THE RESISTANCE PLACES

an URBAN INQUIRY IN ORDER TO COMPREHEND APPROPRIATION SPACES

by Ceren Sezer

Delft University of Technology – Department of Architecture
Section of Urban Renewal and Management
The Netherlands

c.sezer@bk.tudelft.nl

Summary

This research aims to construct a theoretical and analytical framework in order to comprehend notion of Resistance Places which refers 'spatiality of survival tactics of vulnerable groups in the society to maintenance their positions under constant transformation of contemporary life'. This notion is found very essential to understand contradictions in urban life and chosen as the main focus of the study to explore potentials of urban environment. The research is carried out by proposing an analytical tool named as 'Level Analysis' based on personal conception of connectivity and movement in the city. The tool is tested by investigation of daily lives of Turkish rural migrant groups within their social and economical practises in Istanbul Metropolitan City. Two highly immigrant populated districts Gaziosmanpasa and Sultanbeyli are chosen as case studies.

1.0 Theoretical Framework : Perception of Urban Environment

Relations between human and environment have been theorized by different disciplines such as anthropology and psychology. Social anthropologist Tim Ingold [2000] in his book on perception of environment categories some of these theories aiming to construct an understanding on notions such as culture, perception and cognition. In one of his categorizations, he argues an approach from ecological psychology, a theory on perception developed by J.J.Gibson in 1980's. He notes three notions from Gibson on perception of environment: Firstly, perception entails movement; secondly, perception is a mode of action, therefore, knowledge obtained through perception is practical. And thirdly, there is no limit in what can be perceived. Gibson introduces the concept of 'affordances' which refers 'to perceive an object or event through what it affords'. He conceives perception an immediate awareness of the possibilities afforded by environment.

Similarly, Read [2003] constructs an argument on environmental perception through performation of networks in the urban space. He suggests an understanding of city not as an object, rather an environment where serial appropriation of diverse cultures situated. Accordingly, in order to understand environment, he proposes to deal with social space which is constructed through relations between people and people and people and things.

Human wants to make their environment intelligible in order to utilize it according to their needs. (This process of intelligibility will be called as 'perception' and process of utilization will be called as 'appropriation'.) S\he spatially appropriates the urban space in order to understand what is already understood. Therefore, this is a constant forming and re-forming process of environment which represents construction of creative mental tactics to deal with newly confronted complexity and situations. This study supports the idea that investigation of this process can give us clues about mechanisms of urban system.

Following this argument, next section will introduce an analytical tool based on personal perception of the city. As a beginning, personal perception of a field worker (author of this paper in this case) will be taken as basis in order to construct a common ground of experience of the environment. Photographic snapshots will be used as representation of point conditions which are noticed / noted - in other words-

perceived by the researcher. Here, photography is chosen as a source, because of possibilities that it allows to record existential conditions in different time frames.

2.0 A framework for analytical tool: level analysis

The theoretical outline that drawn above aims to provide a basis for comprehension of an analytical tool which is named as 'Level Analysis'. The aim of this analytical framework is to attempt to reconstruct new maps of relations out of the reduced information of the process of 'existential mapping'. This tool is developed during a case study in Istanbul on appropriation spaces in order to understand economical and social engagement of migrant groups into the city. This essay also suggests that similar approach can be implemented to different urban context providing a comparison between different urban systems.

Level Analysis refers a process of mapping the information obtained through daily life perception on the street scale - represented by photography taken instantaneously - and projecting it to the city scale in order to construct a new comprehension of the city.

This way of understanding city suggests that urban context is a set of intermingled connections between different layers in the city. These layers refer to social and spatial differentiations which are represented by the term 'levels'. This is also suggesting the presence of a kind of hierarchic structure in the urban environment. The abstraction of hierarchy provides possibilities for mappings in between levels and indicates opportunities for multiple interpretations.

3.1 Demonstration of tool: Istanbul case study

During the field study in the chosen migrant districts in Istanbul (In Gaziosmanpasa and Sultanbeyli) area in Istanbul, as the first step of the method, area is explored by walking collecting photographic representation of personal perception from the environment. Since, site exploration made on feet, images mostly taken from movement paths such as streets. Here, the most interesting thing was similarities discovered on these snapshots taken in different parts of the area. This situation provides a categorization according to their strongest attributes such as crowdness, density, etc, by using different sections of the same frame. Following this idea, case study allowed for five distinctive categorizes.

