

Walking Further: new perspectives on long-distance walking and walking distance

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Abstracts

Walking Further 1

1. Introduction to Walking Further

Farzaneh Bahrami (University of Groningen) and Simon Cook (Birmingham City University)

This paper briefly introduces the Walking Further sessions, outlining the background of the sessions and the new perspectives on long-distance walking and walking distance we hope the sessions will generate.

2. Airport Walks: Visualising the Urban-Airport Interstice

Philippe Vandebroek (ETH Zürich)

My pedestrian photo project Airport Walks was conceived in 2015, on a ride with the Leonardo Express train from Fiumicino to the city of Rome. The ugliness of these drossscapes triggered an odd mix of elation and grief and a desire to reconnoiter these secondary spaces.

I took up the project in 2016. The idea is to walk from an airport to the city centre. I am limiting myself to major European hubs that are located at a fair distance from the urban core. Walks vary in length between 15 and 40 km. At present I have walked from Rome, Amsterdam, Brussels, London, Frankfurt, Stockholm, Paris, and Zürich airports. Athens will bring the project to a close.

There are various narratives wrapped into this project. At a micro-level it reflects a desire to stage unconventional *dérive*. Zooming out slightly, I have noticed recurring spatial patterns - constituting a typology of zones - that offer an interesting jigsaw puzzle to a keen eye. Emotionally I have to admit the curiously bracing character of these walks. Although boredom and ugliness abound there is also great beauty to be discovered and I usually hit the city centre in a mood of jubilation. The bigger story is the confluence of oppositional elemental energies: humanity's technological prowess and irrepressible drive to explore - epitomised by jet-powered flight - are counteracted by an addiction to fossil fuels that is filled with feelings of guilt and foreboding. Hence, the insouciance of my pedestrian experiments resonates with uneasy questions: How long will we be able to take to the skies so carelessly? What will happen with these dross-scapes that are so precariously inhabited by human and non-human entities?

3. Notes on long distance leisure walks with apps: An intersectional perspective on techno somatic affective registers.

Diti Bhattacharya (Griffith University)

While the implications of the digital quantification of movement such as running and physical exercise have gained sustained academic interest at the intersections of leisure studies and geographical research, walking has remained under examined within this context. Much of how we engage in and practice long distance walking as a leisure activity, in recent times, is accompanied, predicted, controlled and in many ways rewarded by mobile software applications. These applications often quantify leisure wayfaring experiences disembodied the affectivity and visceral sensations of the same. Reflecting on two auto-ethnographic vignettes of my own experiences of walking fitness walking tracks of Brisbane city, accompanied by walking apps, in this paper I interrogate the visceral moments of mobilities and (im)mobilities; of liminality and discomfort within trajectories of walking that inform the experience of wayfaring with mobile applications. I highlight how certain racialized and gendered sensations inform trajectories of walking and how these moments complicate the 'data' that walking applications produce at the end of a prolonged walking experience. Using post-humanist feminist thinking, this chapter unsettles the complex techno somatic experience of wayfaring with walking apps.

4. Daily walking in Switzerland

Derek Christie (University of Applied Sciences Western Switzerland Freiburg)

Walking is a major physical activity and transportation mode at population level. Despite considerable health and environmental benefits, the promotion of daily walking is rarely a public policy priority.

Little is known about contemporary walking, so our group used official transportation data to investigate the distribution and correlates of walking in Switzerland: a representative sample of the general population, every five years, N > 60'000. We analysed these data to understand who walks, when, where and why.

These quantitative data indicate that most walking in Switzerland occurs in urban and suburban areas. Walking in mountain or touristic area was rare (admittedly, only Swiss residents are included in the dataset). This has led to a future project that will investigate walking within conurbations in Switzerland.

The present contribution will also detail how 48 volunteers were followed with a GPS tracker, for 8-10 days. This was followed by computer-assisted interviews focussing on the walking routes, why they were chosen, and what the participants perceived as encouragements or hindrances to walking.

