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
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Tom Calvert
PhD student
Centre for Transport & Society
Department of Planning & Architecture

Dr Juliet Jain

Dr Kiron Chatterjee
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

Physical aspect and movement of walking

The experienced city (other pedestrians, traffic, urban space, etc.)
Is walking, in itself, unobtrusive

Inner world of thoughts and feelings

Physical aspect and movement of walking

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

Inner world of thoughts and feelings

Physical aspect and movement of walking

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


References


