Retracing my Steps: a 10-years journey to walking-based transdisciplinary research

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Title short version for running head: Walking-based Transdisciplinary Research

Abstract
Engaging in a chronological retrospection of my professional and personal transdisciplinary practice of walking-based research over the past decade, and embedding some elements of arts-based writing into the article itself, I articulate the influence of walking art, transect walks by urban researchers, and especially of Sarah Pink’s sensory ethnography on my own use of walking-based method-elements for sustainability research. I discuss how these approaches bear relevance to urban sustainability research, and suggests a queer-ecological direction for walking-based transdisciplinary research.

Keywords: walking, walking-based research, arts-based research, transdisciplinarity

0

Notes from Hayle: A Queer-Eco-Walk

On our first day of walk in Hayle, Cornwall, UK, Phil Smith (a leading British walking artist, prolific writer on walking arts, and advocate of “Mythogeography” and “Counter-Tourism”) handed us small notebooks, with prompting texts and spaces to write, for us to use on this day
That walk emerged for me as an occasion to corporeally reflect on the possibility of queer-ecological dimensions in walking. We started the walk at the edge of Hayle on a foggy morning, walking towards the sandy dunes along the sea shore.

0.1 - “Leaving”

9:30
I do not leave the normative, or hegemony, to emancipate. I pull on a tension and re-articulate it, (un-)shaping & re-configuring a hegemonic claim.
(This is echoing Chantal Mouffe and Bruno Latour – my feet are moving yet I am not leaving my academic references behind)\textsuperscript{ii}.

9:35
I leave a “we” by pulling it, stretching it, and as I pull out, I pull in. Rowing, pull-out, pull-in, pull-out, pull-in.
I dis-identify by connecting towards, pulling in. I identify by differentiating. Come leave.

Am I path(ologiz)ing, as those discourses are kicking in? No. I am de-re-path-ing, stitching in and out, attentive not to get stuck.

Leaving for a walk is a sexual intercourse with ontology.

A few steps back

Since around 2000 personally, and since around 2008 professionally, I have been increasingly engaged with different approaches to walking as a moving repository of methods, replete with transversal elements that help me develop a transdisciplinary research practice. In this section (-1), I engage in a retrospection of an engagement nourished since 2010 through a number of international gatherings and exchanges between social scientists and artists in which I actively took part. I will then sketch out some of the salient characteristics, and identify learning benefits, of the walking-based practices I have integrated in my own research until now.

The evolution of my own walking-related research practice was influenced especially by three international events: ASSiST (2010), Sideways (2012), and the Walking Artists Network (hereafter WAN)’s Footwork walkshops and “Where to?” conference (2013, 2015).
0.1 - “Leaving on”

9:45

As I am ‘leaving’, I am perceiving emerging bifurcations. And engaging in them. But, see the contingency, keep aware of the political!

9:48

Sand-dunes, keeping to the path. This can also mean not leaving a destructive path behind oneself.

-1.1 - ASSiST (2010)

Back in 2007-2009, I was engaged in coordinating a European research-project about a crisis region of Uganda, Karamoja (cf. Knaute and Kagan 2009). In this process, my attention was raised to the under-valuation and misunderstanding, in western sedentary cultures, of the wealth of ecological knowledge coming from (semi-)nomadic pastoralists, accumulated over hundreds of years of walking-based practice. This then enhanced my awareness of the under-utilized learning potential of walking in academia. Soon after, from 2009-2010 onwards, I started focusing more closely on walking as a research method, with the organization of an international summer school (together with a team of friends and colleagues at the Cultura21 international network).
The first edition of the International Summer School of Arts and Sciences for Sustainability in Social Transformation (ASSiST) in the summer 2010, of which I was the founding director, had as its theme “Walking and Places: building transformations”. The gathering of insights gained through workshops given by walking artists (e.g. David Haley, Barbara Lounder), anthropologists/activists (e.g. David Knaute) and social scientists (e.g. P. Radhika) at ASSiST converged with the insights I had gained through my own exploratory work in the run-up to the summer school, through a ‘general studies’ seminar I gave at the Leuphana University Lüneburg in the summer semester 2010.