A category walking over 2 hours per day and mainly for transport emerged from the analysis. Our hypothesis that such “frequent walkers” have advanced skills in planning and improvising in time and space was seemingly confirmed. Further study will be necessary to confirm this and to understand why people walk considerable distances for transportation – or not. Our contribution concludes with a research agenda and recommendations for promoting frequent walking at population level.

5. Where do we fit? Findings from an ethnographic study of fat walking practices in the UK

Vick Empson (Durham University)

Walking practices, as engaged with by cultural geographers and mobilities scholars, are consistently considered through the perspective of a non-differentiated body (Middleton, 2022). The non-differentiated body is, inherently, thin, white, and non-disabled. As a result, despite pushes for a more inclusive approach to policy-decisions around transport, planning, and health, notably often aimed at reducing obesity levels (Frank et al., 2007; Schwanen, 2016), the practical, embodied and emotional elements of walking practices by those in fat bodies are, paradoxically, almost always absent from discussion. Instead, the dominant metric used for the walking fat body is whether it is thinner than when it started. As part of a broader ethnographic PhD study, I am walking (as a fat researcher) with plus-size hiking groups in the UK and conducting walking interviews with participants to address this gap. Drawing from fat studies (Harjunen, 2019), critical mobilities (Osei and Aldred, 2023), and geographies of physical activity (Andrews et al., 2012; Coen et al., 2019), I will present my interim findings. I will first focus on barriers which exist in relation to fat walking practices, ranging from emotional experiences of shame or embarrassment caused by the stigmatising comments of other hikers, to the practical, in being unable to find affordable and/or appropriate clothing. I will conclude by showing how fat walkers, in seeking slower, shame-free, and comfortable distance walks, offer counter-spaces in which the rhythms and metrics traditionally required of the moving fat body are challenged and re-imagined towards more just mobility futures.

6. Streets of Struggle: Understanding captive pedestrians

Neba C Tony, Geetam Tiwari, M Manoj and Niladri Chatterjee (Indian Institute of Technology Delhi)

Distance plays a crucial role for pedestrians who rely on walking as the only affordable travel option. These pedestrians walk for the entire journey, not because

they “want to” but because they “have to”. Termed as captive pedestrians, this category of road users comprises a significant share of walkers in low- and middle-income countries. Captive pedestrians include vulnerable populations groups, such as women, children, the differently abled, poor working class, and the elderly. Despite their substantial representation in daily travel demand, they have been largely overlooked in urban planning efforts.

To investigate the relevance of captive pedestrians in an urban setting, this study was conducted based on the trip data collected from 409 pedestrians in New Delhi, India. Participants were classified as captive and choice pedestrians, considering factors such as vehicle ownership, accessibility, and affordability among others. Pedestrians are considered as captive walkers if they do not own a vehicle, are unable to access a household vehicle (if available) and cannot afford alternative modes of transportation. Majority of respondents (68%) identified as captive pedestrians.

Results show that captive pedestrians walk longer distances compared to their choice counterparts. Additionally, analysis of reported route and shortest route revealed that pedestrians, especially captive, are adept at choosing the shortest route to minimise their travel distance, and thereby optimising their time for other activities. One major implication of our study underscores the need for inclusive transport planning strategies that prioritize captive pedestrians and promote equitable access to transportation.

7. Legitimizing Long-Distance Walking in Densifying Cities: the pathway forward

Sandy James (Walk Metro Vancouver)

The development of long-distance walking facilities within cities and rural towns can connect residents to access nature and also achieve better physical and mental health. In North America the concept of walking long distances usually means travelling by vehicle to major mountain trails or established hikes in protected national park areas.

The push to densify cities in Canada means rapidly increasing housing supply and affordability. In British Columbia the provincial government is mandating that municipalities immediately amend plans to allow for four units of housing on all detached housing lots, and up to 20 storey buildings with no parking requirements around all transit stations.

