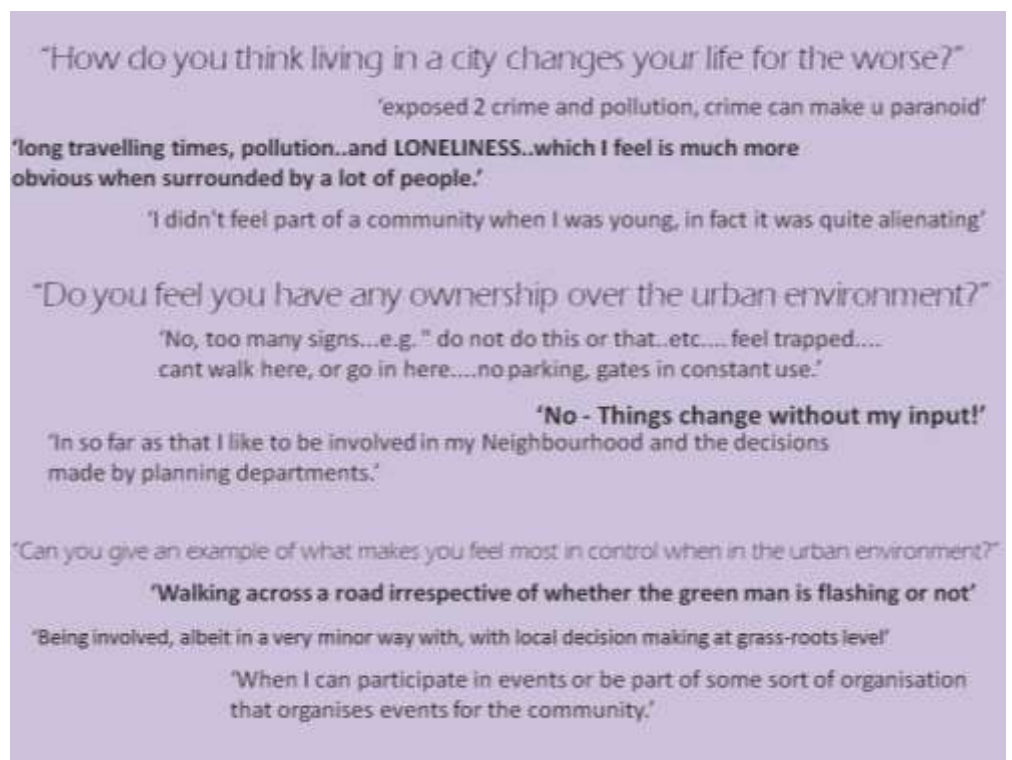
Contexts Unit Presentation 04.11.2010



Space Invaders

Introduction

This body of research aims to further investigate results of surveys which indicated that inhabitants of cities who identify a tangible element of **interaction** or **control** within their area enjoy most aspects of urban life and are comfortable about living there, while those who feel a **lack of control** also report concerns relating to alienation and fear of crime. By contextualising these findings, a review of selected physical trends in the urban environment tests this **'Theory of Control'**.



In 1961, Jane Jacobs published a book that has since become a seminal text for urban planners. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities; the Failure of Town Planning* discusses issues and observations from Jacob's dual position as academic and resident. Despite the date of publication and content relating mostly to the United States, this accessible text discusses many points that continue to relate to cities globally. Jacobs' text forms the central vein of study for much of this research and parallels are drawn between each additional reference presented here and two key themes contained within the book:

Natural Surveillance and ***Casual Public Trust***.

