

6 Place-temporality and rhythmicity: a new aesthetic and methodological foundation for urban design theory and practice

Filipa Wunderlich

The chapter critically examines urban design theory, and argues that if it aims to inform practice and inspire and support novel responses to present-day spatial and social problems, it needs to address three dimensions: include a review and critique; reveal aesthetic preference(s); and disclose a methodological perspective. Focusing on the aesthetic dimension, it is argued that urban design theory and practice are still dominated by a notion of visual and static modernist aesthetics. This hinders methodological innovation; is out of step with new interdisciplinary debates about everyday life and sensing the city; or with emerging new objectives within the urban design discipline, planning and social sustainability agendas, for example those concerning the acceleration of cities and the impact on quality of life. In response to this, the research underpinning this chapter proposed an alternative temporal aesthetics, where the sense of time and the sensorial and affective rhythms of society, nature and physical space take central stage.

INTRODUCTION

Theory and Practice in Urban Design: Questioning its Foundations and Opening up a Temporal Perspective

In urban design, theory and practice are closely related. Urban design is a critical and analytical field of studies as

much as a propositional one, where critique and analysis feed into creative design processes and products. Urban design combines reflection and critique, with analysis, interpretation and creativity when producing new forms of urban socio-spatial environments. As such it is informed by both the social sciences and arts and humanities fields of study and experimentation.

Urban design theory has a unique relationship to practice. Its role is not simply to raise awareness and inform approaches, but also, and importantly, to inspire and to provide a rationale and support for innovative responses to the present-day spatial and social problems in cities and its urban environments. In this context, there are at least three characteristics that one would expect to find in urban design theory. First, any theoretical approach to the design of the urban socio-spatial environment would need to be critical; reflecting upon the state of the art (Marshall 2012). Second, it would need to be informed by an underlying engagement with aesthetics (broadly defined as our sensorio-emotional experiences) (Wunderlich 2013) and reflect in particular on what influences a sense of quality in the urban environment (Carmona and Sieh 2004). Third, it would need to be methodological and purposeful to enable it to influence practice, ultimately fostering change and innovation in design products, practices and delivery processes. What distinguishes urban design theory from other social sciences and humanities theory (e.g. within urban human

geography, anthropology and other urban critical studies), are the latter two aspects – its aesthetic foundation(s) and the methodological perspective(s). These are innately related and it is here where urban design theory and practice meet.

The aesthetic perspective of urban design sets the field for the discourse, determines the selection of problems and opportunities that urban design responds to, and also, and most evidently, informs the nature of urban design propositions. The propositions will in turn be responding to a set of analytical, interpretative and representation design practices that are directly influenced by the same aesthetic preferences. Therefore, if urban design theory wants to influence practice and fulfil its objective to restore spatial and social harmony and effectively foster interaction and affective engagement through design creativity and innovation in the space of the city, then it needs to be aesthetic and methodological.

The Critique: An Obsolete Aesthetics

In the majority of influential urban design theory texts to date, the triad of: review and critique / aesthetic perspective / methodological stand are unevenly combined. Some studies are inherently critical or theoretical without overtly integrating and building upon previous research in the field; others only reflect on analytical research; and others again, tend to be largely aesthetic and propositional.

Another shortcoming of current urban design theory and practice in this regard is that it suffers from the long-standing limitation that place aesthetics are too often viewed in purely visual and static (motionless) terms. The focus on this type of aesthetics is deeply problematic in a number of ways. First, it stands in the way of methodological innovation that aims to find adequate responses to new sets of urban problems that affect cities today (as opposed to three or four decades ago). Second, it detracts urban designers from engaging more fully in the interdisciplinary debate on urban issues, and, third, it is at odds with shifts in planning and sustainability

agendas that emphasise a more holistic approach to the urban environment and its social, perceptual and temporal dimensions.

Hindering methodological innovation

Urban design theory and practice have long privileged the physical dimension of place (see Chapter 5), including in their applied analytical methodologies and place-creation strategies. As a hangover of the Modern Movement, practice has been deeply rooted in Kantian aesthetics which emphasises the notion of art and the sublime as a transcendent beauty that is exclusive to the art object, self-expressive and to be observed from a distance. Urban space analysts and designers typically also focus on visual, and motionless spatial beauty whilst physical materials, objects, and form are still the dominant elements in urban place analysis and design.

This conventional approach to the design of places in the city has meant that for many years design practitioners have analysed and responded to urban spaces in a largely formalistic manner and the design process has seen little innovation in its methods of analysis, representation and interpretation of the urban reality. An established set of representations such as the figure ground map, the land use map, the elevation, the conceptual diagram and the overall masterplan are persistent as the prevailing means of communicating design, accompanied by hand sketches and photorealistic images. These methods are often used to record motionless features of the space and express aspects of their articulation and overall visual aesthetics. They reflect an approach to urban space as an object to be examined; that is, an object that is observed and measured from a distance. In this process, the urban design practitioner assumes the role of the doctor, and through a brief examination of the patient and a standard set of analytical processes, endeavours to understand and respond to the malfunctioning or unrealised potential of urban places.

