

## VITALITY AND SOCIAL VALUE OF PUBLIC SPACES: A SOCIO-SPATIAL ANALYSIS IN TWO URBAN SQUARES IN LONDON

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### Abstract

This paper aims to investigate the impact of vitality on the social values attached to two public squares in London. Based on an extensive review of the literature and empirical work, this paper will explore the similarities and differences between these two squares in order to deliver a better understanding of the reasons behind urban design vitality and quality in generating social values attached to physical spaces. These two squares are comparable in size, physical setting and geographical and social context providing unique contexts for socio-spatial analysis. This study follows a case study approach with a qualitative method. For both case studies, there are 100 surveys and 33 semi-structured interviews in total conducted with participants at the squares. In addition, many site observations for this study have been taken, in both cases, at different times of the day to track human movement, activities, spatial qualities, social interactions and spatial interrelations. This study demonstrates the complex nature of the generation of vitality in urban spaces.

### 1. Introduction

In densely populated urban areas, urban public spaces work as important physical sets, fulfilling the needs of urban residents by providing social interactions and a considerable part of a city's transaction base (Space, 2003). The life of public space occurs in open public spaces in a complex set of functions and forms (Gemzøe and Gehl, 2006). The attribute of these spaces usually is capable of containing diverse behaviour, activities and use such as walking through, shopping, conversation, using the facilities, relax, people watching or even just passing the time as a daily activities (Ibid, 2006). One of the key aspects that determine the failure or the success of urban space is vitality (Montgomery, 1998, Engwicht, 1999, Carmona et al., 2001). However, the lack of the use of vitality as a tool that can distinguish successful urban spaces from others occurs in many contexts. Urban designers whose task appeared to be aiming toward the healed public spaces among sociologists, geographers and politicians show more interest in the subject of public space. However, focus has been on the requirements of vehicles in the modernist planning rather than pedestrians and their needs and expectations which leads according to Oktay (1996) to negatively affected the quality of everyday life in cities. Consequently, the attention toward social value has been increased as a result of the need for investment in good urban design (Carmona et al., 2001, CABE, 2002, Carmona et al., 2002a, Carmona et al., 2002b, McIndoe et al., 2005, Macmillan, 2006a).

This paper aims to investigate the impact of vitality on the social values attached to two public squares in London. Based on an extensive review of the literature and empirical work, this paper will explore the similarities and differences between these two squares in order to deliver a better understanding of

the reasons behind urban design vitality and quality in generating social values attached to physical spaces. These two squares are comparable in size, physical setting and geographical and social context providing unique contexts for socio-spatial analysis.

## 2. Understanding vitality and social value of public spaces

Lynch (1984) recognizes vitality as one of the performance elements of urban design and defines it as the degree to which the setting of the space support the functions, biological requirements and capabilities of human beings. Sherman et al. (1988) consider vitality as one of the indicators of successful urban places. Vitality can distinguish socially beneficial places from the others. According to Montgomery's definition (1998) vitality 'refers to the numbers of people in and around the street (pedestrian flows) across different times of the day and night, the uptake of facilities, the number of cultural events and celebrations over the year, the presence of an active street life, and generally the extent to which a place feels alive or lively'(p.97). Many of contemporary research findings indicate that vitality is a product of visual quality and the variety of the supported activities to these environments. (Space, 2003, Townshend and Madanipour, 2008, Gehl and Matan, 2009, Nemeth, 2009).

It is recognizable that the good design contributes to human needs and satisfactions. It is essential to meet people's needs and adapt their activities in order to have a proper public space. Maslow (1999) identified a five stages hierarchy of basic human needs starting from physiological needs such as food, warmth and survival toward more complex needs such as social needs that includes safety and belonging needs. Similar to these, the most important social elements in a public space could be accessibility, equity and safety. The viable place has the capability of providing more choices for social activities to take a place in urban public space as well as being the arena for cultural exchanges(Gehl, 2010). These spaces are successful due to the result of the active engagement that peephole seek out (Carr et al., 1992) and due to the process that had been taken when place making for people (Carmona, 2010).

According to Macmillan (2006b) social value has coloration with the encouragement provided to residents by places and buildings to interact in ways that lead to trust, shared understanding, shared values and supportive behaviours. Walmsley (1988) claimed that there is a relationship between the environmental perception of a place with its social behaviours. He also claimed that human behaviours are not only developed by inter-relations within the environment but also urban environment can be the foundation of this development. Social value emerges when people have common interests that can join them with others. (Macmillan, 2006b). Social value usually measured by indicators to identify areas where enhancements are desired. Many attempts have been done to identify the possible indicators that used to measure the social value of urban design (Table 1).

Table 1: Assessing and measuring the social value

Research	Possible indicators
The Value of Urban Design (Carmona et al., 2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identity/civic pride.</li> <li>• Place vitality</li> <li>• Inclusiveness</li> <li>• Connectivity</li> <li>• Safety</li> <li>• Facilities and amenities</li> </ul>
The Value of Urban Design (McIndoe et al., 2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The percentage of people who are involve in community and cultural activities.</li> <li>• Increased use of public Space.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gives greater sense of personal safety.</li> <li>• Attracts social engagement, pride and commitment to further achievements.</li> <li>• Public art contributes to greater community engagement with public space.</li> </ul>
The value handbook (Macmillan, 2006b)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The strong sense of a community.</li> <li>• Being proud of the neighbourhood.</li> <li>• Feeling safe when out at night.</li> <li>• The decrease in the number of people suffering from mental health problems.</li> <li>• The number of people taking regular exercise.</li> </ul>
Urban Design Toolkit (Environment, 2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The way people live, work, play and interact with each other on a daily basis.</li> <li>• Culture.</li> <li>• Community services and facilities, community character.</li> <li>• Ability to participate in decision-making.</li> <li>• Personal and property rights.</li> <li>• Perceptions about safety or future aspirations for the community.</li> </ul>

The importance of the role of the public realm and associated semi-public spaces is emphasized by Montgomery (1998) which is providing the territory for social interactions and a substantial part of a city's transaction base such as the market square, the shop frontage, the street vendor and the sidewalk café. It is advisable to be linked and connected to the community. Emphasizing relationships and social significance of the site can reflect the physical qualities of it (Carr et al., 1992).

