

Methods of investigating

Oct. 20, 2023

The location I observed was the ground floor café of the British Museum in the center of London. It consisted of two long tables and 32 chairs.

My focus was on studying the behavior of people in public spaces, their desire to occupy space, and how they perceive and use objects within that space. Inspired by the chapter titles in "Invisible City" such as "Cities & Desire" and "Cities & Signs," I believe these topics are important for discussing urban spaces.

Following Georges Perec's observation method described in his book "Species of Spaces and Other Pieces" (2008, pp.50-54), I documented a series of actions using photographs and images:

- Retrieving a tray from under the counter
- Taking bread or cake
- Paying at the counter and placing the prepared coffee on the tray
- Taking napkins and cutlery from the side of the counter
- Searching for an unoccupied chair and a suitable place to sit
- Placing the tray on the table
- Adjusting the chair to a comfortable position

While observing how chairs function as different symbols, I captured various situations through images: chairs as tools to extend the boundaries of space, chairs defining other objects, chairs as obstacles, and chairs as expressions of attitude towards space. However, as images can convey excessive information and distract from the main focus, I must provide a comparative explanation of the subject I observed.

I noticed that people's occupancy of this public space is dynamic and mutually influential. To showcase changes over time, I presented a set of photos. In these photos, I highlighted the changes between each photo and used different colors to mark the factors (people leaving or

entering the space) that caused these changes. The markings on the photos created a rhythm. I extracted graphics from the photos to present and discuss this mechanism.

Moreover, changing the observation perspective led to new insights. Initially, I took an overhead view to observe people entering, using, and leaving the space, considering the space as a whole. This allowed me to easily translate these changes into a mechanism. However, when I entered the space, sat at the table, and placed the camera on the surface, the perspective transformed the square table into a trapezoid, reminding me of an aerial view of Manhattan Island. At this point, my focus shifted to the relationship between utensils, trays, and the tabletop.

Similar to "Invisible City," where each story in every city is detailed and specific, readers can feel that the discussions apply to other cities as well. Although my observation method begins with specific and detailed records, through mapping and creating diagrams, these observations are not limited to this particular location. They contribute to a broader discussion about public spaces.