THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

On an excursion through EC1

Link:
Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer

Document Version:
Peer reviewed version

Published In:
Qualitative Research

OPEN ACCESS

On an excursion through EC1: multimodality, ethnography and urban walking

Introduction

In January 2015, researchers gathered at the Institute of Education in London for a conference that would consider the future direction of multimodal methodology[1]. Our group of three researchers arrived in advance of proceedings in order to undertake a walking excursion through the EC1 district of London that would form the subject of our conference presentation. In this paper we describe and critique the enactment of this methodology which combines theoretical assumptions of multimodality with ethnography's interest in the study of cultural phenomena, enacted through an unscripted urban walk. The methodology proposed here is intended to be sufficiently flexible to be used in a range of educational settings and reflects that each of the authors brought their own research interests (in multimodal pedagogy, mobile learning and digital culture) to the exercise. Towards the end of this paper we briefly discuss how participants in a subsequent enactment of this methodology have recognised the potential for its use in different learning contexts.

Our paper begins by highlighting the role of methodologies that explore our relationship with city, whilst at the same time highlighting the growing critical interest in the use of walking as a research method. From there we go on to discuss the relationship between multimodality and ethnography, suggesting that they are sufficiently in-step to provide a means of investigating the city. Having discussed the research fields that informed this work, we proceed to describe the experience of enacting this activity within central London and the insights it provided into our relationship with the city, including ideas around relational narratives. At the same time we have drawn attention to an inconsistency in the enactment of the methodology through the way that we privileged the collection of aural and visual data over other meaning-carrying phenomena. We also discuss the difficulty of adequately recording and reproducing the full repertoire or meaning-carrying resources. In response to these challenge we instead propose that emphasis should fall on the performance of the walk, in place of an attention to the gathering of data for subsequent analysis and discussion. Finally, we draw our paper to a close by briefly describing a subsequent performance of the methodology that successfully addressed the inconsistencies experienced during our earlier excursion in London. During this recent (November 2016) enactment, participants suggested how this type of excursion might be applied in a

_____

[1] Multimodality: Methodological Explorations organised by the Centre for Multimodal Research

range of educational contexts, for instance to promote literacy, to support student identification with their host city and to put into practice theoretical concepts around urban transportation.

The sights, sounds and smells of the city

In a progressively urban, technologically-rich, and digitally-mediated world there exists potential for new methodologies that enable us to investigate the city. At the same time, the complex nature of the urban environment is a subject of interest to a range of disciplines, including, but not limited to, architecture, sociology, geography and urban studies. While it is beyond the purpose of this paper to survey the myriad ways that researchers are currently investigating the city, we nevertheless wish to briefly draw attention to some of the methods that see researchers taking to the streets in order to make sense of the their surroundings. In a visually-mediated society where, according to Mirzoeff, more than a trillion photographs are taken each year as we seek to understand change in a world 'too enormous to see but vital to image' (2015: 12), there is an increased potential for using images as a means of exploring the complex and shifting nature of the urban environment. A survey of contemporary visual research reveals a number of studies that resonate with our interest in exploring the city. Adami (2017) brings visual methods alongside multimodality and ethnography

when exploring ideas around superdiversity and social change. Using a city-centre market in Leeds as her field site, Adami uses the sign-making potential of photographs depicting market spaces and vendors to lay out a series of research questions and working hypotheses around superdiversity. An alternative use of image-based research in an urban setting is seen in Andron's ongoing research around street graffiti (2017) which draws on Kress and van Leeuwen's (2001) work around multimodality alongside the geosemiotics of Scollon and Scollon (2003), in order to propose a unifying visual-material approach to understanding urban inscription. Elsewhere Powell (2010) describes how visual methods considered through the lens of the palimpsest can be used to understand the lived experience of the built environment. Describing a series of image-based methods including collage and mapping, Powell argues that through the principle of synaesthesia, the gathering of visual content can be used to offer insights into other of the sensory experiences that come to explain our complex relationship with the city.