There are of course alternative forms of analysis and communication by design that have been rehearsed in academia (Thiel 1961, Lucas and Romice 2008, Lucas 2009). However, they remain at the margin of what is the usual set of practices adopted in the process of analysing and designing urban places. In practice, by contrast, practices are often characterised by a fixed set of methodological approaches and modes of representation that represent their 'product', whilst their adoption of more scientific analytical processes helps to shield them from the charge of subjective engagement with places. On the other hand, such approaches discourage a wider debate or exploration of the nature of aesthetics in urban space, and inhibits creativity and innovation, which are essential ingredients in the design process.

For example, one important aspect that is commonly overlooked is the issue of one's sensorial engagement in places, and the associated subjectivity over time in terms of how places are perceived as urban social, spatial and cultural milieus. Seldom have urban design practitioners recognised and responded to the city as a sensorial, transient and temporal phenomenon, even though these essential attributes of the urban condition are debated across other social sciences. Considering these attributes as part of urban design theory and practice is ever more important when factors such as user experience, health and wellbeing are taking front stage in both planning and sustainability agendas as indicators of urban quality.

Hindering a comprehensive response to the interdisciplinary debate

Second, the obsession with the visual and morphological is hindering urban designers reflecting on and responding to new emerging interdisciplinary debates which have a different aesthetic focus and that identify new sets of issues and perspectives on the city and the quality of built environment. As such they may miss out on relevant contemporary discourses that focus on the importance of place in everyday life, considering emotional affect, sensoriality and time.

Interpretations of place as practice and process (Seamon 1980, Massey 2005), and performative space (Thrift 2003, 2008) have been established from within urban critical theory, along with other geographic accounts, which in equal measure, draw on elements of space, time and everyday life (De Certeau 1984, Lefebvre 2004, Sennet 1990). The significance of senses of time in the process of thinking and shaping urban places has also long been acknowledged and, much has been said across the human and social sciences on the significance of time and everyday life in the production of urban space. Most recently the work of Lefebvre on 'time, rhythm and everyday life' (2004) has steered interest on the politics but also the phenomenology of time and everyday life in urban space (Massey 2005, Thrift 2003, 2008, Ingold 1993, Wunderlich 2013).

Recently, also, there has been a revived interest in the senses and the urban environment that is shaping research in the field of sensorial urbanism. The debate is headed by the International Ambiances Network' where the focus has been on the alternative senses and the city (Pallasmaa 1996, Howes 2004, Zardini 2005): places and atmospheres, soundscapes (Augoyard and Torgue 2004, Bull and Back 2003), smellscapes (Barbara and Perliss 2006, Diaconu 2011), touchscapes (Classen 2012), and ultimately, places temporal depth; that is how sensorial and emotionally affective events shape unique and meaningful atmospheres through time (Wunderlich 2013).

Out of line with the shift in planning, sustainability and urban design agendas

Third, the dominant visual and static aesthetics that prevail in the realm of practice is at odds with current agendas and directions of urban design research that explore social, perceptual and temporal dimensions of urban environments (Carmona et al. 2003). It also fails to link with the wider shift in planning and sustainability agendas where the user's happiness, health and general wellbeing become more and more centre stage and are taken as principal indicators of quality in the urban environment.

There is a growing concern about the acceleration of cities and how this affects people's everyday life. Whether it is daily commuting versus social activity patterns, or the sensorial experience of urban spaces; time and speed in the city is recognised as having an important impact on the social identity and sustainability of neighbourhoods and urban spaces (Knox 2005, Parkins and Craig 2006, Wunderlich 2010, 2013). Environmental planners have already started to research aspects of urban social time, speed versus gender, life-style, and changes in individual and social life patterns and their relationships to the physical forms of the city (Bianchini and Greed 1999, Bonfigliogli and Mareggi 1997). For their part transport planners and morphologists take an interest in travel-rhythms and time-corridors versus density and complexity of use (Hägerstrand 1975, Pred 1977, Penn 2003). Urban designers, however, are behind in addressing these concerns, whilst urban design would greatly benefit from understanding the role of soft attributes of places and their atmospheres, in particular how senses of time are shaped in urban space and how they impact on health, wellbeing and happiness in the city.

Key urban design texts have in the past touched upon the sense of time, temporality and rhythm as a potential research topic for urban place design, albeit briefly and sometimes concealed (Giddeon 1941, Jacobs 1961, Lynch 1972, Norberg-Schultz 1980, Jackson 1994). The sense of time as an explicit theme of research has only recently been introduced to urban design studies (Isaacs 2001), and its relationship to the everydayness of urban places, the sense of place and design remain virtually unexplored. Nevertheless, as mentioned above, there is a renewed interest in the temporal and perceptual dimensions of urban design and the social performance of urban spaces (Gehl 1987, Madanipour 1996, Bosselman 1998, Carmona 2003). But little of this research is offering insights into how to approach a place's sense of time and its temporality explicitly through design.

The Opportunity: An Alternative Aesthetics – Not About Space but About Time

In the light of the above, there is a need to challenge the established visual and static aesthetic foundations of urban design, and consequently review the focus and scope of urban design research and practice altogether. Reflecting the idea that it is more important what happens in spaces than what one finds there, this requires the inversion of the urban design perspective, looking at urban design not from a spatial but from a temporal perspective. For example, rather than focusing on the spatial (and visual) beauty of space, urban design should look at the temporal beauty of urban places, as they are sensually and emotionally perceived by urban dwellers.