Accessibility is the most fundamental level of the social elements in public space. It has two forms that are visual and physical accessibility. Visual accessibility allows people to see open public spaces and be informed about the activities there while the physical accessibility offers an entry to that space and allow people to use its functions (Carmona, 2014). Open public spaces should stimulate and invite people to come inside and use its amenities. At the same line with the concern of urban design with the formation of physical setting of open public spaces, urban design is concerned with the creation of equitable, open public space as well (Gehl, 2010). One feature of these spaces is democratic spaces due to its availability to all users to use them. They also might be categorized as spaces that increase choice. Thus, they are responsive places. The result of considering equity in the design of the public realm is getting more blended, democratic environment which is accessible for all. Equity provides safe and vibrant public spaces in which different groups of the society from across the social structure can socially interact with each other without conflict (PPS, 2013).

### 3. Case study approach

A case study approach was chosen as viable tools for gathering qualitative and quantitative data. Moreover, selecting the case studies are an important part of this research. The case studies were selected after an in-depth review of many mixed- use development in central London. The cases adopted for this study meet the following indicators: 1) they are both mainly contain residential blocks in order to seek the impact on the development residents and the local community within the development. 2) The volume of the mixed- use development are large enough to produce a practical impact on the level of the neighbourhood with surrounding community. 3) Both mixed-use developments include a public open space that available for its residents and the surrounding community. 4) Both selected cases reflect the importance of urban design policy and plan after the

Urban Task force's report in 1999. 5) The selected cases have different approaches in term of developing the scheme to enable a meaningful comparative assessment between both cases (Table 2). Even though it is not an easy mission to identify the suitable pair, Empire Square and Bermondsey Square pair were selected to make this study (Figure 1). They are located in London Borough of Southwark (Figure 3).

### 3.1 Brief background of the Borough of Southwark

Southwark is one of the inner London boroughs that face the river Thames. It is home to a wide range of commerce, business and leisure. The Bankside area contains many tourist attractions, such as the Tate Modern and Shakespeare's Globe Theatre; these are located beside large regeneration developments such as the Elephant & Castle, one of the largest redevelopment schemes by borough in London, and the Aylesbury Estate. Southwark gets the benefit of many attractions at its fringes, which offer substantial tourist traffic that is associated with providing many job opportunities (southwarkheads, 2009). In this paper, both case studies will be delivered from the borough council and developers vision to the concept of providing public spaces.

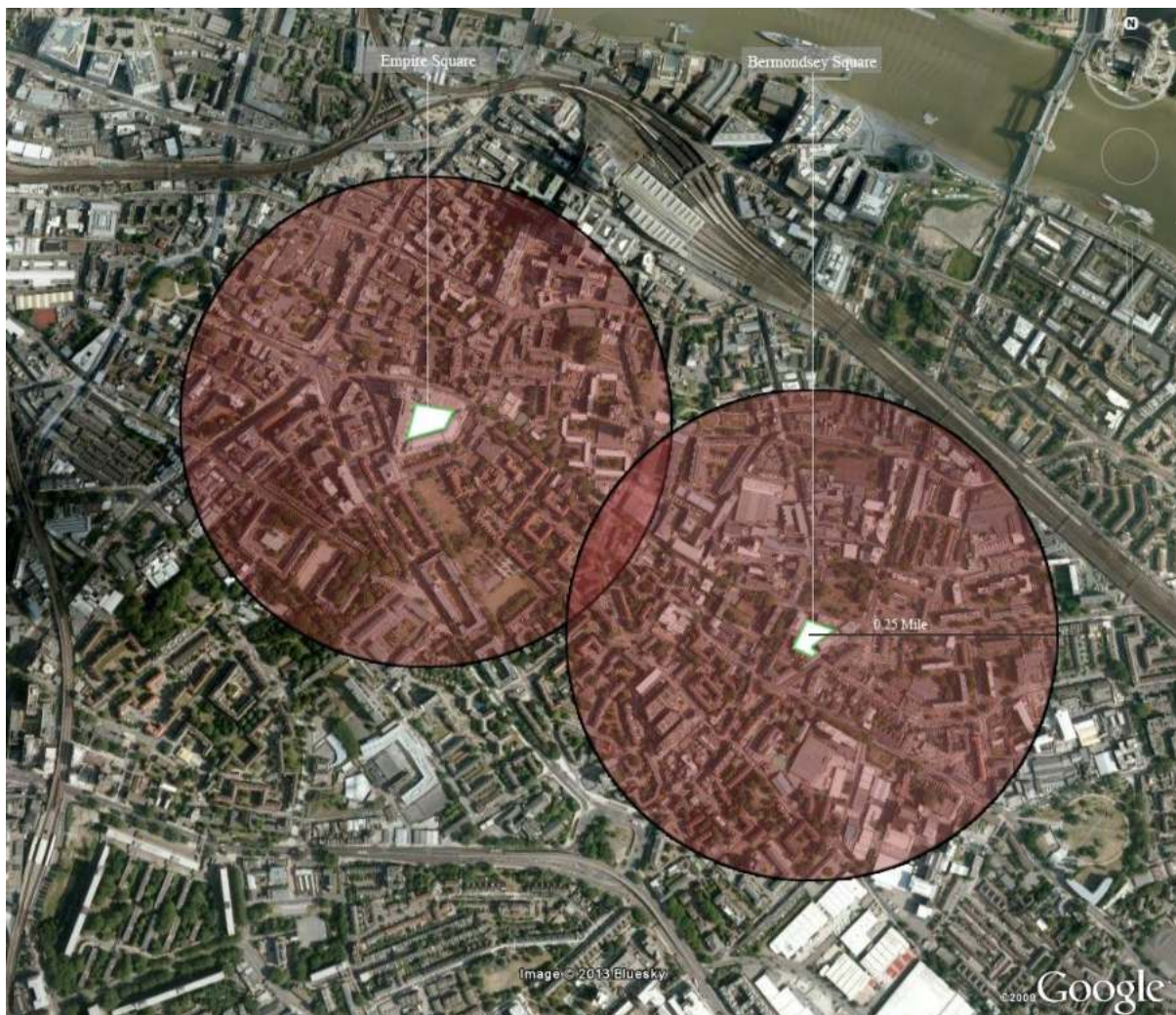

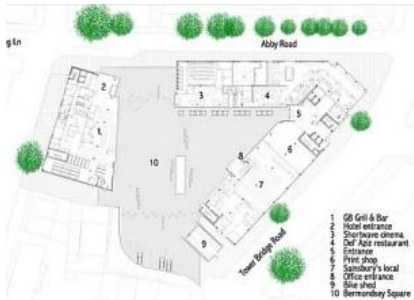


Figure 1. The location of Empire Square and Bermondsey Square (Obtained from Google map)



Figure 2. Bermondsey Square (top), Antique market is taken place on Friday the 24<sup>th</sup> of April 2015. (Image: the author). Empire Square (bottom), Even though it is sunny noon on Friday the 24<sup>th</sup> of April 2015, the square appears empty. (Image: the author).