The seminar produced an eBook (Kagan 2010a) where two students and I shared some findings about walking, gained from studying the work of walking artists and historians of walking, and from experimenting with walking formats in the town of Lüneburg and city of Hamburg (including a dérive, a walk with the artist HM Jokinen reflecting on her postcolonial walks/performance art, and a student’s re-enactment of a walk-format created by the artist and curator Till Krause i.e. his “shortcuts” walks through Hamburg’s streets and buildings). Through the seminar, we learned about the changing significance of walking across several thousand years of European history, its art-historical role in 19th and 20th century art, its uses by a variety of researchers, its political functions and ramification, and how it can be employed to develop critical postcolonial practices of memory.

My experience with ASSiST then allowed me to further reflect on the multiple modalities of walking as embodied learning, both personal and social. Walking can help train an empirical phenomenological attention and allow the development of serendipity, i.e. a sagacity to learn from the unexpected and emerging phenomena that one meets along the way (Kagan 2010b).
These insights were nourished by and contributed to my then-crystalizing theoretical reflection on the importance of a culture of qualitative complexity and of aesthetics of complexity for a transdisciplinary research engagement in the direction of sustainability (Kagan 2011).

0.2 - “Coastal”

Phil Smith’s notebook asks us a flurry of things: First, “consider an idea with knee joints”…

9:50

De-Re-Posturing. And the knee allows to kick.

Knee, as the antagonistic impetus. Kneeing democracy is: kneeing (aggression) and kneeling (submission). A BDSM walk of kneeling and kneeing. I am back on to Chantal Mouffe’s agonistic democracy. Consensus is a walk without knees.

-1.2 - Sideways (2012)

In the summer 2012, I was invited by Andy Vandevyvere and Sinta Wibowo, main organizers of the “Sideways Festival”, to join their final symposium (“Moving On”, in Zutendaal) and give a talk (which I titled “The Serendipedestrian”), in company of Tim Ingold, Jan
Masschelein, Giula Focca of Stalkers (Rome) and several members of WAN – the Walking Artists Network (Misha Myers and Deirdre Heddon, Wright & sites, Andrew Stuck, Clare Qualmann, Mark Hunt, etc.). Sideways was a 334km-long walk across Belgium from August 17\textsuperscript{th} to September 17\textsuperscript{th}, with special events and symposia on the weekends.\textsuperscript{iv} It unfolded several dozen walking-based approaches to artistic research, heralding a culture of ‘slow paths’ and ‘slow ways’ in contrast to car culture.

Around the same period, in 2012-2013, I started reading Sarah Pink’s books and articles on ‘sensory ethnography’, soon discovering her “walking with video” research method (hereafter WwV) and her use of Tim Ingold’s ideas. It was through digital serendipity that I came across Pink, as a curator and close friend, Bettina Steinbrügge, had showed me on the summer 2012 in Vienna (shortly before I joined Sideways), the film \textit{Leviathan} by Lucien Castaing-Taylor and Véréna Paravel of the Sensory Ethnography Lab at Harvard University. Impressed by the visual language of the film, I started looking, first online, into the different contemporary approaches labeled as “sensory ethnography”… I would soon start experimenting with walks with go-pro cameras, and eventually with Pink’s WwV.

It was also at Sideways that I first met with walking photographer and urban researcher Martin Kohler (based at the Hafencity University in Hamburg), whose practice of urban ‘transect walks’ looked especially promising for my own research. Transect walks are walks taken through an entire city, with a set starting-point somewhere where the urban fabric ‘begins’, and a set end-point where the urban fabric ‘ends’. A transect walk can thus take from a few hours in a small town to several days in a vast city like Delhi (Kohler 2012, 2014). As opposed to the ‘pure’ straight transect walks advocated and purportedly practiced by Jan Masschelein and his students (keeping to the straight line drawn on a map of the city,
climbing over fences and passing inside houses), Kohler’s transects are more serendipitous, using the drawn line only as a loose guideline, leaving the map in one’s backpack most of the time (taking it out only once an hour at most to check one’s overall direction), letting curiosity lead one on sideways, and especially paying attention to often break the own (established or emergent) patterns of attention and of walking – for example deciding to stop taking back-alleys and spend instead some more time walking up a main avenue.