Natural Surveillance



Jacobs' concept of *Natural Surveillance* has become firmly accepted in modern urban planning, referenced particularly frequently in the *Secured by Design (SBD)* and *Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)* models. These are based on American strategies, such as that of *Defensible Space* and include *Natural Surveillance* as one method in 'designing out crime' alongside an artillery of other, more obvious devices such as CCTV, physical barriers, anti climb paint, etc. The *Natural Surveillance* as referenced by

these methods seeks to predict and deter criminal behaviour by designing environments to increase the perception that potential criminals can be seen. These may take the form of external design decisions including landscaping, lighting and building materials (e.g. glass and transparent panels) or architectural strategies such as positioning kitchens and living areas ('high use' rooms) to overlook public or entrance areas. It is increasingly common for new built homes in the UK to conform to these police-endorsed principles and through this developers attract the approval of insurance and security firms as well as gaining the trust of the mid to high income residents who can afford them.

When Jacobs first used the term *Natural Surveillance* in 1961, her description of it varied somewhat from this recent interpretation. She states;

"The first thing to understand is that the public peace – the sidewalk and street peace – of cities is not kept primarily by the police, necessary as police are. It is kept primarily by an intricate, almost unconscious, network of voluntary controls and standards among the people themselves and enforced by the people themselves." [pg 41]

Jane Jacobs *The Life and Death of Great American Cities – The Failure of Town Planning*

Jacobs' case rests on the key concept of encouraging a diversity of use in city areas and she recognises that these need to be designed to allow not just for *Natural Surveillance* on an immediate level as in *SBD* and *CPTED* but also to incorporate a range of uses that sees areas frequented for different purposes by different sections of the society and at different times of day and night. The physical environment needs to allow for the surveillance but must also encourage a continuous presence of those who can and would conduct it.

Casual Public Trust

A closely related point raised by Jacobs during discussion of *Natural Surveillance* is the role of the stranger. Recognising the presence of strangers as “an enormous asset” (Pg 50) missing from rural environments, Jacobs reflects on the value in informal, impersonal exchanges which allow social contact without threatening privacy. “Cities are full of people with whom, from your view point, or mine, or any other individual’s, a certain degree of contact is useful or enjoyable; but you do not want them in your hair. And they do not want you in theirs either.” (pg 66) According to Jacobs, this healthy approach to the presence of strangers in cities generates a *Casual Public Trust* which is an essential prerequisite for successful *Natural Surveillance* and is “formed over time from many, many little public sidewalk contacts” (pg 66). She takes steps to distinguish an environment with a high presence of strangers from an impersonal environment, stating “Impersonal city streets make anonymous people” (pg 67); apparently echoed in earlier survey responses discussing alienation. It may be concluded that causes of alienation stem not so much from environments in which it is impossible to know most other residents than from a reduction of informal, trivial interactions that allow development of trust and a sense of belonging. As Jacobs recognises, “the sum” of these ‘trivial’ interactions “is not trivial at all” (pg 67).



Anna Minton makes related observations in *Ground Control; Fear and Happiness in the Twenty-First-Century City* when referencing the case study of a resident who reports surprise at feeling *more* vulnerable since moving into a high security development. Minton argues that when acclimatised to life in these ‘safe’ but isolated environments, “people are far less able to cope with the ordinary risks that are part of healthy life than they were before” (pg 81); the less we interact with strangers, the more anxieties we experience when doing so. Jacobs’ expands on the potential consequences of this by giving examples of adults choosing to either respond to or ignore poor behaviour of unsupervised children communicating clear messages to the same youths that somebody without the implied

duties of family or close friendship either feels responsible for them or, conversely, demonstrates and reinforces anonymity. It follows that these lessons are carried into adolescence and adulthood and we begin to enter the familiar realm of the much debated ASBO, more complex issues of poor community cohesion and an escalated social alienation and disparagement which further drives a wedge between strangers in cities and apparently justifies a lack of trust.



