

CTS Winter Conference, 2014

Urban walking experience, understood as relationships between the pedestrian's inner world, the city the experience and their physical movement of walking

University of the West of England
Dec 2014

Tom Calvert

Thomas2.Calvert@uwe.ac.uk

PhD student

Centre for Transport & Society

Department of Planning & Architecture

Dr Juliet Jain

Dr Kiron Chatterjee



University of the
West of England

bettertogether

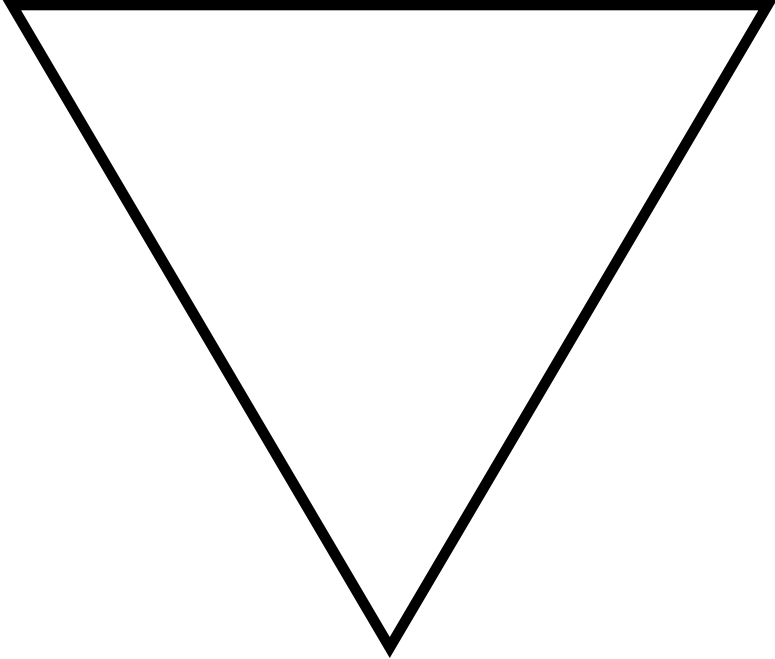
Research design

- Research questions
- Qualitative – well suited
- Phenomenological commitments
- 31 Participants (18 female, 13 male)
- 2 Phases
- Prompting discussion

Concept of urban walking experience

Inner world of
thoughts and
feelings

The experienced
city (other
pedestrians, traffic,
urban space. etc.)

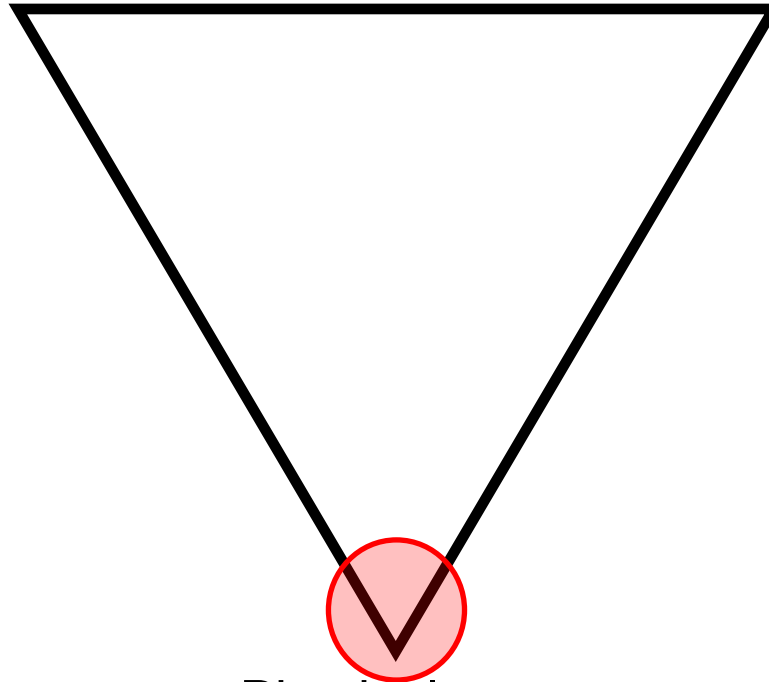


Physical aspect
and movement
of walking

Is walking, in itself, unobtrusive

Inner world of
thoughts and
feelings

The experienced
city (other
pedestrians, traffic,
urban space. etc.)