Transect walks have many relevant qualities for an urban researcher, as argued by Kohler. They bring a corrective to the ‘view from above’ of maps and high vantage points. They allow attention to many details on the ground, and passage through them – an occasion for ethnographic immersion. As they force one to traverse the whole city at walking pace, and not only visit one’s favorite sites and areas on foot, i.e. impose a certain slow systematic observational procedure, they do a better job both at laying out the city’s diverse urban fabric and at discerning in which relative proportions to each other the different urban forms and types of neighborhoods exist in the city (whereas the urban researcher otherwise easily can exaggerate the size and importance of specific urban forms and types of neighborhoods). Last but not least, through their long duration, urban transect walks set the walkers into a heterochrony (Foucault 1984), a different experience of time, temporarily releasing the walker from the dominant experience of time regulated by the rhythms of a hegemonic order, and thus allowing another reading of the city.

Next to the overall inspiration gained from artistic and arts-based walking practices, it was particularly those two approaches, Kohler’s version of transect walks and Pink’s WwV, which soon gained importance in my own research practice.
Smith’s notebook prompts us to “follow living things with your eyes”…

10:00
I see a snail on a sandy grass. With my eyes I see patterns, traces from other paths, “lines” of life (as Tim Ingold writes). As I see them I re-trace them. I repeat.

10:10
The eyes are not so much subjected to gravity – unless pretty much all my other organs. The eyes can also change rhythms much easier than the rest of the body. But they do so less easily when I have to focus on my steps. These steps re-integrate the eyes, engages them to reconvene with the body’s rhythms.

10:15
Amazing tiny plants in the sand, between the grasses…
… Rabbit shit.
-1.3 – Paint it Pink

Because Sarah Pink’s sensory ethnography approach gradually took a central place in my own use of walking for transdisciplinary sustainability-research, I focus more closely on it in this subsection.

Pink’s approach is all about place-making by multisensory re-searching (Pink 2015). This is especially useful and importance in order to see and activate places, in a city, as spaces of possibility for opening up desired futures – which is the focus of my own current research project “the city as space of possibility” (see section 1.2 below).

How are places made into more than just material frames and structures imposed upon people? Rather than only blaming certain spaces for not being suitable for specific uses, activities and desires, the spaces can be purposively opened up for imagining and experimenting. Here the space becomes a place – as involved social agents are engaged in an activity of “place-making”. They are making the public spaces, of streets, squares and others, into places with new, or old but re-discovered, emergent meanings and values.

An “open meaning” of places is created through a gathering where both humans and non-humans are involved. The material surrounding would stay meaningless if it were not coming ‘to life’, so to speak, through specific social interactions, activities and emotions, involving all of the human senses in shared experiences. Think for example of a special place in your childhood, maybe a fireplace where you and your family used to gather… Think of the special characteristics of that place, and how they came to existence…

The changing uses of places show how places can be transformed. Of course, we should not naïvely believe that we can easily go out and durably transform places in the direction of
sustainability. The activities and projects of specific artists, urban gardeners and urban activists seeking for a more sustainable urban development, are of course not the only place-makers in the streets of our cities, and this place-making is existing in relation to other, similar, competing, opposing and/or complementary place-makings, by multiple agents with various political, cultural and social backgrounds and motivations. Still, the question is: What kind of place-making is going on for these agents? Who is involved? Who is affected? How? How significant, meaningful, is it for those who are partaking in the place-making? How do they experience it and how can we, as visitors, also share some of these experiences? To explore these questions, it is helpful to activate one’s attention and sensibility, using all senses and trying to directly follow and participate in the event of place-making that is going on in our encounters with these social agents. This is where Pink’s WwV method, a video-assisted, multisensorially-rooted approach to on-site visits combining participant observation and unstructured interviewing, comes into play. In her own words: “As a simple method this means walking with and video-recording research participants as they experience, tell and show their material, immaterial and social environments in personally, socially and culturally specific ways” (Pink 2007: 240).