Jacobs’ descriptions of civic life and voluntarily exercised social responsibilities between strangers and vague acquaintances, reflects earlier findings that a sense of control can be achieved through interaction with local residents’ associations. To further investigate this I interviewed Kieron Kirk, Chairman of the Chessington Hall Residents’ Association in South West London, who discussed the genesis of the group as an attempt to address local antisocial behaviour. In addition, many other issues were successfully tackled, from building maintenance to planning applications. The following extract from the interview not only links to Jacob’s assertions that a feeling of inclusion can be fostered by impersonal contact between residents but directly supports the notion that a sense of environmental control improves positivity.

AEO: So at the beginning of the interview I stated that I was investigating the supposition that people who have an element of interaction or control within their areas feel more positive about living there, generally, would you agree, or disagree with that?

KK: Oh, I absolutely agree with that, yes, and I think those that don’t feel somewhat left out.

AEO: Do you feel that your involvement in the associations would be an example to support that?

KK: Yes, Yes I do.



If conclusions from established and contemporary research indicate that good levels of diversity, *Casual Public Trust* and *Natural Surveillance* promote social positivity when used *alongside* measures such as CCTV, might there in fact be an argument that these factors should be sought to *replace* more established controls? Building on Jacobs' discussion of trust, Minton looks at Fear of Crime (FOC) which she clearly associates with a lack of control, stating "American studies which show that more security increases fear also reveal a link between fear and a person's sense of self and mastery over the environment." (pg 141) She further discusses the case study in which the resident of the gated community experienced a high degree of anxiety when a security feature, in this instance the gate to the complex, was broken. Minton identifies that the resident's "sense of mastery or personal control over her environment was diminished by her growing reliance on security gates and that this mastery did not return when she needed it, when the security broke down." (pg 141) Minton states that 80% of UK residents believe crime is rising, when it has actually been falling since 1995. While she recognises sensationalist media playing a part in this perception she identifies environmental elements also playing a role in fostering an inflated FOC, exemplifying security features used in tandem with *Natural Surveillance* friendly design. Walls and gates, anti climb paint, multiple locks, burglar alarms and entry phone systems are all methods by which designers of modern developments attempt to protect and reassure residents; however, findings on the much debated use of CCTV have begun to question the social impact of these.

In 2007 Dave Williams and Jobuda Ahmed of the University of Hertfordshire Psychology Department conducted a study which supports Minton's references to the relationship between CCTV and fear of crime. Published in *Psychology, Crime and Law* in 2009, they discuss the intention of surveillance cameras "with reduction in fear of crime being a stated objective since the early days of their introduction" (pg 743) and refers to earlier findings that areas where systems are installed do not, in fact, experience a reduction in FOC as predicted. The study quotes the work of Ditton in Glasgow city centre, which found that "Respondent claims that they would 'avoid' the city centre (where cameras had been installed) rose consistently from 50 to 59 and 65% in the years 1994, 1995 and 1996, respectively. Yet, over the same period respondents showed the reverse trend in control locations without cameras (43, 39 and 37%)". (pg 743) Williams and Ahmed go on to discuss the Van der Wurff et al. model, which predicts that FOC will increase when individuals perceive themselves as potential targets in areas where the public space is shared with others who cannot be trusted. The study describes the counterintuitive impacts CCTV may have on this. "When in no special need of reassurance, on spotting a camera, the user of the public space might reason that others have 'evil intent' or that the danger presented by powerful others is such that cameras are called for" (pg 744). The study also recognises that the presence of other deterrent measures "may suggest an area especially prone to crime, or frequented by criminals" (pg 744). However, the text goes on to state that "mistrust of others ... and a low 'sense of community'" (pg 745) are also contributing factors and differs from previous bodies of research in that it explores



