

Analysis of Survey Results

Though the validity of these findings is questionable as there were a limited number of responses, I have derived some interesting ideas from the gathered data and have expanded my thoughts on human relationships and interaction with urban environment.

Previous responses to the same questions gathered during the installation revealed the general perception that one of the main positive elements of city living is the close proximity to amenities and cultural/social facilities while the main negative aspects included the stress generated by modern industrial demands and a fast paced society.

The new information (Appendix 2) supports these findings but has also allowed me to go deeper into these ideas and through that analysis (Appendix 2A) begin to generate a theory relating to feelings of ownership of urban space and how this effects positive or negative perceptions of environmental factors and city living.

Initially, the findings raised some confusion between positive/negative aspects of city living. Individuals seem to find it challenging to define those environmental encounters that stimulate contradicting emotional responses, for example, a city centre may be both exciting and stressful. One observation revealed that there was a discrepancy between the imagined or iconic *notion* of the city and the physical reality and *experience* of one.

The new responses did however confirm that the main positive elements (when successfully distinguished from the negative) are accessibility to amenities, transport and work places as well as cultural and social facilities. Negative aspects include exposure to crime, financial demands and pollution in the forms of chemical, noise and light. I also drew parallels between the concept of pollution and the comments relating to emotional stresses:

'You take on others people's moods..hectic, stress, depression' [*sic*]

and reason that this could be considered as a kind of emotional pollution, where pollution is the process in which the individual is subjected to and effected by external influences which negatively impact upon their wellbeing, be this physical or psychological.

The new findings also confirmed that methods of moving about the city tend to be varied. Individuals use many different forms of transport and this is often dictated by their reasons for travel. I found this worthy of note as it suggests that people are experiencing a range of different viewpoints of the environment; the view of a city when travelling by train is very different from that by bus and still more different when on foot. This indicates that the perceptions gathered by the survey will not be especially biased by methods of travel and that this might be discounted as an influencing factor in positive or negative perceptions.

60% of those who responded felt that they had no sense of ownership over the urban environment and this supports a majority as found in the previous results. The 40% who stated the opposite had recognition of direct physical impacts they have on the space in common, either through concept (input into town planning) or visual contributions (public display of design work). The majority stated change without input, an abundance of instructional signs (no parking, gates in constant use, etc) and a sense that they pass through with out interaction as their reasons for a lack ownership. It is interesting to note that the proportion who felt their strongest emotional response to the city was negative is an equal 60%. This led to careful analysis of the reasons stated and it can be recognised from this that there is a clear contrast between the identified sense of input, or contribution to the city and the main negatives highlighted which may be seen to stimulate feelings of a lack of control (crime, noise, drunkenness, provoking anger, irritation and fear). The main positive aspects stated relating to ownership, that an individual might recognise a contribution they have made to the

environment, can conversely be seen to be indicative of an element of control. The main conclusion of these findings therefore relates to this idea; that an important aspect in feeling positive about city living is found in a sense of control characterised by a tangible input to the environment. When this is either absent or imbalanced by a build up of feelings related to a lack of control, negativity becomes the predominant perception.

This theory of control is supported by the findings that the most frequently stated positive feature of cities are those facilities in which individuals engage in a controlled and predictable fashion (cultural/social amenities) and that the most commonly identified negatives are those which directly stimulate senses of a lack thereof (crime, noise, overcrowding and alienation).

One of the comments relating to ownership being found in the physical impact of design work on the city

'Glimpses of me can be found'

links comments regarding alienation into this more directly. Lack of identity can be linked with a lack of input and control by considering that we divine elements of our personality through recognising the public outcomes of our own self-expression. By tangibly participating in the city (and achieving a sense of control in doing so) we can subsequently recognise a reflection of our identity in it. This then counteracts feelings of alienation and facilitates a more positive relationship with the urban environment.

That this theory has a bearing on the acts of graffiti and littering which are both elements used visually in the work, does not seem coincidental. In the case of graffiti, the act becomes an attempt to participate in and visually control the environment and is clearly linked with issues of identity; the repeated and prolific writing of a name to find fame and gain notoriety, all be it an anonymous way. That pride is often taken in writing in inaccessible but easily viewed places (such as high up on buildings or by train tracks) suggests an attempt not only to be seen by as many people as possible but also an attempt to increase the longevity of the work and the perceived permanence of the input.

Where littering occurs it may initially be caused by a desire to be rid of a worthless item; however a lack of a sense of ownership of the city justifies the act. If it were not 'your' environment why would you have a vested interest in maintaining it to a certain standard? If you have no control over it, why bother to inconvenience yourself by responding to the attempts of society to control it? Perhaps it would actually be quite welcome to find that a drink you dropped on Tuesday was still there on Wednesday; A reminder of your passing through, a monument to your existence, a personal continuity in the faceless mass.

These conclusions are not to say that having an input to a city space is the only way to feel positive about it or that a perceived lack of control is the exclusive generator of negativity. However, the findings of the survey support the supposition that they are at least contributory factors and can certainly be taken as starting points when looking to see how we might make social or environmental improvements on a larger scale, or how we might change our approaches on an individual basis in order to become happier and more fulfilled in our daily encounters with city spaces. Of course, adherence to social and legal norms prohibits certain courses of action, for example it would not be appropriate to engage in vandalism or littering in order to engender a sense of input and control, however participation in public arts activities or city planning might be worthy of consideration.

In terms of further developing the practical work, these findings have gone some way to explain why visual aspects such as images of graffiti and litter feel more pertinent in their inclusion than by their aesthetic values alone. It also raises some interesting questions about the public nature of the work and the previous suggestion of the possible inclusion of interactive elements.