‘Multisensory’ practically means paying attention to all the sensory experiences one is having, but not seeking for the stimulation of each sense as a separate, discrete reality. Besides, walking with others (with or without video) means being present together, moving together, going together alongside each other on a line, not facing each other in a ‘face-off’. I find WwV especially helpful in order to be attentive to the making of meaningful and imaginative places. As Pink (2007) pointed out, this is not just about designated spaces, but also includes any spaces in between. The paths and routes in between designated spaces for specific activities, may be as revealing and interesting. Therefore, when practicing WwV I
invite my colleagues and students to be attentive to the whole sensory line that one will be tracing through a given site together with one’s host. Moving along one’s line, a “sensescape” (a landscape of sensory perceptions, awakening thoughts, emotions, memories, imaginations) will emerge.

For example, how does one experience the transitions between designated spaces or zones, at a project site during one’s visit? And how does one experience the transition between the spaces of the project site and the urban spaces around it? In this process, the use of one’s serendipity is a great resource in order to make potentially insightful empirical observations. But the focus is not only on oneself and one’s own serendipitous discoveries. The exercise in WwV is not only to inwardly explore one’s own subjectivity. It is to enter into an intersubjective encounter when interviewing and filming one’s ’guide’… With her or him, one enters into a collaborative process.

It is a collaboration in “sensing place” and “placing sense”, as formulated by Pink (2007). Paying attention to the multisensory experiences, not just my own, but of the people I am visiting. This implies being curious and attentive to them and trying to partake in how they are experiencing things on the site. Explicitly asking people to show me (what they are hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, touching), following them, joining them in their experiential processes or accounts/anecdotes of past experiences. In my mind, I also try to relate my own sensory embodied experience and memories to theirs – this might help generate some further questions for them. Of course I cannot “be in someone else's head”, but I can try to understand their experience, without negating my own partial situatedness. In Richard Sennett (2012)’s words, this involves developing not merely a feeling of sympathy (claiming that “I feel your pain” and identifying with you), but also more importantly a
feeling of empathy (“I am attending intently to you” and registering the difference between
us).

Together my guide and I are “sensing place”: finding out about place-making through paying
attention to my own and the other persons' sensory perceptions. Together we are also “placing
sense”: being attentive to where and how the senses are being involved and engaged into the
place-making that is happening while doing the WwV. What kind of multisensory
environments and experiences are being encouraged to emerge on the site I am visiting?

Pink (2015) describes the sensory ethnographer as a “sensory apprentice”, learning to
perceive things thanks to one’s local guide, paying attention where she or he pays attention.
That person is educating the ethnographer’s attention. One also pays attention to the pace of
one’s guide. How does she or he walk and move around on the site? The researcher pays
attention to rhythms, and changes in rhythms (further analysis of these rhythms would root
itself in Henri Lefebvre’s first sketches for an empirical science of “rhythmanalysis” - cf.
Lefebvre 1992), while trying to adapt oneself to this pace and these rhythms.

Of course, the walking and filming researcher is also influencing what is going on, and her or
his subjectivity is engulfed in the process. Once again, it is a collaboration. Sensitization
works both ways. For example, I may be following someone, assisting her or him for some
very small task while doing the filmed interview-WwV, and then asking some questions that
the person would not have thought about otherwise; I might bring that person to see/hear/etc.
(to sense) certain present (or absent) things that they would not have sensed otherwise, or
sensed differently.

However, not all the experiences made may be aligned and forming some consensus. Places
have polysemic meanings. For example it is possible for me to follow and participate in more
than one guide's viewpoints. Contradictions, ambivalences, tensions, ambiguities, are very
interesting and revealing. Not only nice shared experiences with one’s guide are insightful.
Also negative experiences are a part of place-making. So, I try not to ignore these either, when I practice WwV.

Working with a video-camera for WwV is not making things easy, and no doubt increases greatly the guide’s feeling of being scrutinized. But according to Pink (2007) – and to some extent confirmed by my own experience (with some of my guides), working with the video-camera can be especially help both heighten the attention to certain things/details on site, and later on (watching the recorded video) deepen one's understanding of the place-making process and of the shared sense-scape that emerged at the event. The use of a video-camera can help to learn more or learn differently about a particular question, according to Pink. It can help, together with your local guide, to define and represent certain qualities of the experience.

In many ways, Pink’s overall approach and Ingold (2012)’s take on phenomenology (in whose writings WwV is finding some of its epistemological inspiration) come close to the ways of knowing of artistic and arts-based walking practices.