not just the impact of CCTV on FOC but specifies the relationship between the presence of crime deterrence measure and other cues such as existing social stereotypes; "CCTV may enhance perceptions of the 'dangerous' other if this accords with pre-existing negative beliefs about the threats which others, especially drawn from certain social groups may pose." (pg 746) The researchers concluded "As predicted, when a male 'skinhead' target is shown in the presence of a CCTV camera, participants give significantly higher FOC ratings and report more negative impressions of this person than when a female target is shown or CCTV is absent." (pg 753) It continues "This interaction involves both the presence of a situational crime deterrence device such as CCTV and the presence of a target more or less likely to prime negative or antisocial stereotypes." (pg 753) This study demonstrates the complexity of FOC related issues and indicates that it is not only the implied need for crime deterrence which causes high FOC but that perceived stereotypes and existing social perceptions also impact heavily. The discussion concludes by stating that modern surveillance "may have unexpected consequences in terms of our impression of others and the spaces they occupy, which in turn may have quite far reaching implications for society as a whole." (pg 755)



Figure 2. The stimulus pictures – top row without CCTV; left column, absent target, middle column, female target, and the male target is on the right.

Researchers approached 120 participants from the central shopping area of Hatfield in Herfordshire over two weeks. With steps taken to ensure a broad range of participants, they were shown a photograph of an urban scene in to which images of a CCTV camera, female 'studious' target and male 'skinhead' target were placed interchangeably (left) and were asked to predict the frequency of a range of crimes over the next month when looking at a particular image. Participants were also asked to consider how safe they would feel in each scene at various times of day.

Shared Space



An urban management method that reflects Jacobs' writing is the *Shared Space* concept pioneered by Dutch Traffic Engineer Hans Monderman. Removing devices that segregate traffic from pedestrians (railings, kerbs, signals, etc) the model encourages a literal sharing of space by cars, cyclists and people aiming to improve safety, congestion and access. Part of a wider European drive, the main UK promoters are Hamilton-Baillie Associates, founded in 2003 to provide "Specialist knowledge and experience of innovative solutions for reconciling traffic movement with quality public space in cities, towns and villages". With a belief that removal of restrictions encourages development of 'informal social protocols' and 'spontaneous order', the apparently counterintuitive assumption of *Shared Space* is that when not reliant on imposed controls, individuals must acknowledge one another when negotiating space. The concept relies on mutual awareness, famously demonstrated by Monderman (before his death from cancer in 2008) by walking backwards into traffic with folded arms, trusting motorists to avoid collision.

There is little research currently available on this relatively new concept; however early reports indicate some reduction in traffic related casualties. Minton states that in Kensington, London, where the high street was remodelled using shared space principles, accidents have been reduced by 44%. However, organisations supporting disabled and vulnerable people raise concerns relating to accessibility. In a study into *Shared Space* conducted for the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, Thomas and Wood are critical of the consultation processes in place surrounding the implementation of these schemes. They recognise a "concern that designers were taking on one physical aspect of the shared space concept and transferring a design that had been seen in one area to another area without taking on the wider aspects of the shared space concept, considering the context and involving local people." Despite these criticisms, there has been enough discussion to inspire an investigation by the Department for Transport, completed in November 2009, which recognised that more research was required but concluded by saying "Shared Space schemes do appear to be a beneficial design approach for application in appropriate settings." Though traffic specific in context, these ideas clearly link to Jacob's discussions of Casual Public Trust, exemplifying her assertion that informal public interactions are an important requirement for healthy city life.



Urban Diversity

Many references in this research cite diversity as a necessary condition to achieve successful neighbourhoods. Criticisms of gated developments featuring *SBD* and *CPTED* include the observation that these are only affordable by mid to high income households, exacerbating disparity and mistrust between social groups, while excessive use of CCTV fuels negative stereotyping. Discussions of Shared Space recognise positive impacts of diversity in navigation of cities and how this might be better facilitated, while Minton discusses it in connection with encouraging spontaneous bonds between strangers. She also references sociologist Richard Titmuss' finding "that the war coincided with improved mental health, to the great surprise of the nation's psychiatrists who were anticipating widespread problems as a result of the bombing. He concluded that this ... had the consequence of creating 'less social disparagement', which led to better mental health." (pg 177)