This mandated change in land use means that recreational amenity and access to public space will be at a premium. However an initiative developed in the City of

Vancouver in the early 1990's and implemented in the last two decades can be readapted to create regional networks of long-distance walking. In this presentation I will be exploring how cities and regions can create connected long-distance walking routes based upon work I was involved with as Greenways Planner for the City of Vancouver.

Vancouver is the only city in North America to have developed an intentional network of 76 miles (120 kilometers) of walking routes that are traffic calmed, have pavements or footpaths with accessible curb drops, expanded landscapes, and pedestrian priority. These city wide routes connect parks, shops, services and schools. Funding for the creation of these routes was done through municipal capital plans and by co-ordinating work with other engineering street projects across the city.

These streets have massive flower plantings, public art, seating, good overhead lighting, and public water fountains. The greenways also serve as a demonstration place for design innovation in water retention and filtration, street design, and slowing vehicular traffic.

There was extensive consultation of the routes with area residents, and that input has informed route planning and adaptation.

This work forms the basis of expanding a long-distance walking network to adjoining municipalities and enhancing opportunities region wide.

Key to this routing would be involving the other municipalities and local residents in the planning. A priority for this initiative will be good transit access and proximity to washrooms and other services, and ensuring that the routes can be expanded as residential density and demand increases.

Walking Further 2

1. From Home To Home

Andrea Vassallo (University of Chichester)

This paper draws on Vassallo's current PhD research investigating the phenomenological impact that peregrination can have on an individual artist's experience of a long-distance walk from England to Italy (walk completed during the summer of 2021). The research engages with traditional philosophical notions, employing ideas from scholars such as Heidegger (1953), Ingold (2000) and Barad (2007) to clarify how peregrination can operate as a phenomenological propulsor. The implementation of footage and personal reflections taken while walking aims to produce an installation-walking art practice. A process integrating the experiential

aspects of walking as a repository for enhancing others to experience the subsequent art installation *From Home to Home* (presented at Quiddity art show, September 2022, University of Chichester).

The paper presents the framework of ideas that outline the project's structural trajectory, in which peregrination is construed as a form of walking that articulates a particular mode of experiencing and relating to the world. The perception of the environment, intensified by the act of walking, pushes forward an eco-centric perspective on human-nonhuman relations. An approach highlighting how the interconnection between Being and the world-at-large cannot be separated but must be considered holistically. A method that can promote an authentic and heightened onto-epistemological relationship with the world, enriched further by personal knowledge and memory. A way of thinking implemented as a creative process for producing the art installation.

2. Walking further: Pilgrimage as a journey of transformation and transcending boundaries in inquiry and advocacy

Clarice Santos (Middlesex University Business School)

Drawing upon anthropologist Tim Ingold's concept of 'wayfaring' as a dynamic mode of existence, this research delves into the transformative potential of long-distance walking, particularly as pilgrimage. Ingold proposes that life unfolds not in static locations but along paths, framing 'way of life' as a continuous navigation through an evolving network of relations and processes. Walking, then, becomes a method of travel and knowing, intertwining observation, memory, listening, and touch, within a rhythmic resonance of communal movement and open-ended exploration.

This study focuses on a researcher's journey of walking as pilgrimage along the Santiago de Compostela Way (Caminho Português) in 2022. The walk was aimed at both personal growth and raising awareness for gender-based violence. Through immersion in the pilgrimage's sacred, historical, and cultural landscapes, the researcher engages in transformative interactions with the path itself, fellow pilgrims and local communities. By reflecting on inner struggles, dialogues, and encounters along the path, this research illuminates the convergence of personal and scholarly quests, unveiling walking's capacity as a catalyst for self-discovery and advocacy.