Table 2. The characteristics of the selected case studies

	Empire Square	Bermondsey Square
Location	London Borough of Southwark	London Borough of Southwark
Usage	Offices, health club, retail units and residential.	Offices, retail units, residential, hotel, bar, restaurant, cinema and café.
Developer	Berkeley Homes	Igloo Regeneration
Design	Rolf Judd	Munkenbeck + Partners Architects
Size	572 units & commercial retail space	76 units, a 79-bed boutique hotel & commercial retail space
Occupiers	Gym, retails, nursery, NHS facility, grocery store and office uses	Hotel, restaurants, café, bar, cinema, grocery store and office uses
Completed	2007	2008
Site Plan	 <p>Obtained from <a href="http://www.rolfe-judd.co.uk">www.rolfe-judd.co.uk</a></p>	 <p>Obtained from Igloo, 2013</p>

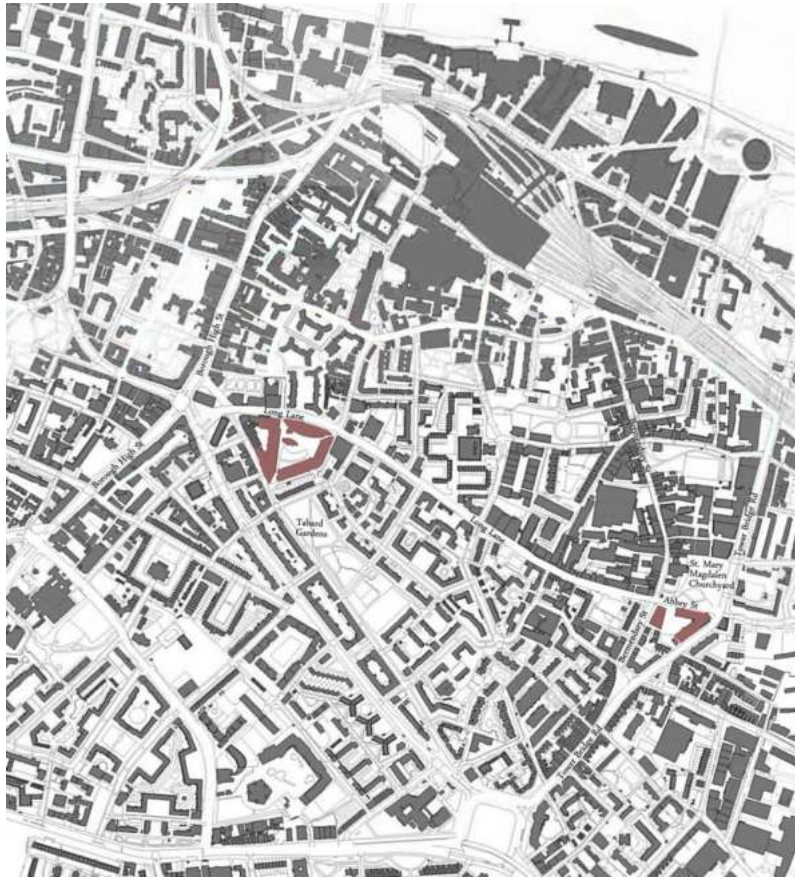


Figure 3. Empire Square & Bermondsey Square - Urban structure and built form. (Obtained from 2012 OS Mastermap)

### 3.2 Case 1: *Empire Square*

Empire Square is a residentially led development in the historic district of Southwark, located at the end of Borough High Street. The site was used industrially, including as a goods depot, until the London Borough of Southwark saw possibilities for its development. They emphasised high quality, to be addressed in this project. Initial approval was granted for 270 residential units of a gated community development with no public access. However, Berkeley Homes, the developer, sought to increase the density to 576 mixed-tenure units. Thus, they saw the potential of a new public square and affordable units by giving around 33% of the site to public use. The new public square was a price worth paying for the additional units they got (Carmona and Wunderlich, 2012). The project was completed in 2007 and won the Housing Design Awards and CABE Gold award (Keddie, 2010).

### 3.3 Case 2: *Bermondsey Square*

The Southwark Council and Igloo Regeneration Partnership worked together to redevelop Bermondsey Square as part of an economic, social, environmental and physical intervention. The vision of Bermondsey is set around a new square that hosts the Bermondsey Antique Market. A farmer's market, exhibition, and community-related outdoor events are being scheduled and held at Bermondsey Square to help increase social interaction and enliven the space. The development is at the end of Bermondsey Street and intersects with the less-gentrified Tower Bridge Road, the outer limit of the city centre. The square is intended by the developer and council to be the heart of Bermondsey (Stewart, 2009).

#### 4. Methodology

The methodology of this study is employed to demonstrate and evaluate the study outcomes. Moreover, the study will need to undertake the analysis of social-spatial behaviours in relation to the social value of urban design as a mean. There is several different research methods have been developed and used in this study as one comprehensive methodology. Therefore, the knowledge claim for both case studies from all the methods will provide qualitative and quantitative data as well. There are two different trips have been undertaken in order to obtain data for this study. For both case studies, there are 100 surveys and 33 semi-structured interviews in total conducted with participants at the squares. The participants are occupiers, managing agents, residents and everyday users. All 100 participants have been asked to answer face to face survey takes about five to eight minutes to complete, and 33 participants have been asked to spend 10 minutes of face to face interviews. At the first trip, the data gathered from questionnaires in both sites. It has developed supporting knowledge for the social analysis of the study. The findings of each case are demonstrated in various charts and tables to express a valuable range of knowledge to promote the understanding of the outcomes of the observational and socio-spatial analysis work.