Shifting from sight to sound, a growing number of researchers are turning a critical ear to the aural dimension of the city. Labelle has done considerable work to advance the case for sonic methodology as a way of understanding our surroundings, for instance through work on acoustic territories in

everyday life (2010). Meanwhile Fluegge's work around personal sound space (2011) strikes a chord with our own interest in investigating how we interpret meaning from our surroundings, when she argues that the experiences of everyone from street musician to the salesman to the school child are affected by the activities of others, combined with a knowledge they are each themselves audible. An interest in the meaning-carrying potential of aural phenomena is neither new nor the preserve of those working in social acoustics, sonic studies or similar fields, however. On the contrary, with his interest in social semiotics Van Leeuwen invites us to to consider how we might interpret meaning from an orchestration of sound that includes the 'swash of traffic noise' and the 'raucous voices of the men drinking beer outside the pub across the road' (1999: 17).

If we had the courage to cross the road and take our place amongst the noisy imbibers of Van Leeuwen's description, it is likely that we would be struck by smell, as well as by sight and sound. The meaning carrying potential of scent, according to Springgay (2011) has been under-considered within education, compared with the attention given to the aural, visual and linguistic. In *'The Chinatown Foray' as sensation pedagogy*, Springgay draws on a relational art project that saw a group of mycologists, students and foodies undertaking a walking tour of the shops and markets of New York's Chinatown in search of various mushroom species. Drawing on ideas around movement and the sensory, Springgay emphasises how interpretation of smell is influenced by social, cultural, and political factors whilst at the same time being influenced by the context in which it is experienced (and has previously been experienced). That smell contributes to understanding is also recognised in the contrasting examples of Curtis's (2008) discussion of educational outings with school pupils around Aberdeen and Edensor's (2000) discussion of the overwhelming sensory experience of an Indian bazaar.

Investigating the city: walking as a research method

A useful starting place for walking as a research method is with the work of Tim Ingold who has done much to make the case for fieldwork-by-foot. Challenging the longstanding tendency to privilege the meaning-making capacity of sight and sound over touch, Ingold has travelled a considerable distance in encouraging us to divert our critical gaze towards the way we construct knowledge through an attention to the repeated placing of feet on floor, rather than focusing on what is seen and heard (2004). Of particular relevance is Ingold's discussion of the ways that the perception and purpose of walking have evolved over time in response to the changing nature of the city, and in turn how streets have been shaped to suit social expectations of the day. In this way the pedestrian and the public thorough-

fare are co-constituting: we are simultaneously guided by the layout, texture and other qualities of the city, whilst in turn attaching meaning to these qualities through the process of walking and reflection. Moving beyond the theoretical recognition that attention to walking helps us to better understand human nature itself, Lee and Ingold (2006) and Ingold and Vergunst (2008) make clear the connection between walking and ethnography. Describing a series of fieldwork exercises on foot across the North-East of Scotland, Lee and Ingold propose that the repeated action of walking promotes a state of being attuned to the environment in a way that echoes the ethnographer's desire for detail and directness. Undertaken within a group, walking allows a sense of sociability that Lee and Ingold see as analogous to interaction between ethnographers and the subjects being observed. Rather than undertaking observation from the periphery, the act of walking affords the ethnographer the opportunity for reflection whilst simultaneously participating in the embodied experiences of the field. The case for walking as ethnography is further made by Pink (2009) who highlights how understanding and knowledge emerges through its experiential and reflexive approach. The undertaking of a walk, in Pink's view, presents opportunities to appreciate the sensory nature of bodily experience and materiality, which in turn offers insights into how we make we make sense of our surroundings. It is the situated nature of the researcher as she undertakes a walk through the city that enables an immediate and affective experiencing of particular phenomena that contribute to meaning-making practices. The connection between walking as a research method and ethnography is also made by Springgay (2011) who argues that the entanglement of mind, body and place would be understood by critical ethnographers as 'emplacement'. Applying Springgay's stance on emplacement theories to our own excursion, an understanding of place would emerge through the performance of a walk, rather than being seen as a pre-existing location through which the researcher might traverse. In this way, place - and therefore how we understand the urban environment - emerges through the process of walking and reflection as we cut a path through the city.