Paul Kingsnorth's highly critical writings on the collapse of independent retail and the rapid spread of corporate chains in *Real England; The Battle Against The Bland*, also discuss diversity, or lack thereof, through the concept of *Clone Towns*¹. Kingsnorth references a report by the New Economics Foundation in 2005 which



concluded that "41% of surveyed towns were clone towns and a further 26% were border towns." (pg 106) Kingsnorth argues this spread of global homogenisation is having a negative impact on the UK economy and our personal relationships with cities in terms of placemaking. He calls for further consideration and discussion "about identity and reality; about belonging and corporate power and control and who is in charge; about a sense of place and what constitutes it." Jacobs argues that diversity of use not only facilitates informal contact between residents but encourages interactions even between areas. She remarks "A city is not a collection of repetitious towns. An interesting district has a character of its own and specialities of its own. It draws users from outside (it has little truly urban economic variety unless it does), and its own people go forth" (pg143) She also recognises:



"Few people, unless they live in a world of paper maps, can identify with an abstraction called a district, or care much about it. Most of us identify with a place in the city because we use it, and get to know it intimately. We take our two feet and move around in it and come to count on it. The only reason anyone does this much is that useful or interesting or convenient differences fairly nearby exert an attraction. Almost nobody travels willingly from sameness to sameness and repetition to repetition, even if the physical effort required is trivial." (pg 239)

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¹ A term coined by the NEF used to describe a town where the major shopping area is dominated by chain stores

“Successful Public Spaces are inclusive, provide opportunities for social interaction and give users the ability to shape what happens there.”²

Conclusion



This body of work aimed to investigate the theory that individuals recognising an element control through interaction with their environment feel happier living there (referred to in the introduction as a ‘*Theory of Control*’). However, it is recognised that issues presented here may appear at times to contradict this, suggesting that the *removal* of such controlling elements as traffic control and CCTV can in fact improve safety and stress levels. It has therefore been identified that there are two distinct forms of control; Personal Control, whereby an individual makes decisions relating to their habitation of the environment³ and Institutional Controls, which are the mechanisms of agencies (government or corporate) aiming to exert control. Minton recognises that these forms of control cannot coexist when stating

“The problem is that these environments remove personal responsibility, undermining our relationship with the surrounding environment and with each other and removing the continual, almost subliminal interaction with strangers which is part of healthy city life.” (pg 33) and “Giving up responsibility for personal safety is one aspect of the abdication of control over surroundings that comes with CCTV.” (pg 169)

The imposition of recommended behaviours removes the necessity for individual engagement and it therefore follows that removal of institutional control measures increases opportunities for personal decision making and control, encouraging interaction which in turn promotes understanding between individuals and community groups, fostering diversity, acceptance and cohesion. However, though the discussed trends and concepts apparently offer innovative solutions to certain social problems it is important to remember Jacobs’ comments and Kingsnorth’s assertions regarding a sense of place. Formulae such as *CPTED* and *Shared Space* models are useful as starting points yet there is a danger for these to be applied too indiscriminately and become inappropriate.

This research concludes that personal control in the urban environment is indeed crucial and that a sense of it is achievable through certain forms of interaction. Diversity (both social and utilitarian) is equally important and is directly linked to both the facilitation and impact of those interactions. However, it is recognised that the construction of situations in which interactions are encouraged is not the same as facilitating interactions themselves. As exemplified through interactive aspects of recent practice as well as some participation in community projects, facilitating interaction is a complex task.

With this established, the outcome of this research is to pose a new question, which will inform the remainder of Practice 2;

“How can we encourage interactions in city spaces?”

² A ‘Key Issue’ Identified on the ‘Public Spaces’ section on the website of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation; a charity which seeks to identify and understand the causes of social problems in order to recommend strategies to address such issues.

³ These can be seen to include choices relating to negotiating traffic, intervening in or reporting offences and even marketplace decisions such as where to shop.

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