Today there is an increasing interest in the power, sensoriality and affect of timescapes on everyday life (Lefebvre 2004, Massey 2005, Crang 2001, Thrift 2003). The geographical notion of space as only a physical entity is disputed; instead, space is discussed as ephemeral, sensorial and performative. Urban design research needs to catch up with this trend and contribute to these changing perspectives in order that they might inform practice.

The quality of people's temporal and sensorial experience in urban spaces is directly linked to their sense of time and the perceived rhythmicity of places (see Wunderlich 2013) and urban design topics such as placemaking and urban identity can be approached by examining the urban sense of time, place-temporality and rhythm. For urban designers to capitalise on these temporal understandings, urban design research needs to advance its understanding of the temporal aesthetics of place. In particular, to deliver quality temporal experiences in urban space urban design must review its ways of analysing, designing and delivering urban spaces.

With reference to the urban design theory triad that was introduced earlier – review and critique, aesthetics perspective and methodological stand – so far this chapter

has critically examined urban design theory in the context of disciplinary and interdisciplinary discourse and detected a need for a change of perspective on the aesthetics of the urban place. The following section will focus on defining a new aesthetics under the notion of place-temporality and rhythmicity, and offer methodological insights on how this can be approached. The first part is dedicated to aspects of expression, discussing the sensoriality, performance and aesthetic significance of place-temporality, and four principal experiential attributes – the sense of time, flow, soundscape, and rhythmicity. These attributes characterise place-temporal aesthetics as akin to music. The second part looks at aspects of the spatial and temporal expression of time in urban space and its constitutive rhythms, and discusses particular ways in which these can be analysed, represented and interpreted in order to catalyse responses through design.

PLACE AND RHYTHM, A TEMPORAL AESTHETICS AKIN TO MUSIC

The Attributes of Place-Temporality

In the city, senses of place, time, rhythmicity and wellbeing are intrinsically related. The sense of time varies from place to place; and to this sense of time is associated a different and unique sense of place-temporality. This place-temporality is not an intellectual understanding of time but is instead an aesthetic experience. It involves the immediate and the sensory, and a feeling, or, a ‘certain affective quality’ (Duffrene 1973, in Silverman 1975: 464). It is a meaningful (both sensorial and emotionally affective) appreciation that defines our relationship to an urban place.

Extensive empirical research has revealed that four sensuous attributes and meaningful experiences define this temporal aesthetic experience (Wunderlich 2013):

The vivid sense of time

The sense of time varies depending on the individual, and both the social and the spatial settings. It can thus be influenced by personal experiences and particular states of mind; however, and most importantly, it is inter-subjective (collectively perceived) and place-specific. Indeed extensive observational research in four London places – Piccadilly Circus, Oxford Street, Regent’s Park and Fitzroy Square – revealed that time is place-specific, distinct from place to place, but most importantly, associated with a temporal aesthetics that is sensorial and performative but also affective and meaningful. In the first two spaces their scale, density of movement and social and spatial complexity are associated with acceleration and stress. In the latter two urban spaces, the sense of place has a clarity associated with attributes such as slowness, quiet, calm, order and safety. Fitzroy Square in particular was perceived as an urban place of temporal aesthetic significance (Figure 6.1). There, the unique architectural and natural setting and the high level of urban social complexity gave rise to a vivid and contrasting sense

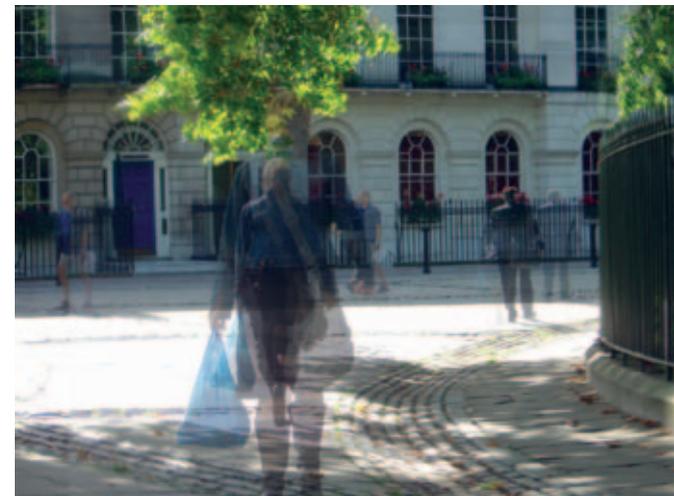


Figure 6.1 Fitzroy Square, September, 2005, ‘Freeze-time’ photography project

of time. Observations, ethnographic interviews and place-specific writing studies (see below) over a 12-month period confirmed that people, living, working or passing-by this square, experienced a similar distorted sense of time. Urban places, such as those studied, each possessed a distinctive sense of time generated by their particular experiential and performative character, that further distinguishing them from other spaces.

Sense of flow

There is a direct relationship between a unique sense of time, the experience of flow, and the vibrant set of orchestrated temporal events and practices one is drawn into when visiting an urban place. Csikszentmihalyi suggests flow is a quality and experience that is inherently rewarding (1988: 30). In fact, in urban space the experience of flow is attractive and nurtures a sense of comfort and satisfaction. Consider, for example, places where one may seemingly lose a sense of time, immersed in activities like strolling through a market, roaming around a town centre shopping, or relaxing in a local park. Fitzroy Square is characterised by a typical place-flow, defined by the particular flow practices that recur and are collectively experienced throughout the day, the week and the season. These activities and tempos are not choreographed, they simply unfold in a synchronised and effortless manner making up the 'Fitzroy place-ballet', as did Jane Jacobs' 'street-ballet' (1961).