Stepping indoors into the setting of the classroom, Ehrett and Hollett (2014) call for greater attention to the way that composition and literacy practices of adolescents are influenced by movement and feelings as they interact with the material environment. If the nature of this research does not immediately resonate with the methodology we are discussing in this paper, we are drawn to the way that Ehret and Hollett emphasise how '*moving, feeling* bodies influence meaning-making in unpredictable ways' (2014: 430) whilst drawing on the work of Lemke (2013) to argue that our understanding of habitus - a disposition to the world around us - comes through an interaction between human bodies

and the material environment. Also helpful is the way that Ehrett and Hollett present what we see as an entanglement between body, mind, technology and place, all enacted within the course of a movement through space and contributing to the construction of meaning.

The studies described above refer to the walking methods in a number of different ways. Our own preference is for 'excursion', through its association with a reasonably short journey that carries a purpose yet allows for deviation from a regular path.

Multimodality and ethnography

Having advanced the case for urban walking as a way of investigating the city we will now proceed to explain how by bringing together principle ideas from multimodality and ethnography our own work advances current methodological approaches to investigating the city.

Multimodality

The essence of multimodality is a belief and interest in the way that meaning is communicated across a broad range of semiotic resources or modes. Multimodality accommodates a range of approaches, each with their own aims, theories of meaning, history, empirical focus and analytical methods (Jewitt et al 2016). Reflecting its interdisciplinarity, multimodality has been used theoretically, conceptually, methodologically and analytically as a way of investigating education, technology, media, business, health and other social practices. As well as being drawn to its interdisciplinary flexibility, we have found that multimodality presents a particular way of the seeing the world as we undertake an excursion through the city. In particular we have found it helpful to draw on Bezemer's (2012) description of the theoretical assumptions of multimodality, which draws on the earlier articulations of multimodality by Kress (2009) and Jewitt (2009) and principally looks towards social semiotics. To begin, multimodality is presented as being open to the full range of resources that convey meaning, including but extending beyond those concerned with language in its various forms. Therefore as we take a walk through the city we make sense of surroundings not simply through spoken conversation or the words printed on signs or shopfronts, but also through the buildings we encounter, through movement, through smell, sound and so on. Further, it is the way that these different resources come together in concert or collision - their juxtaposition or configuration - that is essential to how we make sense of the world around us: we never depend solely on a single mode. Therefore the meaning we construct through the city is shaped by the ways that the different sounds, sights, smells as well as other senso-

ry phenomena come together in the moment. Even then, the meaning we attach to these phenomena are socially and culturally shaped, as well as subject to our personal interests and histories. In this way the same billboard poster might carry alternative meanings in different social and cultural contexts, while our aesthetic appreciation of a post-war housing block could diverge depending on our interest or understanding of architecture, history and politics, as well as our own lived experiences.

Although extending beyond a commitment to multimodality, at this point we wish to briefly discuss how our methodological work resonates with Scollon and Scollon's much more extensive theory of geosemiotics (2003). Still with an interest in social semiotics, although drawing on a diverse range of fields including linguistics, communication and cultural geography, Scollon and Scollon propose geosemiotics as 'the study of social meaning of the material placement of signs and discourses and our actions in the material world' (2003: 2). Central to the purpose of Geosemiotics is the desire to understand and analyse how the interpretation of meaning conveyed through public signs, shopfronts and other public displays needs to be understood 'in place', or in the context of the surrounding social and physical world. While the interest of geosemiotics extends considerably beyond our research, not least through its analytical work, the emphasis that Scollon and Scollon place on recognising how understanding of phenomena, particularly that encountered in urban settings, needs to be understood within its particular context, is mirrored in way that methodology depends on what we describe as in-situ meaning within a particular time and place.