0.2 - “Coastal”

The notebook asks: “Where are the gates of pardon?”…

10:25
The arch of my 2 knees down to the pillar-bases of my 2 ankles. Pardoning my 2 eyes for inviting to abrupt changes of rhythms.

10:28
The herbs and snails – is ‘pardon’ relevant to this inter-species encounter? Why pardon – such a Christian load in the word…? Should my body really ‘pardon’ my eyes? Does one pardon eye-perialism? Or should I rather shut them off? Sensory deprivation walk (back to playing BDSM again).

10:29
Pardon is herding. Do I really want to get myself into a herder-flock complex?

The notebook asks: “What traces of the state’s footprints are here?”…

10:30
The State institutionalizes certain kinds and forms of de-re-organization. Paths, barriers, landmarks, signs; geo-engineering the whole coastline maybe too.
The State makes one set of hegemonic claims among others, a dominant one yes, but not having the monopoly over the footprints-violence on this coast.

1

Back in my own shoes: Urban-Ethnographic Walks

While I was continuing to gather insights from the practices of walking artists thanks to WAN’s invitations to the meetings of the Footwork research group in the UK in 2013 (see Kagan 2013) and 2015 (see section/cluster zero in this text), I started intensifying my own use of walking-based methods, integrating them further in my own research practices and research collaborations.

0.3 - “Seals”

The notebook asks: “How will you walk when you share the cities with wild animals?”

10:45

I love this question. I guess I will walk more carefully, more in meta-logues, like a meta-human? (I remember the cyborg, meta-human walks of Jaime del Val in Madrid...)
Alas, no seals in sight today, on this sea-shore. I
look down – any wild animals down there? Instead
I notice the lines made by footprints of dogs in the
sand.

10:50

I start following the footsteps of one dog, and soon
of other dogs. Lots of twists and turns, lines cross. I
look out for patterns, especially when it seems to
me that the dog(s) seemed to be not-following his
human ‘master’ or ‘mistress’.
At some point, I find footsteps of other, wild(!?)
animals. I move on to following them…
Eventually I need to walk straighter, to catch up
with the walking artists ahead of me...

1.1 – From Cluj to Hanover via Cornwall (2013-2015)

I first integrated the transect walks, both at sustainability research projects at my home
university and in my disciplinary European research network (in the sociology of the arts),
before integrating Pink’s WwV method.

This was done for example at the “Global Classroom”, a German-American educational
project between the Leuphana University Lüneburg and the Arizona State University, in
which I was actively involved between November 2012 and September 2013. I introduced transect walks (next to systems thinking games, participant observation and qualitative interview methods) as an urban exploratory method to approach issues of urban (un-)sustainability, and associated Martin Kohler’s expertise to the project. While Leuphana students did transect walks in Lüneburg and Hamburg, ASU students did transect walks in Tempe and Phoenix, in early 2013. The walks were integrated both with the making of ‘Mental Maps’ after Kevin Lynch (championed by ASU colleague Guido Caniglia) to reflect the students’ pre-existing and then evolving image of the city, and with problem-based-learning (PBL) oriented teaching approaches from sustainability science (championed by ASU and Leuphana colleagues Arnim Wiek and Daniel Lang) to develop students’ “key competencies in sustainability”. The transect walks were further used in the project after my departure, for a second students-cohort in 2014, though in a modified framework (as described in further details in Caniglia et al. 2016) – including stricter “walking targets” (e.g. documenting ecosystem services every 500 meters with prepared questionnaires) whereby attention was systematically focused on specific ecological topics but the space for serendipitous processes was also significantly shrunked and the heterochrony largely lost, narrowing the inquiry and deteriorating its creativity (as confirmed by the spontaneous feedback I received from several 2nd cohort students).