Using these categories, the existential condition is diagrammatized in following steps: Firstly, the examples are chosed from one of the groupings. Secondly, basic dominant elements in the picture such as build environment, pedestrians, cars, cars in parking, etc. are noted. As the third step, the background source (photographic image) is eliminated and as the fourth step, to be able to obtain further information through abstraction, a new leganda is assigned named the different components of the current situation such as cars, parking cars, pedestrians. And the final step was to reduction of the actual condition in order to examine and explore the possibilities arousing from the situation.

After same analysis has been implemented to the other categories, one dominant character is noticed differentiated in each example. That was continuity of the flows. Continuity is not formed only by physical elements which appear in the photographic images but by non physical factors indeed. These are repeated elements which creates successions, and in a way routines of the daily life such as days, hours, or rituals, and so on. However, possible factors that can influence and add further aspects to the continuity of flows by stopping and slowing down their complementary factors which I called as 'breaks'. If we look same example from highway, the flows can hardly be interrupted by any factor than a shopping street case. It seemed to me, continuity as one of the possible aspects that can be revealed from the existential mapping was the base of the 'hierarchic levels' concept.

Since the analyses of examined aspects were connected to the street flows, and to the participants of street motion, the lines of the street and their continuity were the most relevant (visible) condition in the process of mapping the city. According to this idea, studied areas are remapped based on five distinctive categories named as level1, level2, level3, level4, and level5.

In order to explore qualities that each level reveals, additional analyses have been done. These were indication of local, middle, city scale qualities that each level represents, and speed of movement paths in different hours of the day, physical accessibility diagrams, and time-space diagrams of agent's daily life activities. In the latter one, time-space diagrams gender differentiated social and economic activities of agents are analysed in order to explore how they operate levels of the city during one day period.

3.2 Outcomes of the Level Analysis

If we summarize the steps taken so far, as beginning the impression is noted from the street scale using photographs as source. Through the previously described processes general information regarding to existential condition is extracted from this source. Then this information is projected back to the location to point out its existing spatial conditions. In this way it was possible to extrude the locally realised conditions to higher scales. By doing so, a new representative layer on the top of the geometrical map of an urban structure is literally constructed taking point conditions as basis. Finally, the study area is remapped and the qualities that levels represent are investigated.

After the analysis on case studies it is investigated that every level has regional, middle and local scale qualities. However, there were some dominant qualities within the same levels and that is basis in defining their hierarchic build up. L1 and L 5 are the two opposite poles of the system. What matters is that there are more observable differences in between levels that makes difficult to determine them.

The other important aspect of the level system is the actual way of interaction between them. At each level, there is an important relationship between its higher and lower levels in the hierarchy. The levels above suggest inflexible administration of a collective space (for example in case studies represented by the highway) whereas the levels below suggest – locally realised conditions which open up possibilities for flexible social and economical appropriations.

According to the case studies it is noted that there is a tendency to make linkages from lower levels to the upper levels. This linking between levels is realized through physical and visual mobilities of agents. In this way, two distinct ways for accessing to the other layers are introduced: The gradual and the instant transitions. Through investigation of daily life activities of migrants, gradual transition is defined as a process which operates levels one by one, through corporeal travelling for social and economic purposes. The second mode is instant transition which is realized individual and communal activities which are crossing over level 5 to level 1.

As another important outcome, it is also noted that tendencies to make linkages from lowest level to the upper levels whenever confronted with social and physical obstacles, they create tensions. Resistance place however appear to be the spatial implications of these tensions. It is possible to observe these tensions through basic daily life activities such as: production, consumption and social interaction which are actually functioning through networks. Therefore, this analysis supported the hypothesis that urban context which is perceived through personal perception is in fact emergence of intermingled systems of networking operated through movement patterns. This approach can provide an open understanding of the urban through network systems in comprehension of relationship between human and environment.

Following to above mentioned outcomes of the research next section will define and locate different forms of resistance place in the city of Istanbul through basic daily activities such as economic (production and consumption) and social activities of immigrant populations. These statements are based on case studies.