The 33 semi-structured interviews are taking place to eliminate the limitation of some data that occur from the questionnaire in the first trip. The way semi-structure interviews are constructed for this second trip of conducting data is to cope with the lack of understanding regards with the complexity of vitality among some participants in the first trip of data collection. Therefore, the questions of the second trip are set the aim of the study, in a way that can encourage the participants to reveal their opinion directly. At the same time, the primary goal of this interview is not to measure the perception of users but rather recognize the social, spatial value and vitality in a relationship to the urban design.

In addition, many site observations for this study have been taken, in both cases, at different times of the day. The unobtrusive observational approach was used to track human movement, activities, spatial qualities, social interactions and spatial interrelations. The pedestrian traffic movement and static activities such as gathering and meeting are recorded on the basis where individuals sit, meet and move. The outcomes of the site observations will give a comprehensive vision of the movement and the use of each square during different times of the day and reflect the vitality and viability of each square.

This research will be analysed in the comparative analysis approach that aims to minimize the deficiency of research work. It also can generate findings that support and benefit the overall outcome of the research. Therefore, a comparative study is considered to be the ideal approach for such a study due to its understanding of the socio-spatial interrelation and social values (Ragin, 1989). The comparative analysis approach will allow the researcher to assess and evaluate the theories and test the outcomes of the study as well. According to CABE and DETR (2001), place vitality is among the possible indicators, which are identity and civic pride, place vitality, inclusiveness, connectivity, safety and security and amenities and facilities, for assessing the success of the social value that added by urban design through the open public spaces within a new mixed-use development to be spread all over the neighbourhood.

#### 5. Empire Square analysis and evaluation

The square connects Long Ln. North with Sterry St. south creating a walking path for local people who are going to their work or reaching their homes. People come mostly to Empire Square individually from 6:00 to 22:00. The majority of people in Empire Square, according to the questionnaire, live either within the development or within  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile from it (Figure 4). Many people stated that they use the square because of its proximity to their home. People who live more than two miles away from the square stated that they visit mainly because they study or work nearby.

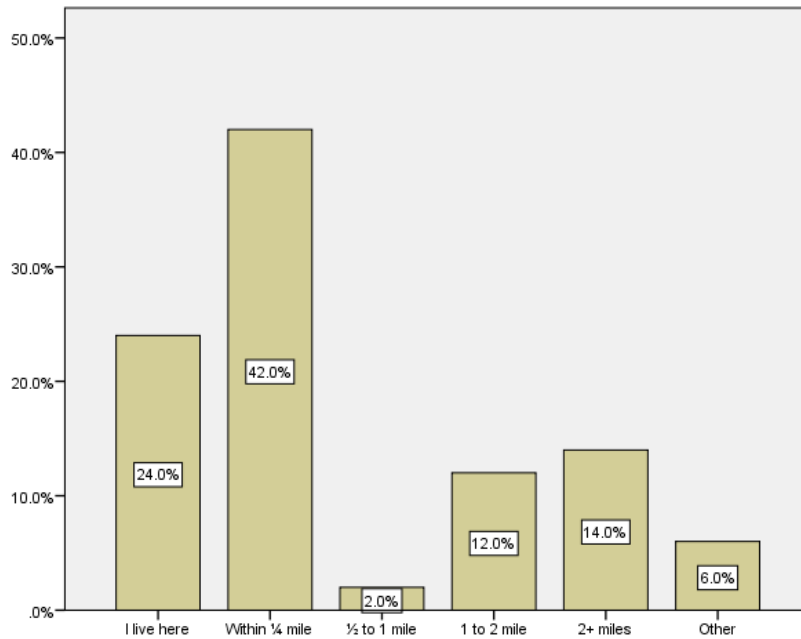


Figure 4. Home Distance from the Square

The majority (46%) of interviewees stated that they were using the Square as a through-route to their destination, while the second most popular purpose was to use the gym (Figure 5). In the winter, people did not come to the square to spend time with friends or relax in the sun; but results indicate that they instead use the square’s indoor facilities.

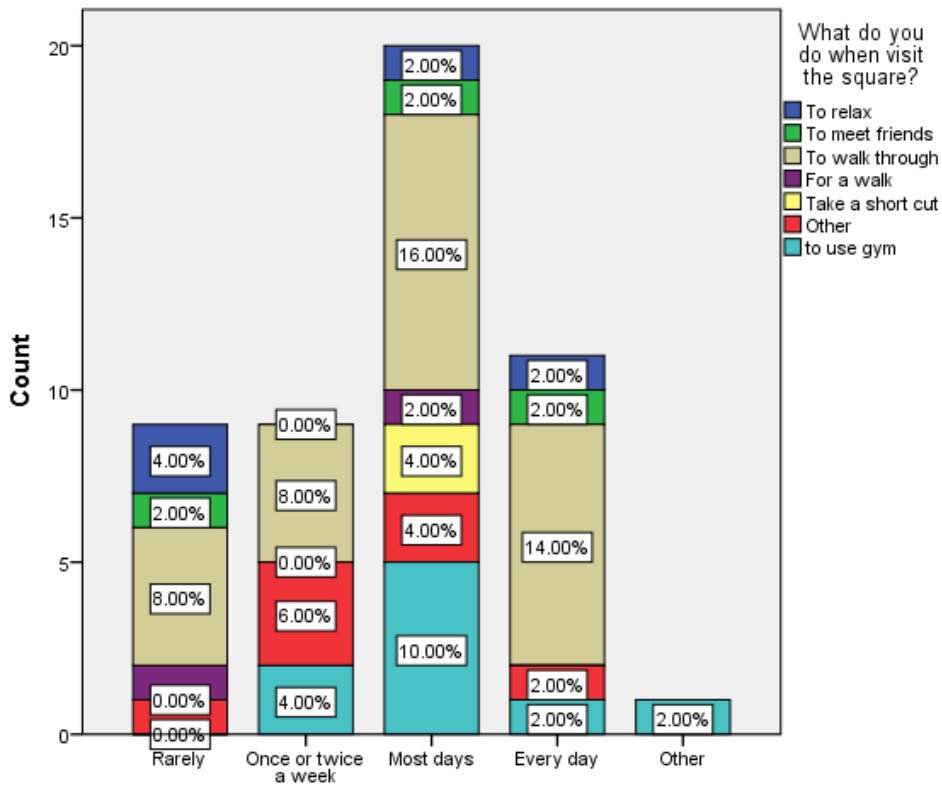


Figure 5. The purpose of visiting the square and how many times

The development itself contains a variety of facilities, including NHS Guy's and St Thomas' Borough Kidney Treatment Centre, CPC Connect Company in the pavilion building in the middle of the square, a small Tesco convenience store, a gym, a nursery, and small commercial offices. With most of these commercial spaces facing onto Long Lane, there are no connections to the square to enliven it. Moreover, the pavilion was originally planned to hold a restaurant, but instead has become an office space (Figure 6). In other words, most of the active use of the development has no relationship with the square.