A vivid soundscape

The soundscape of an urban place plays a major role in the perception of temporality in everyday urban spaces. Observations of various places with vivid senses of time in London suggested that it is the hi-fi soundscape that characterises urban place-temporality. In hi-fi soundscapes 'frequencies can be heard distinctively' (Schafer 1977: 43) and foreground and background sounds can be identified (Wrightson 2000: 2). The acoustic colourations offer significant information about the physical nature and scale

of spaces and express aspects of its social and cultural identity (Thibaud 2003). Through repetition and resonance they define and enhance the experience of place-temporality in urban space. At Fitzroy Square aesthetic assemblages of recurrent and resonant sounds of social activities, movements and interactions with space, and of the cyclical events of nature, juxtaposed in a single location, define the aural experience of place-temporality.

Rhythmicity

Not only the soundscape but the overall sensorial experience of place-temporality is rhythmic and resonant, expressed by the orchestration of everyday temporal patterns of events in urban place (Wunderlich 2007, 2013). The temporal dynamics and patterning of social space by routines of everyday life has been acknowledged by a range of scholars (Hagerstrand 1975, Pred 1977, Buttner 1976, Jacobs 1961, Seamon 1980, Zerubavel 1981, Lefebvre 2004). It is important to note that everyday social life is linked to physical space and the natural environment, which are both temporal and rhythmic entities in their own right. Place temporal milieus are therefore hubs of recurrent and synchronised stimuli of different kinds: everyday social routines, patterns of movement and other sensory practices, circadian and seasonal cycles of nature, and visual and haptic patterns of physical space. A multiplicity of rhythms can be sensed and tangibly engaged with in urban space. These rhythms are place-specific and unique in the way they vertically relate to one another, in other words, how they superimpose temporally.

As in Music

In some places the interrelation and superimposition of rhythms do not result in a cacophony of temporal events, but instead resemble what could be described as a 'symphony of events'. As in music, groups of unique place-rhythms imbue urban spaces with a temporal structure, metrical order and pulse. As a result, they organise time, and set and characterise

the perceived tempo of a place. Also, as in music, place-rhythms are both sensorial and emotionally affective. They shape aesthetic rhythmical continuums and offer sensorial and meaningful temporal distinctiveness to urban places. In this way, they shape the timescape of urban places, and define the unique aesthetics of place-temporality with a sense of pattern and rhythm, a sense of balance and resonance.

Place-temporality is a quality aesthetic experience similar to the aesthetic experience of music. It similarly offers a vivid and distorted sense of time, the experience of flow, a vivid soundscape and rhythmicity. Also, it is perceived through all senses, involves performance, and imbues meaning to urban spaces. In this regard, place-temporality, as a meaningful phenomenological experience, has parallels to the understanding of 'art as experience' and 'art form' (Dewey 1934, Barthes 1985) (see Wunderlich 2013 for further exploration of this perspective).

Uncovering Place-Temporality through Place-Rhythmanalysis

Fieldwork research on place-temporality and rhythmicity in urban places requires an understanding of urban analysis and design as a qualitative exploratory practice. It necessitates methodological innovation and the integration of phenomenology into the analytical and design processes. Such qualitative research involves an 'interpretative and naturalistic approach to the world', studying things in their natural settings in an attempt 'to make sense of, or to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring them' (Denzin 2000: 3). This is based on the idea that 'meanings of events, actions and expressions' are not given facts or 'self-evident' and that they require 'some kind of contextual interpretation' (Have 2004: 4).

The qualitative researcher is 'a multi-tasking profile – the bricoleur– and his/her choice of practice is pragmatic, strategic and self-reflexive' (Denzin 2000: 4). Qualitative site based research may require various empirical methods

together with their careful study and planning. Methods may include comparative case-studies, personal experience records, introspection, lifestories, interviews, observation of artefacts and the generation of design, cultural, historical, interactional and visual texts. Fitzroy Square was the subject of extensive fieldwork and ethnographic studies of this nature to uncover its temporal aesthetic attributes. As already mentioned, the square is a vibrant civic space, an everyday social space with a distinct physical, natural and sociocultural rhythmic profile, where a rich set of regular interweaving rhythms can be perceived (Figure 6.2).