Ethnography

In its most broad sense, ethnography is concerned with the study of peoples, cultures and societies through observation and description. As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) note however, beyond some of these broad areas of understanding, ethnography evades straightforward classification, reflected in the way that is has been adapted to suit the varying interests and epistemologies of different disciplines and researchers (Mills and Morton, 2013). We regard ethnography as a series of practices aimed at ''the elicitation of cultural knowledge' or as the detailed description of modes of social interaction; it can be mainly descriptive, it can verge on story-telling, or it can be a research procedure for the testing and development of theories and hypothesis' (Jenks and Neves, 2000, p. 3). The use of ethnography presents us with the constructive aim of researching the urban space with methods 'born of the field (notes) than a posteriori, in the (published) text' (2000: 3). The methodology proposed here presents an ethnography that is emergent, that attempts to avoid the post-structural emphasis on text

('ethnography is not, and cannot be reduced to, just writing' (p. 3), and that is inherently multilocal. It is an attempt to articulate sets of relationships between local or multi-site elements (Hannerz, 2001: 206) within the EC1 district. Urban space itself suggests such a position of ethnography: one that gives 'ontological primacy, not to groups or places, but to configurations of relations. The point of fieldwork becomes to describe a system of relations' (Becker 1996: 56). The methodology presented in this paper foregrounds this system of relations as well as the in situ presence of the ethnographer.

Multimodality and ethnography in-step

In an early discussion of the potential for methodological compatibility between multimodality and ethnography, Dicks et al. (2006) describe fieldwork in a science centre where they considered the capacity of multimedia devices to gather multimodal data. Amongst their findings was the varying ability of tools to take account of the different modes at play, combined with the way that meaning is transformed when recorded and represented through different media. Dicks et al. highlight the way that social semioticians and ethnographers are united in 'examining the diversity of resources that people use in their everyday worlds' (2011: 2): the methodology we are advancing here echoes this approach as we seek to investigate the relationship with the city through an openness to the full range of resources we encounter during a walk through the city. Hurdley and Dicks (2011) take the position that while ethnography has always been equipped to holistically take account of the way that a particular setting is shaped by a range of different semiotic resources, multimodality's attention to studying non-linguistic phenomena draws attention to these possibilities. Elsewhere Flewitt (2011) highlights three overarching characteristics of ethnographic work that bear a close resemblance to the interests of multimodality: the undertaking of research using real-world data, the inclusion of participant and researcher voices, and a recognition that meaning emerges from the combined effects of language, objects and other resources. Kress (2011) uses the real-world setting of the operating theatre to demonstrate how combined multimodal and ethnographic methods allowed the deployment of modes to be studied within their particular space, context and sequence, thereby offering insights into the complexity of that site of social interaction. Of particular interest to our own work is the way that the bringing together of multimodality and ethnography would seem to have the effect of heightening the researcher's attention to the significance of meaning-making resources that were always present yet might previously have been under-considered.

Having drawn on the literature to highlight the methodological compatibility of multimodality and ethnography, we acknowledge that this is not understood to be an entirely comfortable relationship. Flewitt for instance suggests that this is a partnership 'punctuated with ambivalences and potential tensions' including different interpretations of what might be understood to be a 'text' (2011: 307). Meanwhile Pink (2011) is more broadly sceptical of the proposed complementarity of multimodality and ethnography, pointing to the fundamental differences in the theoretical traditions that the two areas are grounded in. Considered in light of what Pink sees as the contrasting theoretical roots of multimodality and ethnography, our own position is a pragmatic one. The varying research backgrounds of our group, combined with a shared commitment to a methodology that might suit different educational settings, means that we are comfortable using what Green and Bloome describe as 'ethnographic approaches' (1997) as part of a methodology that is informed by some of the principle ideas of multimodality, without feeling the need to resolve theoretical differences.

From Vine Hill to Smithfield Market: enacting the methodology

In this section we describe the experience of enacting this methodology and the themes that emerged during the course of the excursion. The discussion that follows should be seen in light of our privileged position as able-bodied males operating in urban contexts of relative prosperity and safety. It is probable that the route we followed through the city and the subsequent interpretation of our experiences would manifest in other ways across differences in gender, race, disability, economic status and research interests (discussed in Serlin, 2006 among others). Therefore we proceed without making claim to the objectivity or generalisability of the observations that follow, but simply with a desire to demonstrate how this methodology allowed us to usefully interpret what we experienced. It is also necessary to acknowledge that we brought our own personal histories to the exercise, including our individual educational interests in multimodal pedagogy, mobile learning and digital culture. Therefore while the path through the city was not predetermined, we did not begin the excursion without preconceptions of what we might encounter, and neither do we believe that this would be possible in a city as well documented as London.