According to the manager, 'The Square was designed with no public access which was the original intent. However, the council did say I have to have limited public access between the hours of 6:00 to 22:00 and the public can come in and use the area as long as they do it within the confines and rules and regulations of being here.' Most of the interviewees supported this: 'The management of this development try to provide as much privacy as they can, so the square is quiet and empty.'

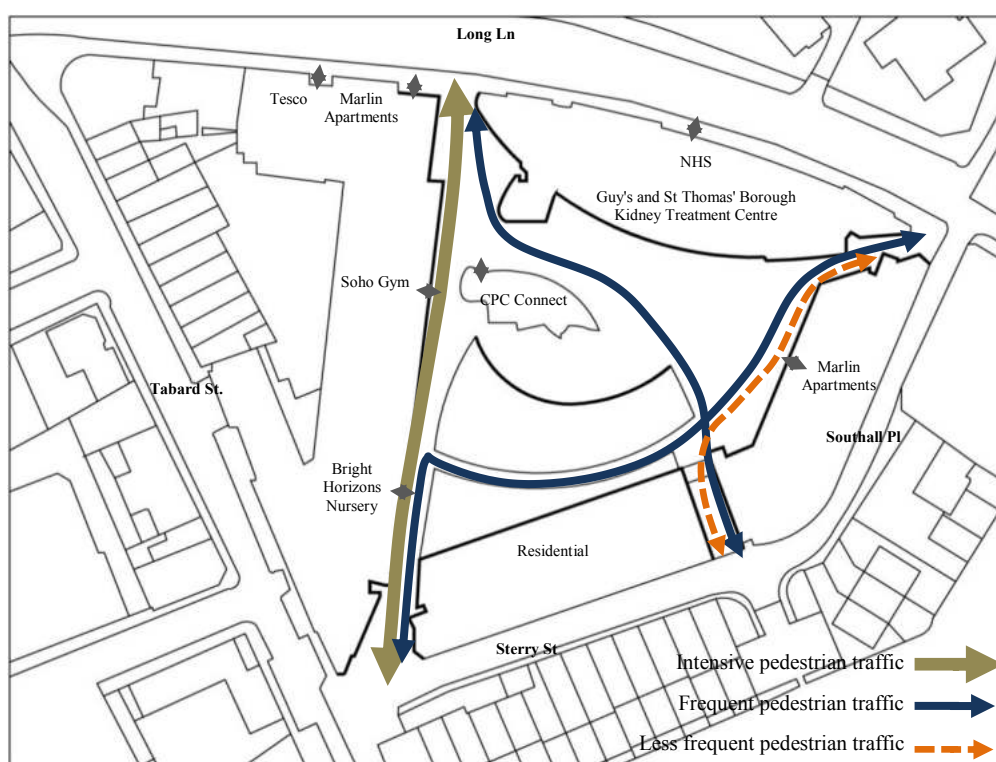


Figure 6. The pedestrian movement of Empire Square

Most of the interviewees pointed to the role of the management in keeping the square quiet for the desire of its inhabitants. A resident stated that 'the management of this development try to provide as much privacy as they can, so the square is quiet and empty'.

Some interviewees commented on the lack of sunlight and high degree of enclosure, while others suggested that the profusion of signs, CCTV, and gates increase safety and security but at the same time limit access by some social groups: 'Seeing signs and CCTV around makes it unwelcome for us [residents]. I think it needs more attractive point for people to come around and stay longer time.' Even though the majority of the development scheme is residential, residents do not constitute a large proportion of square users. This is due to the car park underneath the square and the lack of a playground for children.

There are two aspects of the control of this public space. First, the management needs to keep Empire Square as safe and quiet for residents as possible. The manager of the Marlin Apartment, who is in charge of running this development, said, ‘It is a quiet area that non-residents and residents can use. As I said, if we start using any form of noise in there, it is like a gladiator arena. It easily gets noisy, and I start getting complaints. There is no way to expand the grass area.’ He also explained, ‘the rules are simple rules: no loud noises, no cycling, no litter, and no ball games. It does not say no drinking but if we end up getting large parties sitting on the grass and start getting loud we [as management] would ask them to kindly calm that down because they cannot turn it to loud.’ From this point of view, then, limitations prevent local use of Empire Square and reduce its vitality, even though it is clean, well maintained, well lit, safe, accessible, and comfortable to use. According to Nemeth (2009), developers of privately owned, publicly accessible spaces are often financially driven, and this leads to limitations on political, social, and democratic functions of the spaces. In addition, such spaces can directly impact visions of citizenship and representation, which implicates them as new models for urban space provision and management.

The second aspect of control is the for activities from the perspective of a visitor to the square. One participant commented, ‘It is a dead area. There is nothing to do here. I do not use this space. It is just a waste of land for us [residents] but for them [developers] it is important to make the development looks fancy.’ Empire Square has a substantial basis toward inactive space. As one visitor said, ‘The gates seem to be the big issue of this development even for its residents—when they come late at night they have to walk all the way around to get inside.’ Therefore, lack of facilities is a main reason people do not visit Empire Square (Figure 7). Although a noisy street runs along one side of the development, the square appears from the outside to be a quiet and isolated place, making people reluctant to visit. People are attracted spontaneously to activities and other people (Gehl, 2010).

