Social relations in places of performance: 
a comparative study by SNA and participant observation

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EUSN 2014
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 3th July 2014
Outline

• Background
• Research questions
• Methods
• Data
• Results
• Discussion
• Conclusion
• Remarks for further research
• References
Background

• Audience participation in theatre events may imply loyalty, where loyalty also relates to the co-attendance to the same theatre events by spectators.

• Loyalty can rely upon relationships among attenders who perceive themselves as part of a community (Pitts and Spencer, 2008; De Rooij, 2013).

• The way attenders experience theatregoing is related to the spatial patterns of places of performance, which “facilitate (or discourage) types of social behavior and social interaction” among spectators (McAuley, 1999; also Goffman, 1963; Giddens, 1984) and, therefore, the creation of a sense of community.
Background

• Larger theatre institutions (commercial or non-profit) are more likely to treat spectators impersonally as customers (Crane, 1992).

• Smaller, alternative theatre companies (e.g. experimental, radical, off theatres) share cultural conventions and knowledge with spectators – e.g. as “circles” – often acting in spaces that do not keep audience and performers apart (Kadushin, 1976; Becker, 1982; Crane, 1992).
1. **Conventional spaces** (traditional theatres) usually tend to be static, hierarchical structured and characterized by *fixed-feature proxemic systems* (Elam, 2002; Hall, 1966) and “long model” configurations where space is “strongly governed by rules” (Hillier, 2007).

2. In **informal spaces** (non-theatrical building or open-air places) proxemic systems are *semi-fixed feature* or *informal* (Elam, 2002; Hall, 1966). As a “short model”, “Space acts to generate relations over and above those given by the social situation” (Hillier, 2007).
Research questions

• Are networks of relations among attenders formed differently according to the specific location of a given performance and the distinct type of organization?
• The more the spatial organization in theatres is inclusive, the more audience members will interact to each other having the possibility to feel themselves as part of a community?
• Could theatre managements benefit from the creation and maintenance of relationships among attenders to increase loyalty?
Methods

Fieldwork
Fieldwork locations

Conventional space
Traditional bourgeois theatre (*teatro all’italiana*)
**Organization:** public resident theatre

Informal space
Ex-watermill (courtyard)
**Organization:** locally based theatre company
Fieldwork methodology

Social network analysis of relational data collected in the two different locations through
• *Survey* → *ego-networks*
• *Participant observation* → *egos + alteri in a single dataset*

Focus on **two relations:**
1) Theatregoing company
2) Conversations among attenders
Data

Data source

• **Self-reports** (questionnaires) with name generator/name interpreter (Marsden, 2011):
  - With whom have you come to the theatre tonight?
  - With whom have you conversed in the theatre tonight?

• **Participant observation**, in order to complement data (Hollstein, 2011; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007)
**Respondents (ego) characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conventional space</th>
<th>Informal space</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N=68</td>
<td>N=21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (79%)</td>
<td>Female (48%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married (46%)</td>
<td>Married (62%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly educated (Degree or higher: 56%)</td>
<td>Highly educated (Degree or higher: 62%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired (42%), student (28%), teacher/professor (13%)</td>
<td>Clerk (24%), teacher/professor (24%), professional (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Season ticket holder (59%)</td>
<td>Season ticket holder (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ego-alteri ties: friends (65%), partner (12%)</td>
<td>Ego-alteri ties: friends (54%), partner (14%), kin (17%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conventional space: Theatregoing networks

Network size: 179

Attribute-based colour legend
Black nodes = missing; Red nodes = Season ticket holder; Blue nodes = Non-season ticket holder

Isolates = inactive nodes
Conventional space: Theatregoing networks

Network size: 179

Attribute-based colour legend
Black nodes = missing; Red nodes = Season ticket holder; Blue nodes = Non-season ticket holder