I also introduced the transect walk method in my disciplinary research network, the Sociology of the Arts Research Network at the European Sociological Association (ESA RN02), the following year, in the summer 2014: The day before our network’s midterm conference at the Babeș-Bolyai University, European art sociologists were invited to take a transect walk through Cluj-Napoca (Romania) in small teams, with the request to agree with each other on mixes of (when possible arts-based) data-gathering methods during the walk, and to present
their team’s findings on the final day of the ESA RN02 midterm conference. About 30 colleagues took up the invitation, and the presentations at the plenary session on the final day were astonishingly creative and insightful about some social, cultural, economic characteristics of the city of Cluj-Napoca. As could be expected indeed from European art sociologists, their embodied knowledge of various forms of artistic practices and artistic research (from music and soundscapes to visual and contemporary art) resurfaced in this exercise. This experience confirmed the epistemological richness of incorporating, not just walking but also arts-based elements of inquiry in a qualitative empirical sociological work.

By the time I joined the final walkshops of WAN’s Footwork research group in Cornwall and the “Where to?” conference at Falmouth University, in 2015 (where I continued to learn from further walking artists), I had already started (since February 2015) my latest ongoing research project at Leuphana University Lüneburg: ‘The City as Space of Possibility’ (that ran until March 2018) – a project researching creative and innovative projects advancing sustainable urban development in the city of Hanover (Germany). In this project, both with colleagues and with students, we incorporate both transect walks and WwV in our empirical research design (see Kagan et al. 2019).

0.4 - “Walking into”

That afternoon, after a bus ride, we resumed our walk into the working-class city of Camborne.
The notebook asks: “Where is reason in your walk?”

It is an erotic reason, aimed at queering the experience of place.

15:25

The notebook prompts: “walk with the ghosts”…
Ghosts of the other urban development that is not here? Ghosts of the residents removed from the redeveloped area?

15:30

The notebook prompts: “walk in another gender… and now with a thousand sexes”… If walking is a mode of eco-sexuality (à-la Annie Sprinkle), it is with a de-re-location of the sexual sites of the body (Michel Foucault) that I best engage with the encounters.

But that was easier in the dunes than right now and here in the street…

…Or, wait, I just did: I just mistook a church for a piercing shop! :-D

(It didn’t look at all like a church at first sight… And the sentence on the poster started with “he was pierced for...”
15:36

The notebook asks: “What is an infatuated walk?”
A walk for a walk’s sake!

0.5 - “Camborne”

15:45

The notebook asks: “What are the spaces of exploitation here?”… I see many churches in this working-class place (even churches one could mistake for piercing shops). Many signs of shops and houses for sale or rent – one can feel the presence of the real estate business and of bankruptcies. The salvation army. Posters of political parties. Small row-houses and then suddenly big houses with front gardens. Very different clothes people wear, in distinct streets just near each other, walking or sitting in their cars. Some are missing several teeth, keep smiling.

16:00

The notebook prompts: “Walk away from power.”
Then you walk necessarily into/toward another (potential) power.

16:07

I just followed an elderly man through a few streets and narrowing alleys. Apparently poor, holding a plastic bag, maybe walking back home after shopping.
I lost him now.

0.6 - “Return”

Written in the bus that takes us back to Hayle:

16:45

Identify by departing, and dis-identify by walking toward. De-re-organize through freaking out.
Engage into walking as an act of eco-sexual intercourse. Engage in de-re-posturing, kneeling and kneeling, politically. Consensus is a walk without the knees. So use your knees and enjoy the pain, queer the signs of institutionalized de-re-organization of hegemonies. De-relocate the
sexual sites of your body, to engage in encounters with erotic reason.

16:50

Follow the footsteps of other species and other social classes.

1.2 – Walking the “City as Space of Possibility” (2015 to 2018)

‘The City as Space of Possibility’ project included several transect walks through Hanover, Germany, both by our researchers team and by students-teams (at seminars I gave in connection to the research project), as well as WwV-walks by myself, by my students and by some colleagues, and a few other walks (soundscape walks, and following guided walks by local activists).

This research project was especially attentive to the emergence, development and innovative effects of physical, social and mental “urban spaces of possibility” (hereafter SoPs) as spaces of imagination, challenging experience, experimentation & ‘Gestaltung’ in relation to the complex issues of (un-)sustainable urban development (Kagan 2016, Kagan et al. 2018, 2019). Beyond awareness-raising projects or protest movements, our research focused on the active “production of space” (after Henri Lefebvre) and the formation of “real utopias” (after Erik Olin Wright).