3.1 Instant Transition

The case of instant transition appears when actors of the lowest activity level (L5) appropriate spaces have been strongly influenced by other higher level activities. This type of individual or communal appropriation is appeared whenever it is confronted with an inflexible administration of a collective space. This form of resistance place is the most direct representation of the reacting power of the lowest level to the conditions created by systematic upper levels serving regional scale interest.

3.2 Gradual Transition: Production > Informal and Formal Economy

The circle of demand and supply forms the basic principles of economics. The informal economy has sufficient flexibility to create opportunities to adapt to any conditions of higher levels through a general process that will be described in three steps: The first step is recognition of economic potentials: A member of the L5 level sees a potential for trading in a spot characterised by higher level conditions. The Second step is cluster formation: The successful business attracts other actor of the same level through the existing social network. And final step is stabilization: Clusters are creating constant

conditions in order to maintain their activities. These three steps are observed and analysed within case studies.

The case of formal economy resistance places appear as possibilities for lower level (L5) workers to participate in higher levels in the form of a hybridized system, which is characterised by informal-illegal conditions such as child workers or workers without social security in a highly regulated formal system. Because of their hybridized status some examples of formal economy are noted as resistance places in the study.

3.4 Gradual Transition: Consumption

Because of economic boundness of the lowest level participants, they simply do not represent buying power in higher scales. Thus, they can provide their needs to access higher level consumption by purchasing the same articles in weekly open markets. The emerging of these informal places, supported by administrative authorities can create a kind of circular pattern in the daily life of the city. (Since in Istanbul case every district has a day for an open market within its region in the city)

It is possible to see the appearance of these temporary market places throughout the cityscape creating a kind of network of temporal places of the same activities.

3.5 Gradual Transition: Social Interactions > Women's and Men's Social Life

Here the division of the society based on gender differences will be considered in the analysis of daily life patterns members within the frame of the family. This gender related distinction determines different ways and extends for resistance. Thus, the evidences, the spatial implementations of this kind of resistance are also different in the case of men's and women's daily life.

The social life of migrant woman is strictly limited by her living and in some rare cases by her working environment. Actually working means already resistance, but compared to men's situation it is weak and vulnerable. She interacts with a restricted, local social network and does not have any chance to build other connections within the society. Working in different place or shopping that relates to travelling means sole chances to modify these limits.

The social life of migrant men is based on strong spatial foundations such as tea houses and mosques. These specific locations formed by these migrant men communities kept their rural character in the different urban environment, and serve as the strongest visible nodes for creating the social links within the same 'level' characterized by neighbourhood activities. These social links enable to them to act collectively through which the actual places of resistances are formed.

In the poster, three series of diagram aims to explain the process of spatial networking through mosques. Through local social interactions which are based on similar activity such as going to mosques in this case to create a mental map through spread of information from very local to higher scales.

4.0 Conclusion

So far this essay summarizes and illustrates the evolution of resistance places according to the defined aspects of daily life. Analytical method started with the personal experiences of tensions (which are called as moments of resistance) in the city and leaded the study to the recognition of a visual and real networks standing behind the visible traces as generating force. These traces appear in the understanding as resistance places formed through the described method of interactions between levels or as spatial implementations/evidences of appropriation spaces.

Although the establishment or introduction of the term 'networking' in connection with the evolution of 'resistance' spaces is not a final nor revolutionary discovery, still it is felt the importance in pointing out that, the phenomenon that can be only experienced in the urban context through personal cognition is a result of a complex re-construction of background conditions.

Using intuitive way of cognitions it could be find the similar phenomena of the formation of resistance places in different urban contexts. Obviously the spatial implications of the same phenomenon are different form the analysed situation which suggests the need for the further investigation for the aim of finding answers to the questions:

What are the differences in the formation of the resistance in different context?
What are the impacts which are seen as instinctive responses of such spaces on the existing spatial and social environment?

References

Ingold, T. (2000), *The Perception of the Environment*, London: Routledge

Read, S. (2005), 'Intelligent Body: City as Psychogeography', working paper, www.spacelab.tudelft.nl