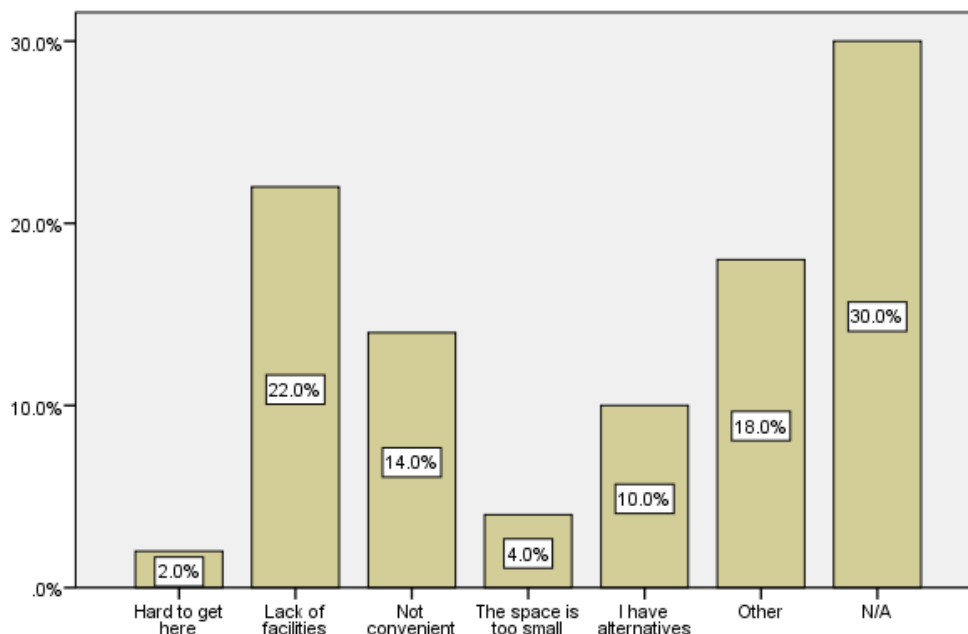


Figure 7. Reasons why people do not visit Empire Square

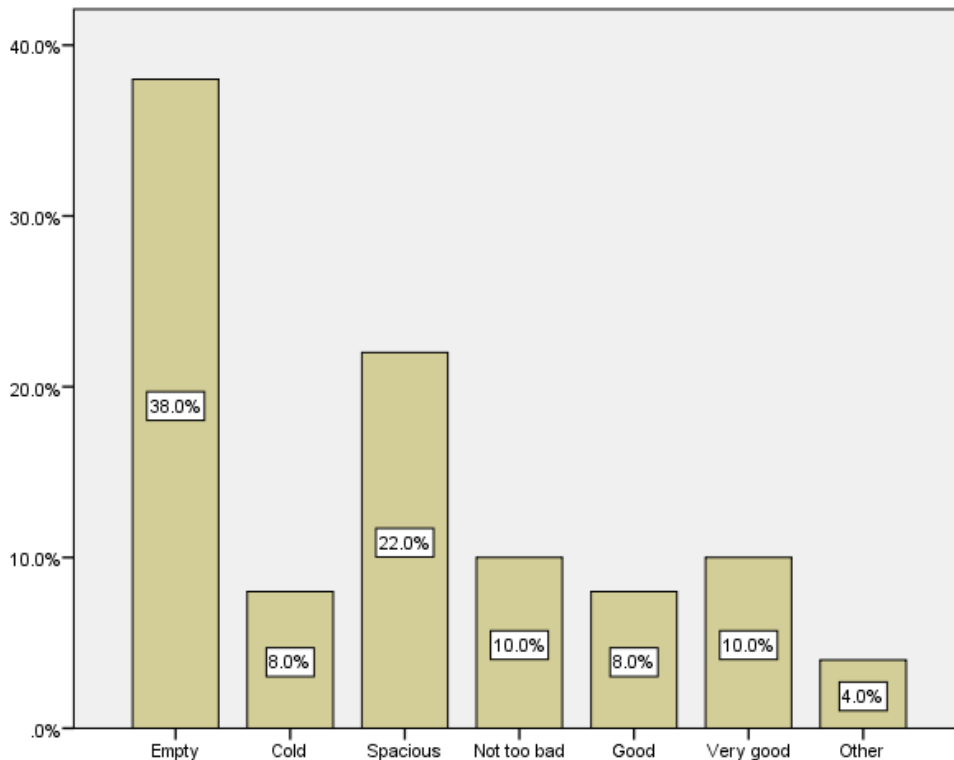


Figure 8. Users' impressions of Empire Square

The predominant impression of Empire Square was that it is empty and spacious (Figure 8). Aside from perhaps a small group of students having lunch or a few workers taking a smoking break, few people linger or walk through. No residents come and go because their flats are accessible from the street or the car park underneath. Attracting people to linger and is not easy; but a lack of activities can make public places seem empty. The square is also underused because its inside edges fail to attract people from the surrounding streets; people tend to be more motivated to walk by a row of shops than a blank wall (PPS, 2013). The land-use of Empire Square therefore has a direct influence on the failure to achieve the desired vision. However, some residents hold the opinion that the square's emptiness is not a bad thing, as it makes for a quieter living area.

## 6. Bermondsey Square analysis and evaluation

Bermondsey Square, the second case study subject, is open to the public both day and night, with major activities taking place during the weekend, such as the Bermondsey Antique Market and a farmer's market. The majority of interviewees live more than 2 miles away from the square (Figure 9), and the most frequent visitors use the square as a thoroughway to where they work or study. If designed well, however, small urban spaces can be energetic and encourage people to use them (Whyte, 1980).