Our open-ended transect walks through Hanover connected several strings of research interests:
• qualities of urban spaces, between “third places” (Oldenburg 1989), private space, public space and commons;
• observed and/or experienced “border” and/or “boundaries” (Sennett 2012);
• soundscapes, the urban fabric and the configurations of nature-culture relations in the city;
• the social, cultural and economic characteristics of different neighborhoods;
• urban traffic and (un)sustainable urban mobility;
• the forest of signs and symbols and how it variates across neighborhoods;
• the identification of potential SoPs in the city, places striking out already on a first encounter, through their visual, spatial, and observable social characteristics.

In the context of transdisciplinary research for sustainability, WwV visits to sustainability-relevant projects/sites, and WwV-walks through entire neighborhoods with local guides, help the researchers find out more about how a project-site or a network of places in a specific neighborhood “creates an alternative sensory context to those framed” (Pink 2008) during the rest of the year by dominant consumer culture, businesses, and the associated dominant practices & sensory pleasures and displeasures that they usually convey.

This kind of research practice helps, not to efficiently develop directly solutionist approaches to sustainability’s complex problems as in the more widespread PBL (Problem-Based Learning) frameworks, but rather to contribute to a more open-ended, more creative and democratic question-based learning approach – i.e. a less constricted, more experiential (Kolb 1984) form of inquiry-based-learning than PBL, because WwV is more sensitive to emergence.

Many potential questions abound in a WwV, such as: How are experiences made available and appropriate-able to local residents through the project we are visiting? How is this done?
Through engaging the senses? Through appealing to, and involving specific emotions?
Through a certain oral culture, e.g. forms of storytelling? Through intellectual stimulations?
Through experiencing different economic relationships? How are these experiences special, or particular? How are they ordinary and/or extra-ordinary? How distinctive is the site where this is happening? Does one feel invited? Does one feel confronted? Does one witness or can one be told more about some forms of transmission of “sensory skilled knowledge and practice” (Pink 2008) at the project site? Maybe across generations (intergenerational)?
Maybe across cultural backgrounds (intercultural)? Maybe across subcultures or professions?
Does one witness or can one be told more about ways in which different participants at the project are educating each other’s attention? Where and how does one experience limits (both physical limits, in space, and otherwise, e.g. limits imposed by speaking different languages)? Are these limits more like impenetrable “boundaries” (i.e. no man’s lands), or like “borders” that one can cross (using again terms from Sennett 2012)? These are just a few of the questions that emerge through WwV-walks.

Our WwV-walks in Hanover allowed us to understand SoPs for urban sustainability from multiple perspectives, including:

- vegan-activists perspectives and food-artists perspectives on the city’s urban gardens, food economy, cultural activities and street life;
- young Parkour ‘traceurs’ perspectives on the city’s infrastructures, urban forms, (un-)sustainable mobility policy and youth policy;
- visual artists perspectives on the visual signs and visual language in the city’s streets, buildings and urban gardens, and pointing to possibilities of artful DIY-responsibilisation for sustainable urban development;
• performing artists perspectives on various subtle details of social life and socio-political issues in the city;

• artists-researchers-activists perspectives on historical-political, economic and socio-cultural developments in specific neighborhoods;

• urban activists and architects perspectives on challenges, failures and possibilities of urban development in specific sites and buildings;

• local crafts- &-businesspeople perspectives on opportunities for ecologically and socially responsible business;

• and everyday-life creative-activists perspectives on potential SoPs for sustainability-oriented activism (e.g. guerilla gardening, upcycling, local currencies, etc.) in different areas and specific sites in the city.

In each of these cases, the WwV sensory-ethnographic approach allowed us to contextualize and spatialize the professional and/or activist perspectives within our guides’ inter-subjective place-making situatedness.

0.7 – Fragment of Manifesto

In other words: In cluster zero, I tried to be a slightly poetic smart-ass. In cluster minus one, I complacently started my own auto-biography. And cluster one is just a marketing spoiler for the results from a research project (Kagan et al. 2019). And of course I mixed it all up and interspersed it in the final format, in order to confuse you, dear reader! More earnestly: Through the interspersing of various language-registers and of the various times and spaces I narrated, I have attempted here to textually render the interlocking conversations and
exchanges that led me to my current use of walking in a context of transdisciplinary sustainability research, as well as to give some hint of the interwoven complexities in the rich epistemological textures afforded to me by walking-research.