At 10am on Wednesday 14 January 2015 we set out from our accommodation on Vine Hill to undertake an excursion within the EC1 district of London. We elected to follow a route through the city without the aid of a map or previously agreed route, although conscious that later the same day we would need to prepare a presentation around our experiences, we agreed to approximately stay within the

EC1 district. By committing to an unscripted excursion through the city we intended for our direction to be guided by *habitus* - a disposition to the world around us, influenced at least partly by the encountered semiotic phenomenon - as well as by *intent*. This intent was demonstrated in the belief that this methodology would reveal insights of the urban space that heretofore had gone unnoticed. Furthermore we were intentionally responding to the need for collecting data for use in the conference presentation the next day.

The types of data collected during this excursion were influenced by the purpose of the exercise, our own research interests, the functionality provided by mobile technology and the availability of time. We began by collecting field notes, video, photographs, sound recordings and GPS data, however this quickly narrowed to a focus on photographs and sound recordings, data we felt could be easily reproduced during our conference presentation, whilst at the same time being relatively straightforward to collect. We felt comfortable narrowing the range of gathered data based upon earlier methodological work where we had used images and sound recordings in the analysis of learning spaces (Author, 2016; Author, 2014). In this way, data gathering was structured by utility (the ability of photographs and sound recordings to inform the presentation), convenience (in the way the we found the recording of video and fieldnotes disruptive) and research interests (in the collection of GPS through mobile devices, even if we made limited use of the data). Consistent with an emphasis on movement through the city, it felt appropriate that we should gather data using mobile devices (principally through the camera and voice memo functions), although a separate camera was occasionally used to document this gathering of data.

The intersection of affect, embodiment and multimodality

The unscripted nature of the walk, combined with our varying research interests, meant that at different times conversation took place around direction. Faced with several routes, different interests came to the fore as we variously made a case for following (or avoiding) a route through a dual carriageway underpass, cutting across a park, and so on. These acts of negotiation included instances where it became apparent that even faced with the same array of semiotic resources we individually foregrounded different phenomena. Our interpretations of the meaning of the city at that point in time were shaped not only by the particular configuration of semiotic content, but the relative importance we placed on particular resources based upon prior interest and history. At the same time, through multimodality's openness to touch and other forms of sensory material we were able to consider how

our relationship with the city was shaped by embodiment and affect. We draw on embodiment and embodied phenomena as put forward by Dourish (2001: 100): by embodiment, we refer to 'possessing and acting through a physical manifestation in the world'; and by embodied phenomena, we refer to events that 'occur in real time and space' (101). Springgay meanwhile defines affects as 'passages of intensity, a reaction in or on the body at the level of matter' that 'express our state at a given moment in time and thus, are always experienced in time and as duration.' (2011: 652). Our experience here invokes Lee and Ingold's discussion of the relationship between walking, ethnography and embodiment through the way that an excursion emphasises the 'social engagement between self and environment' (2006: 68) where the skin becomes a valuable sensory organ (2006: 74) in making meaning of one's surroundings.

Therefore during this excursion we were never simply seeing or hearing the street but were always constructing meaning through the way our feet came into contact with the pavement, the quality and temperature of the air, and so on. We walked and grew tired. We rested. We paused with uncertainty and fear at busy intersections, we bristled at a cold wind, we flinched at the sounds of drills and unseen construction. We grew hungry, we grew thirsty. The body itself became a part of a larger composition where 'walking can be positioned and understood as a 'socio-technical' assemblage by highlighting the significance of 'mediating mundane technologies' (Michael, 2000) such as shoes, clothing and luggage, within the embodied, spatial and temporal rhythms of pedestrian movement' (Middleton, 2010: 577). The body, the bodily senses, and the attendant materiality of walking were agents in the understanding of place in EC1.

