Street performance (key stage 3)

What the photo says
What does this parkour photo tell us of people’s feelings about this part of Cambridge? Some may find it intimidating (the boy in the hoodie and the CCTV). Others may see how the area has changed – Victorian architecture, and a pedestrianised street. Others will see it as an area for performance.

Lesson idea
Context: Introduction to fieldwork in a human environment – who decides what happens here?

Other resources
- a recording of street performers’ music could be played to introduce the lesson
- Worldwise Geography Awareness Week resources 2008 (available online at http://worldwise.geography.org.uk/geographyawarnessweek/GA_EVGAWResources07.pdf)

Suggested activities
Ask students to consider ‘What makes a successful location for street performers?’

They might consider the size of the space, interruptions from traffic/passing pedestrians, the weather – is there any shelter if it rains? What about sun/wind? Is there anywhere for audiences to sit? Would this be suitable at night? Would they disturb people in neighbouring buildings? What type of street performance would be most appealing to the public walking by? (You could get students to ask questions for homework.) Is there any competition from other noises? You could develop this into a fieldwork project – investigating an urban environment – by asking ‘Which is the most suitable area for street performers in ...?’

Students may carry out microclimate studies on wind direction and speed, areas of sunshine and shade, and temperature. They could use questionnaires to establish people’s feelings about the areas, whether they are intimidated by crowds, poor lighting, CCTV, loud music, etc. They could also map street furniture, lighting, CCTV cameras, etc.

Curriculum opportunities
Citizenship: is it right that some people should make their living by begging?
Community cohesion: street performers may be the only way people can experience some forms of culture, for example morris dancing, Peruvian nose flute bands.

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