Figure 6.2 Fitzroy Square social practices, Summer 2005; 'Freeze-time' photography project

The experiential attributes of this square, its slow tempo, its everyday typical flow patterns, its vivid soundscape, and its apparent rhythmicity, made Fitzroy Square an ideal case for exploration (see Wunderlich 2013). The qualitative analysis of the square involved a number of methods that are key in the process of urban place-rhythmanalysis:

- Mapping the sense of time and the sense of flow – Place-specific writing practices utilising on-site personal

spatial expression



Figure 6.3 Taxonomy of place-rhythms according to dominant spatial attributes

temporal expression



Figure 6.4 Place-rhythms temporal attributes

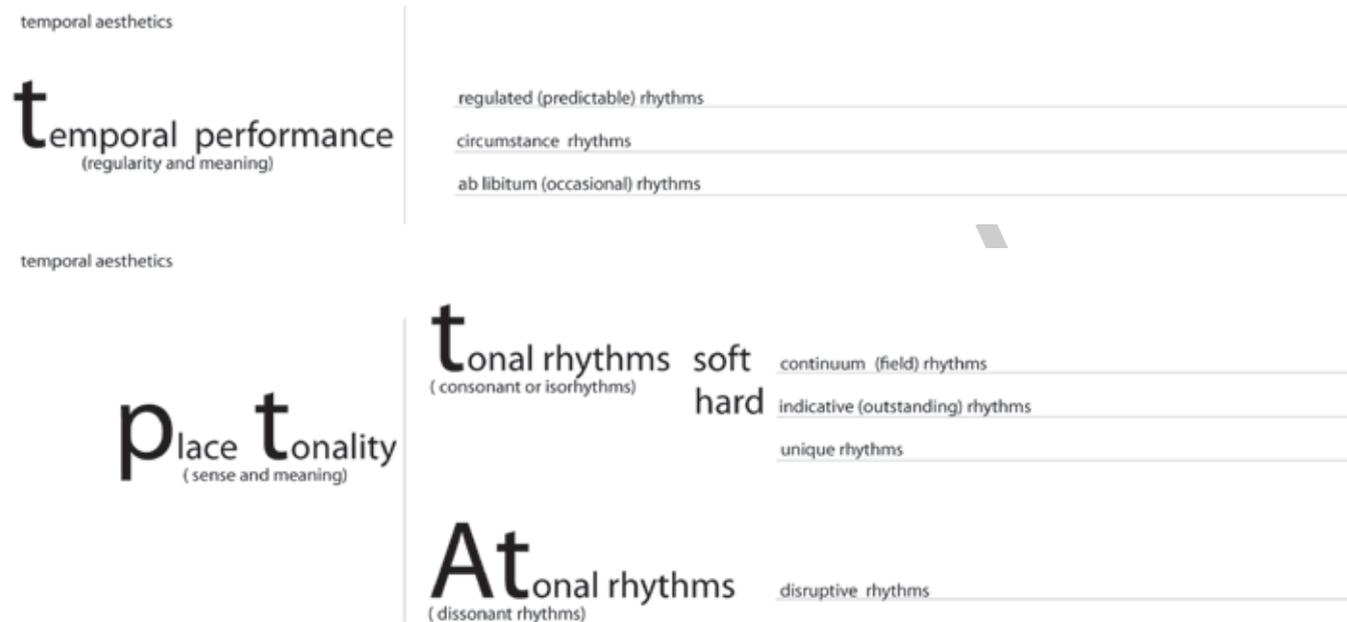


Figure 6.5 Taxonomy of place-rhythms according to aesthetic temporal attributes: (i) concerning regularity / temporal structure; (ii) concerning sensorial and affective forms of expression

narratives by the researcher and conversations with regular users to capture the way time was experienced in situ.

- Mapping soundscapes – Audio and video recording of soundscapes at specific times of the day, week and season, and their representation as spectrograms (visual representations of spectrum frequencies and the duration of sounds) to identify unique acoustic colourations of particular moments and their frequency of occurrence and duration. These could then be mapped in relation to observed everyday events and social practices.
- Mapping urban place-rhythms – The mapping of place-rhythms required careful planning upfront. To start with, the spatial scale and perspective for observations and recordings needed to be established. Also, the time-scales for observation were fixed to three

moments of the day for two weekdays within each of the four seasons of the year. The relevant observations needed to be performed rigorously during these times to allow comparison.

Using these methods, the place-rhythm analysis itself focused on three key aspects: spatial expression; temporal expression; and temporal representation of temporality and its place-rhythms. The mapping of the spatial and temporal expression of place-rhythms responded to two different taxonomies of place-rhythms. The first concerns the dominant spatial attributes of place-rhythms. With reference to Lefebvre and Zerubavel's principles for temporal organisation it divides place-rhythms into social, natural, and physical; each divided into numerous sub-categories (Figure 6.3). The second concerns the dominant temporal attributes of place-rhythms (Figure 6.4). The focus here is

June 2005

Wed.8th

13:00

Bicycle-couriers
Joggers
People sitting for lunch:
- on the pavement close to the railings
- in the park
- at the benches

people passing with shopping bags from tesco, boots and Sainsbury
people meeting chatting under the sun
people waiting in front of their offices

12:00

ice-cream car arrives
people passing-by
grooves with basket balls
man in their suits
girls in their ironed skirts and black long trousers and small black jackets
people with cards in their neck
man in informal t-shirts
joggers

13:00

people buying ice-cream
taxis stop more frequently at the square
working groups passing more regularly
man with computer in their shoulder pass-by
people with trays / plates with their lunch

13:18

people start to queue for ice-cream
people talking in their mobiles sitting or walking
row of people sitting on the pavement against the railings
people passing with shopping bags
people eating ice-cream standing and observing others
(the park gets full)
people walk with their ice-cream in the hands

13:23

black people with basket ball pass the sq. again
people walking have a slower pace than in other times of the day