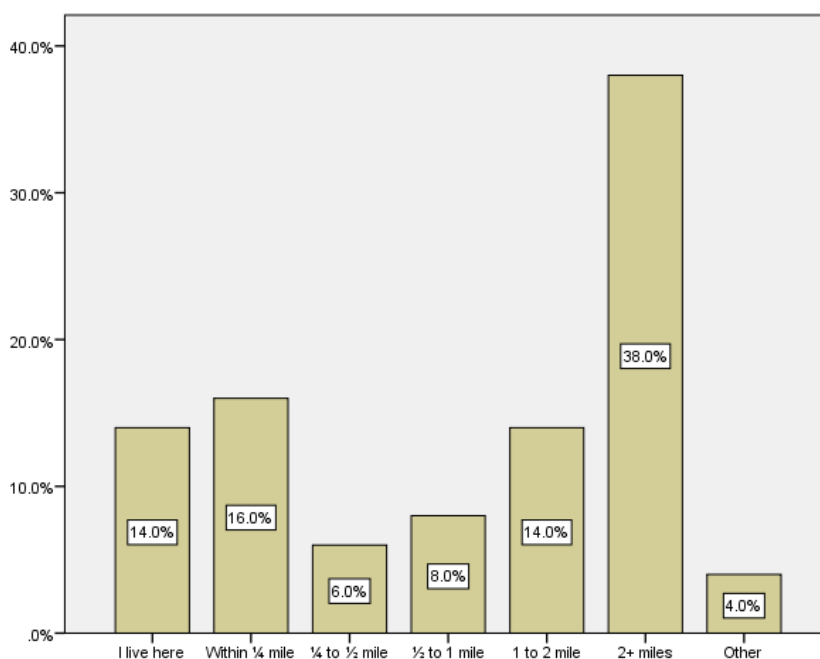


Figure 9. Home distance from Bermondsey Square

The development contains a variety of functions, including a hotel, restaurants, bars, a café, a cinema, markets, and a grocery store. The restaurants and bars attract tourists, while workers prefer the recreational facilities. The restaurant and café add vitality to the square during the week, as their seating areas are often fully occupied in good weather. Most interviewees also pointed to the market and seasonal activities as creating a vibrant atmosphere. According to a seller at the antique market, local patronage is strong: ‘I can tell you that 90% of the market costumers are local people. I have worked here in the market for two years, and most of our customers are from these areas around here.’ The lack of tourists is possibly due to a large number of nearby attractions that draw them away, such as the Saint Mary Magdalene Churchyard, Tower Bridge, and the Shard. Moreover, many locals see the square’s activities as directed toward residents. As one user said, ‘The Square with all its amenities serves the residents but local people use it for walking through.’ Despite this, the range of offerings was appreciated: ‘I think Bermondsey Square is an active place with all the activities and the different atmospheres during the year.’ Bermondsey Square has a high degree of openness to the streets, and this can work as a hook to attract people into the square.

From the questionnaire, there are three types of activities that occur in Bermondsey Square. First, there are necessary activities such as walking through and taking short cut using a square for transit that occur mostly on daily basis. Second, there are optional or leisure activities that can take place in the square such as relaxing, going to a restaurant or the cinema. Third, the social activities take place when people meet their friends and interact with each other. The result of these questionnaires indicates that necessary activities do not dominate the use of Bermondsey Square on daily basis. However, leisure activities are the most popular reasons for visiting the square this is especially true at weekends when the antique and farmer’s markets occur.

This case study consisted of five elements that structured towards social and perceptual dimensions. These elements are the dominant user type, dominant social group, dominant activities, time of activities and the most vital time of the square during a day. As Bermondsey Square is open to public and is mainly used for relaxation and seating purposes, there are some other activities occur there during a particular time of the year. However, the majority of the space is open to public for the purpose of seating, gathering, and relaxing. The analysis works are undertaken during February,

March and September 2014. From the interviews that had been conducted, many people consider Bermondsey Square to be dependent on activities that occur there and the good weather condition. The availability of seating around the square seems to add significant value to the attachment of the place.

In a very general approach, the sense of vitality of Bermondsey Square depends on the amenities that the square provides for local users as well as the markets that take place during the weekend. One said, 'The Square becomes the centre for the area, and it could be improved but it is definitely the focus of the area. It was being used for various events. In the summer, they have Bermondsey street festival and the Christmas and another time of the year they have evening events.' From the data collected, most interviewees build their understanding of the vitality of the place depending on their previous experiences with activities that happened at the square. The place vitality to most interviewees is related to some conditions that must occur in order to reach the optimum capacity of the space. The dependence of Bermondsey Square on the markets during the weekend increases the vitality of the space and creates an atmosphere that expressed with social values. Not only have the markets at Bermondsey Square emerge as the most significant elements but also it reaches the level of the surrounding context being the core of activities in Bermondsey area. It mentally became the central theme of the image of the place.

The accessibility of Bermondsey Square has an essential basis of vital spaces exists in this place. The degree of openness in Bermondsey Square was designed to provide sight interaction directly with the activities that are taking place in the square itself. This degree of openness to the streets works as a hook that can drag people into the square. Moreover, 86% of interviewees agree that Bermondsey Square is freely accessible, due to its connections to surrounding streets (Figure 10). Bermondsey Square was planned toward increasing social interactions and enlivens the space by providing events and activities for the community in order for the square to be the heart of Bermondsey. A majority (61%) of interviewees thought that the design of the square impacts its vitality

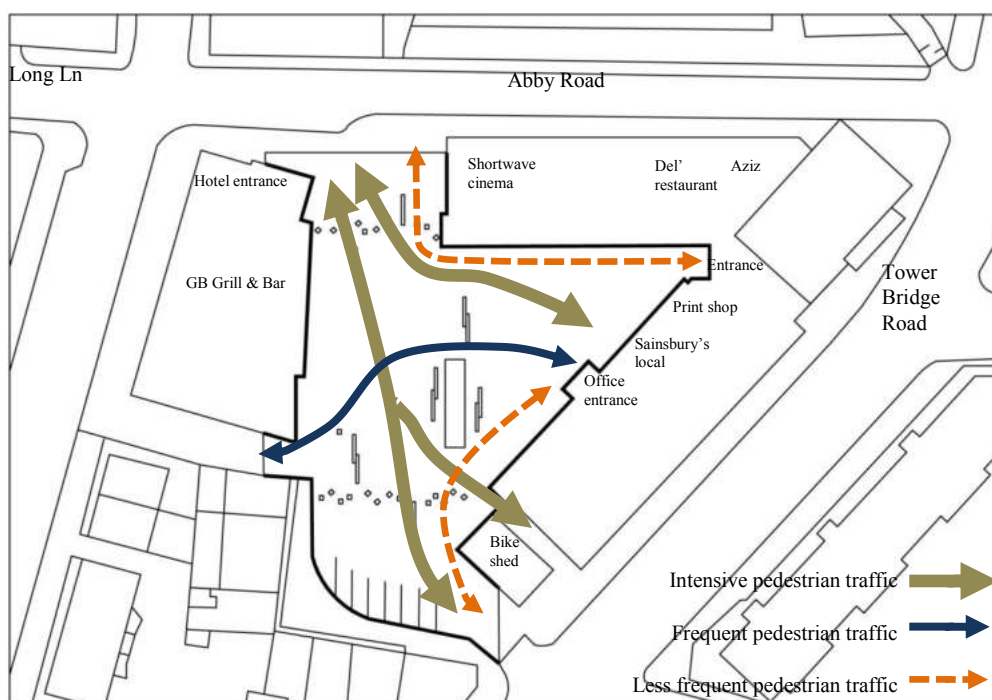


Figure 10. Pedestrian movement study of Bermondsey Square

The amenity as a significant basis of vibrant spaces remains as a key indicator of vitality in this open space. Due to the developer trend and vision of Bermondsey Square, the general quality of space is

sufficient. Moreover, 80% of users agreed that the square improves the supply and quality of amenities in the local context, a key indicator of vitality.