In this text, like in my research trajectory, the queer-ecological cluster and the urban sensory-ethnographic cluster have started to knot around each other, but still only loosely. For example, the queer-ecological approach was not explicitly activated in the ‘City as Space of Possibility’ project. Further integrative work lies ahead.\textsuperscript{vii}

Back in our Hayle mansion, we collated, and we then performed together a manifesto at the “Where to” conference the day after that walk. We all contributed edited bits, inspired by the day’s walk in the dunes and in Camborne & by our notes.

I sent in the following bits:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{10:30}
\begin{itemize}
\item Identify by diff-err-ing, disidentify by conf-err-ing.
\item Walk as an ecossexual intercourse: engage into encounters de-re-locating the body’s sexual sites.
\item Mistake dune-grasses for play-toys.\textsuperscript{viii} Follow dogs’ footsteps so I am wearing the collar. Engage in de-re-posturing, kneeling-up and kneeling-down.
\item Consensus is a walk without knees. Acknowledge the political, enjoy the pain.
\end{itemize}
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{15:45}
\end{itemize}
Acknowledge the political, enjoy the pain. Mistake churches for piercing shops. De-re-organize all hegemonies, walk agonistically.

9 – Reader’s Digest (lazy coda)

My retrospection interspersed several clusters with each other. In a first section, or rather cluster, disingenuously numbered as zero, I transcribed most parts of my notes from a WAN (Walking Artists Network) walk in Hayle and Camborne in April 2015. In a second cluster, mischievously numbered as minus-one, I engaged in a chronological retrospection of my growing interest in and transdisciplinary practice of walking over the past decade, which was also enmeshed with a number of encounters and events. In a third and final cluster, candidly numbered as one, I focused on the walking-based elements in my recent research (and educational) practice.

Cluster zero evokes my interest in a queer-ecological kind of walking, which emerged most explicitly on that day in Cornwall. Cluster minus-one articulates the influence of walking art, transect walks by urban researchers, and especially sensory ethnography on my own use of walking for sustainability research. Cluster one gives some further hints on how these approaches bear relevance to urban sustainability research.
References


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i Because of its less academic form, section/cluster zero sinfully abstains from the use of bibliographic references.

ii At editorial request, I make here one exception already to my no-references rule for cluster zero, and explicitly give these two bibliographic references: Latour (2000) articulates how to think of freedom in terms of interdependence, beyond illusions of independence and of emancipation. He invites us to re-attach ourselves, instead of fooling ourselves with the idea that we can simply achieve detachment (without re-attachments). Mouffe (2013) articulates how counter-hegemonic claims are also hegemonic claims, and how emancipation does not mean leaving hegemonic claims behind into some kind of naive blissful consensus.

iii See http://assist.cultura21.net/

iv See http://www.tragewegen.be/nl/about/intro

v See http://www.leuphana.de/sam

vi According to Oppezzo and Schwartz (2014), the mere physiological act of walking in itself already stimulates divergent thinking processes (and to a lesser extent, convergent thinking processes too), and walking outdoor further stimulates creativity (as opposed to being “rolled outside in a wheelchair” - yes indeed...).

vii For lack of space, and because they involve a different kind of ‘walking’, I left out of this article one other type of walking-based research practice that I am currently developing, and which consists in a combination of systems thinking games involving walking movements (after Linda Booth-Sweeney and Dennis Meadows), fictional elements borrowed from the Television series The Prisoner (1967), and further applied systems thinking exercises focusing on notions of ‘resilience’ and ‘leverage points’ (after Donella Meadows) – to which I am still aiming to integrate further elements borrowed from some performance-based approaches to playful learning... My current game design, named the “Village Triangles Games”, is described in another publication (Kagan 2019).

viii Addendum post-2016: After listening to Catriona Sandilands and Andreas Weber (whom I both invited to speak at the Xplore Symposium in July 2016 in Berlin), I shall correct my anthropocentrically-narrowed and plant-exploitative playfulness, and suggest instead: Engage with the erotic perception of the dune-grasses.