Isolates = inactive nodes
Conventional space: Conversation networks

Network size: 179

**Attribute-based colour legend**
- Black nodes = missing
- Red nodes = Season ticket holder
- Blue nodes = Non-season ticket holder

**Relation-based colour legend**
- Black lines = Theatregoing company
- Red lines = Conversations
Conventional space: network statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component Size</th>
<th>Theatregoing company</th>
<th>Conversations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>59.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Theatregoing**
- Many distinct components (mostly dyads)

**Conversations**
- Increased tie formation → triads, cliques
  - In both cases, the network remains disconnected

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relation/Activity</th>
<th>Density</th>
<th>No. of ties</th>
<th>Avg. degree</th>
<th>No. of closed triads</th>
<th>No. of cliques</th>
<th>Fragmentation</th>
<th>Distance-weighted frag.</th>
<th>Homophily on season ticket holder status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theatregoing company</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>2.123</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0.988</td>
<td>0.988</td>
<td>-0.2947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversations</td>
<td>0.018</td>
<td>578</td>
<td>3.229</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0.981</td>
<td>0.981</td>
<td>-0.3633</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foyer-Bar</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>0.592</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stalls</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>0.570</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boxes</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>0.715</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conventional space: Conversations in the stalls
Conventional space: Conversations in the boxes
Informal space: theatregoing networks

No. of nodes: 43

Isolates = inactive nodes (except for two actors)

Attribute-based colour legend

Black nodes = missing
Red nodes = Season ticket holder
Blue nodes = Non-season ticket holder
Grey nodes = actors belonging to the theatre organization
Informal space: conversation networks

No. of nodes: 43

Relation-based colour legend
- Black lines = Theatregoing company
- Red lines = Conversations

Attribute-based colour legend
- Black nodes = missing
- Red nodes = Season-ticket holder
- Blue nodes = Non-season ticket holder
- Grey nodes = actors belonging to the theatre organization
Informal space: conversation networks

Degree distribution

No. of nodes: 43

Attribute-based colour legend

Black nodes = missing
Red nodes = Season ticket holder
Blue nodes = Non-season ticket holder
Grey nodes = actors belonging to the theatre organization

Relation-based colour legend

Black lines = Theatregoing company
Red lines = Conversations

Two season ticket holders (red nodes) are the most central actors
# Informal space: network statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component Size</th>
<th>Theatregoing company</th>
<th>Conversations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Theatregoing**
- Different components

**Conversations**
- One large component
- Increased tie formation $\rightarrow$ triads, cliques
- Density and degree highly increase
- High centralization (30.95%): cliques are connected via two most central actors (season ticket holders)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relation/Activity</th>
<th>Density</th>
<th>No. of ties</th>
<th>Avg. degree</th>
<th>No. of closed triads</th>
<th>No. of cliques</th>
<th>Fragmentation</th>
<th>Distance-weighted frag.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theatregoing company</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>1.767</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.956</td>
<td>0.957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversations</td>
<td>0.157</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>6.605</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.135</td>
<td>0.603</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Informal space: performing in the courtyard
Informal space: performing in the courtyard
Discussion

• As expected, in both cases conversations involve more actors than the mere theatregoing company.
• The two locations exhibit different patterns of relation:
  ➢ In the conventional space interactions are segregated and occur within separated groups.
  ➢ In the informal space, communication flows across the network and involves participants as a complex of subgroups connected via some actors, including members of the organization.
  ➢ Two season ticket holders seem to have a key role in keeping the network connected.
Conclusions

• A more inclusive spatial organization in theatres has an impact on social relations among attenders
• Network structure follows the spatial configuration of the two locations
• Networks of attenders observed in a conventional theatre seem to be less cohesive than in an informal place of performance
• Theatre managers may consider theatregoing in terms of relation-based practice that can be inclusive as a form of community
Remarks for further research

• Data collection in different settings
• Effects of community belonging on audience loyalty
• Repeated observations in the same setting
• Research on the same spectators in different theatre events
References