13:23

people join in smoking groups in front of their office entrance /
after-lunch cigarette
people walking in 2 and 3 and with baby buggy
people with rolling suitcases
pigeon dance
talking on the mobile
sitting at the stalls
joggers
taxis leaving people

taxi leaving people

13:48

noise lowers
people leave park
joggers in the other direction

Fri 10th

before 12:00

maintenance works:
garbage collection
watering and cleaning flower pots
emptying litters
collecting black garbage bags

couriers with their motorcycles standing at the square
pigeons dance
grand-mothers with their dogs

after 12:00

people with dogs
continuous pace of walkers
continous pace of rambblers
people sitting at the benches
people reading sitting at benches
group meeting / chats at and around the benches area
people smoking in front of entrance-doors of office buildings and institutions / smoking breaks

3 different paces of walkers:
people in their working time with key-cards around people necks;
others just taking a walk in their relaxed clothing (walking for pleasure or without destination),
all others which may or may not at work simply passing the square

people with their paper lunch bags
people with supermarket bags, which enter and sit outside in the square
people which enter the office building taking fat supermarkets
providing lunch for everyone

walkers groups passing slowly and chatting with each other: 2 groups
- the one at work with business dressage and cards around the neck
and the one which looks relaxed and in their spare time

goodies in groups passing the square

taxis stopping at the southeast of the square
people coming out of the taxi at the southeast of the square
taxis passing at the southeast corner of the square (at lunch time frequency rises)

individuals standing at the square waiting for other people
individuals standing at the square and eating their lunch

appearance of children and parents at the square
children event at the square

ethnic minority group people passing / at the square

meetings between couples
meetings between bigger groups of people
meeting at smoking breaks

individuals smoking alone at the back of their office facades

people walking with shopping bags, full and half-full from Tesco, Boots and Sainsbury

hay-fever
noise levels

Mon 13th

11:00

watering the flowers

11:30

Garbage collection with truck
Garbage collection with trolleys
Service deliveries
People eating their middle morning meals (out of their paper bag of shops around the square)
People sitting of at benches at looking at the park

Slow walks of individuals
Slow walks of groups mostly in two

Sun sunshine disappearing suddenly (in and out of the clouds)

Moderate and fast walk of individuals passing-by
Individuals in and out of office buildings with fast walking pace

11:42

sun supprises going out of the clouds
taxi stopping at the square bringing someone

curious girl passing in front of the camera 3 times

11:45

bold women spotted at the square (P)

business people walking in pairs dressed in black

:46

parking warden passing by

:49

dog-walks
curious photographers walking around (exceptionally!!!)
bicyclists sitting at the bench

:54 south bench are full (it is where the sun shines over)

:59 two cops pass (exceptionally!!!)

jogger passes

12:00

every bench with at least 1 person sitting

tourist couple wandering around

:04

jogger
jogger

- the sound of the wind and leaves on the wind dominates, yet traffic noises are rising as well as walking steps, and plus conversations of people on the phone
- sound of wind and pigeons

:07

mail car arrives

parks in front of Adam house

:10

bold woman says hello and goes and sits at her most used bench at the north-east sq
people with their shopping bags - full bags brought to their offices

:13

celebrity photographing session at the northeast of the square (agglomeration of people)

12:15

groups of students girls dressed in their green uniform passing the square

12:25

wind gets stronger and pigeons dance faster in groups

:26
 people chat in group in front of the medical centre
 the sun continues surprising us in and out of the clouds

 :27
 bicycle passing
 people stopped hanging on bollards observing other people, in particular the photographing event

 :28
 family with buggies walking round circumscribing the park

 12:30
 people coming out of buildings starting their lunch break

 12:31 fire car passes with siren on

 at the moment the level of complexity resultant of the superimposition of many rhythms is very high. The square is full of urban life and vitality
 (...)

14:34
 warden passes in front of me

 :37
 post-trolley at the square: delivery is still going on
 girls in black pass for the 3rd time
 park starts to get empty
 square start to get more empty
 mainly (p) stay at the square

 other groups of people start appearing at the empty square
 14:44 1st groove appear

 :46
 old people crossing the square
 courier in his bicycle
 groove and other man enter the park

 another elderly at the square with electric car

 15:00 ice-cream: car leaves

 - the continuum of passers-by
 - people sitting in the benches
 - small talks in front of buildings during smoking break
 - decrease in the number of people passing-by
 - walking steps of passers-by can be heard again
 - the bike passing
 - the park is now closing and being emptied of people
 - people inside are leave
 - only 6 left
 - 3 paces: a faster and a slow one – the walker, the rambler and the old person
 - a girl arrive to the square and stays surprised with its calmness
 - only 1 man sitting in the east bench of the square
 - more people concentrate at the bench at the south-west
 - little girl passes with a man/father? in her school uniform
 :10
 -2 people in the park
 - 3 people sitting at the benches at the south - 1 speaking at the mobile, the other with his legs up and the other lying already for more than 1/2 hour

 15:11
 3 people passing-by really slow

 15:15 park closes

Figure 6.6 Place-rhythms diaries

on the singularity of place-rhythms' temporal performance, the number of events that constitute it, and their relationship in terms of duration, intensity and accentuation, in other words, their temporal articulation pattern. It further includes their sensorial and affective shape; that is the way place-rhythms induce unique sensorial and emotional experiences, as they unfold and group over time in one space (Figure 6.5).