In essence, this project underscores the multifaceted nature of walking beyond mere physical passage—it emerges as a nuanced narrative of exploration, communion, and social action. By navigating physical and metaphorical terrains, the researcher unravels the intricate tapestry of pilgrimage, offering insights into the profound synergy between personal journeying and scholarly inquiry.

3. Public paths and walking trails in Andalusia (Spain): Hiking as a source of development and conflict in rural areas

David Moscoso (University of Córdoba), Luis Camarero (Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia), Pablo Vidal (Catholic University of Valencia) and Víctor Sánchez (Catholic University of Valencia)

The article aims to analyze a complex social process affecting the public path network in rural Andalusia. In Spain, hiking has become the most practiced sport in the country, according to data from the Spanish Sports Habits Survey: 8 million people do it. This means that it has a great economic impact on rural areas. After agriculture and livestock, it generates a greater impact of 9,742 million euros per year, according to the Spanish Federation of Mountain Sports and Climbing. A multidisciplinary investigation has inventoried 200,000 kilometers of publicly owned trails and paths in Andalusia alone. Of this amount, only 30,000 kilometers are valued and are offered for sports and tourism. Qualitative research has been conducted to study this reality and elucidate the social positions concerning this heritage. The results show the social attribution of environmental, cultural and economic value to this heritage, but also numerous conflicts between rural and urban populations. Given the volume and variety of the public path network, the heterogeneity of actors that travel through them, the diversity of their interests, and the weak management, if not poor surveillance, of these road infrastructures and the activities that take place on them, it is expected that an important contentiousness emerges around them, especially around the property and the rights of way. One piece of evidence derived from our research is the existence of a governance problem around the public path network. The project's findings can help guide public policies and the governance of public path network.

4. Meaning in walking: experiences along the North Wals Pilgrim's Way (Taith Pererin Gogledd Cymru)

Richard Scriven (University College Cork)

Walking pilgrimages have been a source geographical interest as a distinct form of human-landscape interaction. Embodied and more-than representational geographies have examined the multiple intersections of people, locations, and spiritual-cultural contexts. My paper considers the central role of walking as a facilitatory activity on the North Wals Pilgrim's Way (Taith Pererin Gogledd Cymru) by engaging in qualitative research on the path. It stretches 215km connecting

Basingwerk Abbey and Bardsey Island and was established in 2011 as a spiritual and tourist amenity. It differs from more well-known pilgrimage trails in that it is manufactured route. However, my fieldwork establishes that its recent origins do not impact the pilgrim experiences. Participants report rich and meaningful impressions of the path generated in the act of long-distant walking. The path presents a medium to enter a purpose ambulatory state shaped by the Welsh countryside, religious heritage, and personal journeys. This paper draws these threads together to highlight the vivid capacity of the Way to create temporary forms of being with and in the landscape.

5. What if I tell you I walked 117 km to meet you?

Laís C. da Rosa

According to the words of Francesco Careri (2017), we walk to encounter the other. So, on April 2021, I walked from Sierre to Lausanne, in Switzerland, a route that I was used to travel by train, covering 117 km in order to participate in ACT Festival, a performance festival that brings together visual arts students of Swiss art schools. While I walked, I sent audios to my loved ones in Brazil trying to document as an act of love (hooks, 2000) and a way to speak nearby (Chen, 1992). This was part of a performance that I concluded six days after I started walking, encountering the audience of that year's festival to start conversations from the question that entitles both the performance and this paper, positioning each person with whom I talked with as the main reason for my walk and thus as a performance partner. The proposed paper reflects on this whole experience, sharing excerpts from the exchanged audios and my diary as a way to unveil how considering walking as an encountering place questions the implicitly masculinist ideology of walking research that valorizes walking as individualist, heroic, epic and transgressive (Springgay and Truman, 2018; Heddon and Turner, 2012). And, consequently, aims to suggest possible ways of decolonizing the experience of a long(er) distance walk, taking an in-depth look at its slowness and its performative and somatic potential.

6. Discussant

Jennie Middleton (University of Oxford)