Physical aspect
and movement
of walking

Is walking, in itself, unobtrusive? - NO

- Studies focusing on body and gait (Ingold, 2004, Gross et al. 2012)
- Rural walking (Wylie, 2005, Edensor, 2000)
- Times of specific challenge – pain and obstacles – rural and urban
- Ben stomping

Is walking, in itself, unobtrusive? - YES

- Solnit (2001)
- Middleton (2010) – legs just take me
- Participants didn't talk about it much
- Zoe

Is walking, in itself, unobtrusive? - YES

Zoe *‘...Yeah and physical movement again, I don’t ever really think, ‘Right oh I’m using my legs or body, to walk, it’s just er....’*

Tom (interviewer and author) *‘.. You don’t pay attention to it really...’*

Zoe *‘No and I guess because I do it every day, it’s just a normal thing in my life. If you’re a driver and you go for a walk, it’s a completely different experience, but for me I it’s just an everyday thing in my life, it’s a natural thing’*

Is walking, in itself, unobtrusive? - YES

- Solnit (2001)
- Middleton (2010)
- Zoe
- 'Mechanics of walking'

Is walking, in itself, unobtrusive? - YES

- Walking perceived as ‘proper exercise?’ (Darker, 2007)
- Unseen magic
- Habit (Merleau Ponty, 2002)
- Walking unnoticed because so primary.

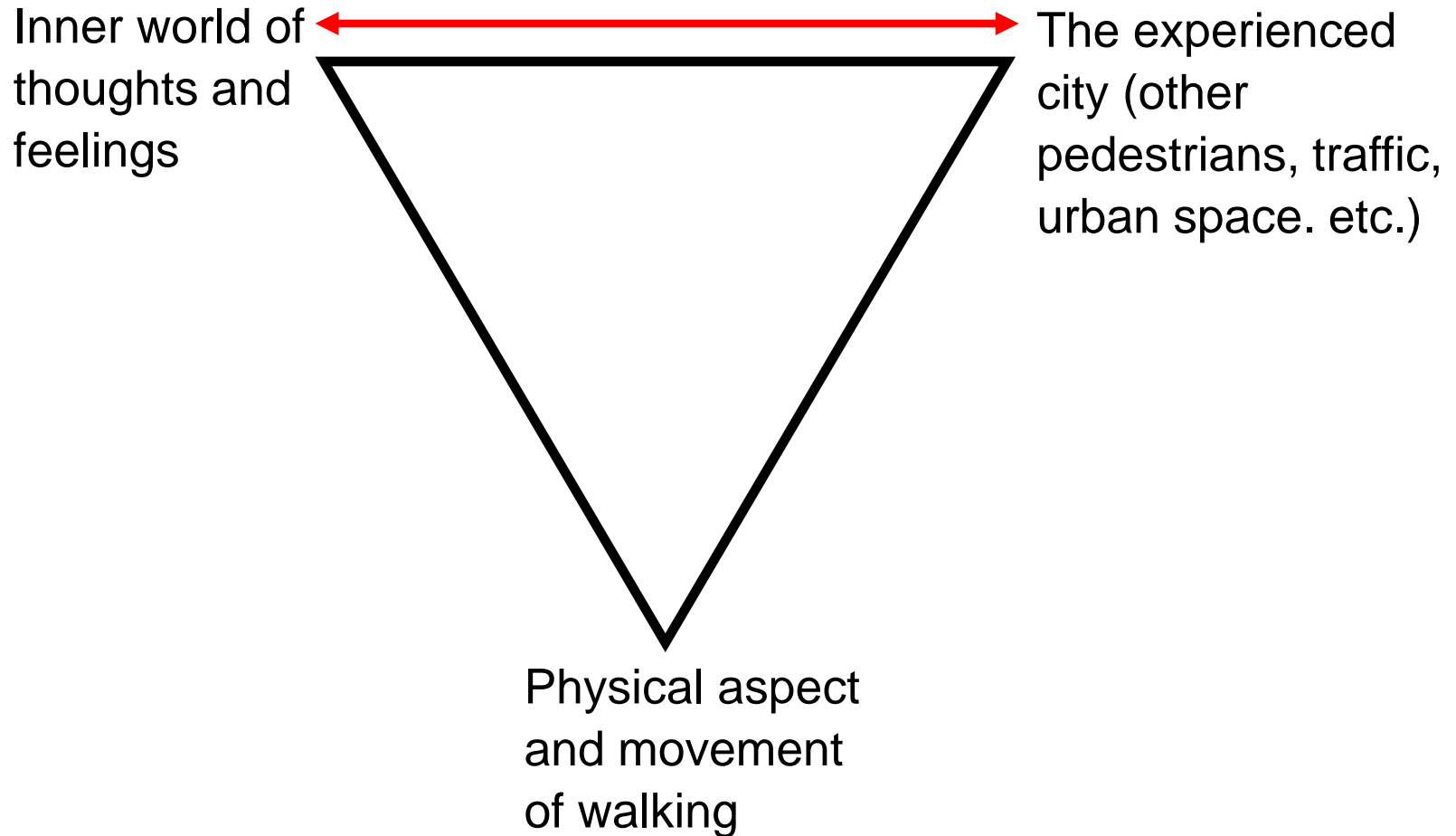
Does walking focus attention on other things?