The spatial expression of Fitzroy Square place-rhythms were recorded through:

- Place-rhythm diaries, which are useful ways to record rhythmic social practices and other natural and physical rhythmic events, capturing them in writing as they unfold (Figure 6.6);
- Photographic albums which grouped representative rhythmic events under the triad of social, natural and physical (Figure 6.7); and
- Other kinds of diagrams of social and travel rhythms.

To understand the temporal expression (organisation and aesthetics) of the Square's place-rhythms, other analytical and interpretative tools were also used, such as:

- Surface patterns diagrams, which deconstruct the architectural elements in building facades and the public realm pattern;
- Place-rhythm spectral diagrams, where the pattern of natural events and social practices is mapped in analogy to musical spectrograms (Figure 6.8); and
- Place-scores, which, akin to musical scores, are the means of superimposing place-rhythm spectral diagrams over time in order to identify patterns of resonance or conflict (consonance or dissonance) and to express how these shape sensorial and affective temporalscapes during a period of time (Figure 6.9).

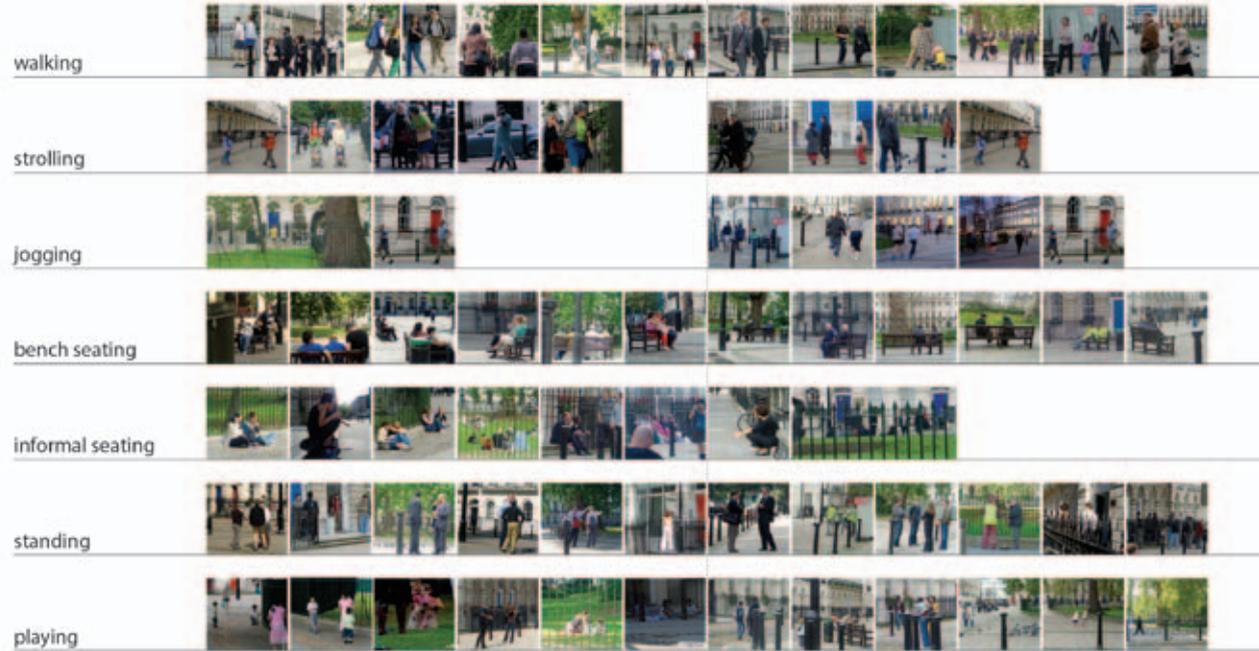
The different methods of observation and techniques of analysis and representation outlined above define an analytical

Social rhythms

Societal: collective

spring * summer

autumn * winter



Societal: individual

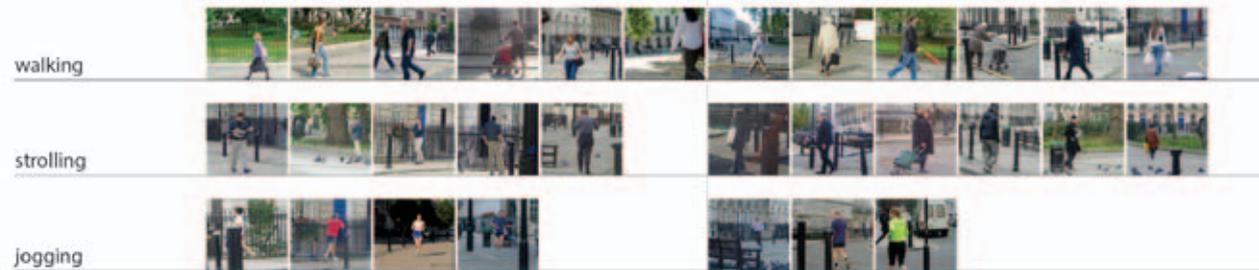


Figure 6.7 Photographic album extract: societal place-rhythms, collective and individual, spring/summer and autumn/winter



Figure 6.8 Twelve-hour spectral diagram combining travel and social place-rhythms, autumn weekday, Monday 31st October, 2005