## 7. Discussion

The new creation of space at Bermondsey Square and Empire Square has indicated vitality as a common attribute of both places in particular ways. However, the central question to be asked here is whether they are similarity animated in term of feeling and essence. The comparison of these two sites explains how they work according to the effect of management of both public spaces while considering the current policy directions. The Selection of the two cases is regard to their similarity in term of the region, size, population, climatic and culture context. There is a complex set of elements works towards producing social components in these two spaces. Besides the physical form and environment of Empire Square and Bermondsey Square, there are some other social concerns. The comparison of both Squares was carried out while aiming at the following factors: user types, social groups, activities and social interactions, and the time of activities in the open space.

The most significant difference is the vitality in Empire Square is brought by residents from the surrounding area to the mixed-use development. Meanwhile in the case of Bermondsey Square, residents, office workers and tourists' presence is the main reason of the vitality in this site. The dominant user groups in the case of Empire Square are local people from the surrounding area whereas diverse users include families, and friends groups are noticeable in Bermondsey Square. Users in Empire Square tend not to engage with others in the space daily since they are mostly just walking through to their destinations. In Bermondsey Square, the ordinary way of use and regular engagement of users play a useful role in making the social atmosphere friendly. It is distinguished that users' attention in Bermondsey Square is more towards socialising rather than exploring the surrounding environment. The social interactions are entirely different from that in Empire Square.

The short cut between Steery St. and Long Ln at Empire Square works like a magnet that attracts local users to walk along this path that considered being the main activities in this case. The image of activities in Bermondsey Square mixed with the image of users who are using the seating areas outside the café and restaurants. Sitting at the café and restaurants is more noticeable than shopping from the Sainsbury's store in Bermondsey Square. The time and duration of users' presence and activities are not similar between the two squares. Empire Square is active from early morning about 6:00 in the morning when the gates are open until 20:00 when the gates are closed. The most vital time is from late morning until evening time when most users come to Soho Gym and walk back home coming from work. In Bermondsey Square, the place is alive from early morning especially when the market is taking place at the square until about 23:00 while the bars, restaurants and Sainsbury's store are still open. The most vital times at Bermondsey Square is early morning and evening.

Table 3. The similarities and differences between the two places

The Factor of comparison	Empire Square	Bermondsey Square
Dominant user type	Residents	Residents, office workers & tourists
Dominant social group	Friends groups	Friends groups & families
Dominant activities	Walking through & using the gym	Walking through & shopping
Time of activities	From early morning to evening	From early morning to late night
The most vital time of the square during a day	Late morning & evening	Early morning & evening

The social value of urban public spaces is a key factor in the cities due to its close relation to people needs from the very basic level to the complex. Since public spaces can affect people's quality of life, one role of the public spaces is that affording activities. If public spaces fail to provide these activities, parts of the society will be moved out of the public realm. The attention toward social value has been increased as a result of the adverse effects of the visual-artistic trends in urban design and a focus on the requirements of vehicles rather than pedestrians. In this context, a comprehensive review of different tactics and aspects in urban public space was found important to uncover that social value has a deep connection with the encouragement provided to residents. Encouragements are provided by places and buildings to interact in ways that lead to trust, shared understanding, shared values and supportive behaviours among society. Social value emerges when people have common interests that can join them with others. The social value of public space depends on the input that can be provided to people in term of increasing people's attachment to their local life, interacting face to face with others and people's memories of sites. Streets and markets that reflected hard spaces are extremely beneficial to many people as green spaces such as parks (Cattell et al., 2006). Therefore, Social value can be a part the urban identity where these social behaviours are controlled by the design of these public spaces or developed along with it.

The analysis of Empire Square and Bermondsey Square in London indicate how they socially work. Empire Square is vital at certain times due to the presence of local users when using the square as a path to their destination early morning and when coming back from their work, while local users, office workers and tourists are the primary users that make Bermondsey Square dynamic place. Therefore, Bermondsey Square is better than Empire square according to the data gathered due to activities and opportunities that the square provide to its users. People stay and spend much time in Bermondsey Square more than Empire Square. Bermondsey Square provides more opportunities for groups to hold their activities there. Also, it seems more open, and the degree of openness is higher than Empire Square that seems isolated from residential buildings. The greater degree of openness and accessibility in Bermondsey Square is representing more interaction with busy streets around with creating a dynamic space. Bermondsey Square wins the multiple uses of space while Empire Square considered as an attractive design for much of participants in this study. It is important to work toward the use value more than the aesthetic value in order to increase the enjoyment of occupiers and attract more people to a place in order to create a vital place. Most of the participants agree that Bermondsey Square is active and livable place comparing to Empire Square. The design plays a useful role in Bermondsey Square to increase the vitality of it.

## **8. Conclusion**

In conclusion, vital spaces do not have the exact reasons or work in similar procedures. Therefore, some public spaces considered to be neat, clean and empty while some other can be vital as a result of different basis that produce different feeling in the space. It is notable that vitality is an essential component for healthier and safer spaces where people tend to interact socially with each other and spend a long period in public. However, empty urban public spaces indicate that something is not right with its design, its management or perhaps both. People attract other people but still planners, and architects seem to find that mysterious. It is easy to realise that busy streets have both users and crowd watchers (Jacobs, 1961). Yet, the presence of people should not be only for the commercialized functions but must be supported by well-designed spaces and facilities that enable them to sit and spend more time in public without necessary purchasing food or drink to have a reason for their presence. The outcomes of this research suggested that vitality add value by increasing the vitality of space and delivering social benefits. The findings of this paper are leading toward future researchs such as exploring the reasons for the mixed- use development residents' absence and the lack of users from the local area in Empire Square. It would help having balanced public space for all different groups of their society. Moreover, this future research should focus on assessment of urban public

spaces in view of both the social and physical dimensions. According to the most recent trend in urban design that is place making, the research can provide responses to the current condition of these spaces as a result of this sequence.

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