- Thoreau (Solnit 2001)
- Inwards or outwards
- Rhythm
- Self-effacing party host

Conclusions on unobtrusive physical act

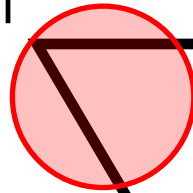
- Unobtrusive quality lost in academic study?
- Reconceptualising what a walk is

Interactions between the inner world of thought and the experienced city



Thoughts independent of the experienced city

Inner world of
thoughts and
feelings



The experienced
city (other
pedestrians, traffic,
urban space. etc.)

Physical aspect
and movement
of walking

Thinking through problems

- Long distance rural walkers (Crust et al. 2011)
- Ben – on another planet
- Walking for solutions not destinations

Personal Reflection

- Pilgrimage (Maddrell, 2011)
- Rural walking (Crust et al., 2011, Edensor, 2000) self restoration – but difficult in urban settings?
- Reflecting on work
- Reflecting on self
- Contrasts with noticing surroundings
- Useful!

Inspirational thinking - daydreaming

- Experimental evidence (Oppezzo & Schwartz, 2014)
- Lucy and Rose
- Lucy contrasts with paying attention to surroundings

Inner world of thought threatened by the experienced city

- Rose staying on guard
- Derek interrupted by negotiating the city

The experienced city triggers thoughts

- Triggers to contemplation
- Different to rural triggers
- Positive and negative – leading to mood change
- Trains of thought interrupting each other
- Triangle points complementing and competing

Conclusions on thought life of pedestrian – Inspiring thought life

- Can walking environments be made emotionally, cognitively and imaginatively stimulating?
- Pedestrian environment goes beyond aesthetic and practical

Conclusions on thought life of pedestrian – Protecting thought life

- Protecting pedestrian from disruptive challenges (not new) may have positive impacts for pedestrian well-being – time for deeper thinking
- Advantages for knowledge economy areas
- Summary

References

Crust, L. Keegan, R., Piggot, D., Swann, C. (2011) Walking the walk: A phenomenological study of long distance walking. *Journal of applied sport psychology*. Vol.23

Darker, C., Larking, M., French, D. (2007) An exploration of walking behaviour-An interpretative phenomenological approach. *Social Science & Medicine*. 65

Edensor, T. (2000) Walking in the British countryside: reflexivity, embodied practices and ways to escape. *Body & Society* Vol.6

Gross, M., Crane, E., Fredrickson, B. (2012) Effort-shape and kinematic assessment of bodily expression of emotion during gait. *Human movement science*. Vol. 31

Guell, C., Panter, J., Jones, N., Ogilvie, D. (2012) Towards a differentiated understanding of active travel behaviour: Using social theory to explore everyday commuting. *Social Science & Medicine*. Vol.75

Ingold, T. (2004) Culture on the ground: The world perceived through the feet. *Journal of Material Culture*. Vol. 9

References

Maddrell, A. (2011) 'Praying the Keeills'. Rhythm, meaning and experience on pilgrimage journeys in the Isle of Man. *Landabréfið* 25

Merleau Ponty, M. (2002) *The perception of knowledge*. Translated from the French by Colin Smith. Uk: Taylor & Francis.

Middleton, J. (2010) *Sense and the city: exploring the embodied geographies of urban walking*. *Social & cultural geography*. Vol. 6 (11)

Oppezzo, M., Schwartz, D. (2014) Give your ideas some legs: The positive effect of walking on creative thinking. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory and Cognition*

Solnit, R. (2001) *Wanderlust*. Uk: Verso

Wylie, J. (2005) A single day's walking: narrating self and landscape on the South West Coast Path. *Transactions of the institute of British Geographers*. Vol. 30 (2)