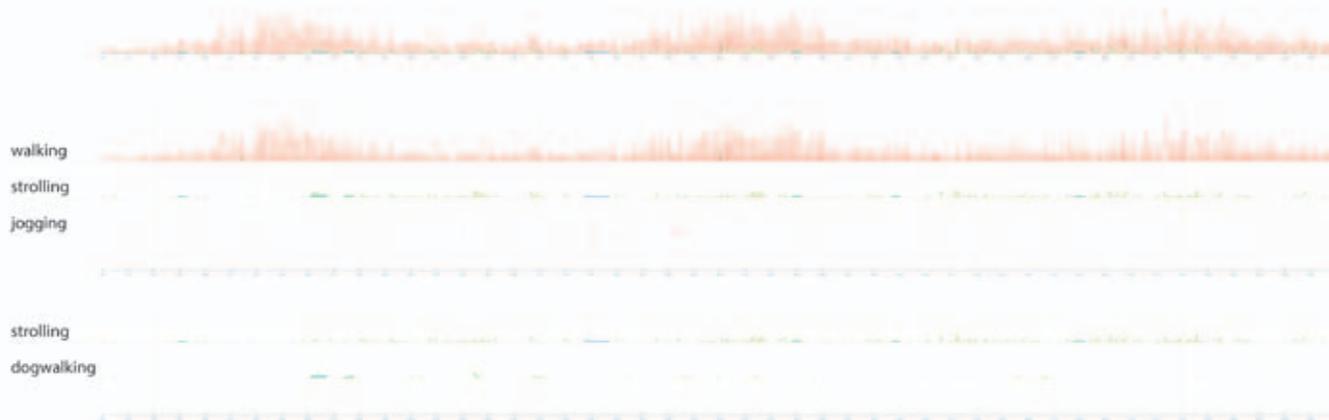
framework for place-rhythmanalysis, through which urban place-temporality and rhythmicity in urban space can be addressed. Beyond their analytical purpose, these types of studies are expressive forms of representation that can support and even inspire the design process through encouraging a critical and creative design processes.

CONCLUSION

This chapter makes the case that the delivery of a comprehensive urban design theory that is closely related

to practice requires a triad framework based on critique, an aesthetic preference and a methodological robustness. It argues that visual and static (motionless) modernist aesthetics still dominate urban design research and practice. This out-dated notion of aesthetics is hindering methodological innovation and comprehensive responses to new interdisciplinary debates about everyday life and sensing the city, or to new emerging objectives within urban design and related disciplines such as those associated with the acceleration of cities and its impact on the quality of urban life. In recognition of these shortcomings the chapter has proposed an alternative perspective on aesthetics focused on

Societal | movement



Societal | rest * encounter

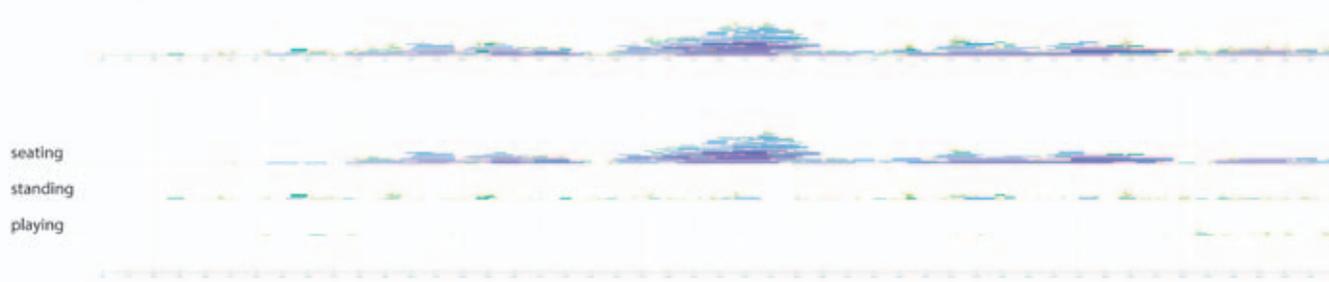


Figure 6.9 Place-score extract, where societal place-rhythms are juxtaposed, summer weekday, Monday 5th September, 2005

the temporal dimension of places, including their sensorial and emotionally affective attributes over time. It provided a brief overview of how to perform place-rhythm analysis, a new methodology for analysis and research in urban design encompassing innovative methods of analysis, interpretation and representation.

Implicit in the discussion is the promotion of a temporal aesthetics for urban design research and practice,

demonstrating that the sense of time in urban space can be tangibly approached. It makes the case that a change of perspective on the aesthetics of urban space and the environment is required, and that this has the potential to open an era of new discoveries with regards to the methodologies and means of representation we use for urban analysis and design.

TIPS FOR RESEARCHERS:

- Consider urban place design not as ‘what you find in places’ but ‘what happens in places’; in other words, consider design as performative, sensorial and emotionally affective.
- Do not reduce your studies to visual and material forms but consider shifting your focus to tempo, pattern and experience.
- Use visual and analytical illustrations in creative and interpretative ways to represent aesthetic perceptions.
- Consider your own and other people’s multiple senses as a means of collecting meaningful data.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Set up originally by the group URM CNRS 1563 (Cresson and Cerma research groups).

Proof Copy