To bring this interest in affect, embodiment and the sensory alongside multimodality, these sights, sounds, smells and other phenomena were experienced in juxtaposition, coming together to shape how we differently understood our surroundings in a particular place and time. Through conversation it became evident that we brought our own associations to particular phenomena, forcing us to rethink how we might approach concepts such as 'noise' or 'beauty' in relation to the city. Pausing to photograph a shop signage advertising 'Off Licence - Open 24 Hours', we constructed meaning through our reading of the sign, but also through the discarded food at our feet, the fumes from passing traffic and how we had each previously experienced these and other phenomena. Our experience here recalls Scollon and Scollon's (2003) work around geosemiotics where they propose that the meaning we interpret from the linguistic content of an advert, street sign or other public display needs to be under-

stood as subject to its particular situation and moment in time. The same shop sign in a different location and surrounded juxtaposed with a different repertoire of semiotic resources (or discussed by a different group of people surfacing their own prior experiences) might lend the sign, and therefore the place itself, a different meaning.

The following example from our excursion is an act of transcription, a 'representational process that encompasses what is represented in the transcript; who is representing whom, in what ways, for what purpose, and with what outcome; and how analysts position themselves and their participants in their representations of form, content, and action' (Green et al., 1997: 173 in Davidson, 2009). While not analysis, it is reflective of the choices we made in our selection, emphasising that 'transcription is not merely the mechanical selection and application of notation symbols' (2009) but rather, as positioned in this paper, representational of particular concepts emerging from EC1 itself as well as research interests, habitus, and intent (such as the necessity of presenting the next day).

The relational city

Early within the excursion we recognised that the city would present barriers to progress: congested traffic, construction work, crowded pavements. In one such instance at Garnault Place, our progress was halted by a fast-moving stream of cars, motorcycles and bikes. Waiting for the pedestrian lights to change we noticed a child's shoe attached to an iron railing. As we photographed this scene the sound of traffic lessened and we became aware of piano music emanating, we presumed, from the open basement window of a municipal building beyond the railings. The piano was soon accompanied by the voice of a ballet teacher passing instructions to her pupils, somewhere in the depths of the building, heard but unseen. Only moments earlier our interpretation of this corner of the city had been dominated by the juxtaposition of traffic noise, the perils of fast-moving city traffic and our own immobility. An entirely different narrative now unfolded as we constructed meaning through the assembly of the piano performance, the careful instruction of the teacher and the imagined graceful movement of the ballet class. We recognise here the role that relationality played in providing us with this moment. Had an earlier route through the traffic appeared we would have taken away a quite different interpretation from this particular corner of EC1. Therefore within a single place and at a single point in time a series of relational narratives are unfolding, challenging the notion that we can confidently describe the 'character' of a street or district. Narratives are not presented as 'a seamless sequence of recollected happenings', nor as 'any totalising narrative' (Edensor, 2005) ascribing to any sort of chronolog-

ical authenticity. They are unfolding constantly, juxtaposed against one another in seemingly incongruous fashion, they 'collide and merge" in a landscape of juxtaposed 'asynchronous moments" (Crang and Travlou, 2001). There is no one fixed narrative of EC1 that would prove plausible beyond its own telling.

Furthermore, this moment revealed the nature of embodiment in this urban walking methodology. Without the initial pause while looking to safely cross a busy street, a pause born of our physical sense of safety and uncertainty, this subsequent observation of the municipal building, the single shoe, and the sounds of an unseen ballet class would have not have been made available. The connections between bodily senses, the conventions of ethnography, and subsequent observations and data collection were evident: 'The embodied rhythmic experiences of moving on foot is then engaged with in terms of the different styles and conventions of urban walking, how these are intimately linked to the bodily senses, and the ways in which these relate to a sense of place' (Middleton, 2010: 576-577).

Critiquing our methodology

With the excursion complete we returned to our accommodation on Vine Hill to download the gathered data and select visual and aural representations of our excursion that we would share with a conference audience the following day. This was a review of the 75 gathered images and 18 sound recordings undertaken on the eve of delivering our presentation. The imbalance between visual and aural data described here was heavily influenced, we agreed, by the speed and simplicity of capturing images compared to sound recordings. During the excursion it quickly became apparent that in the short moments it took to use the camera function, it was possible to gather considerably more visual data than sound. This situation was exacerbated by the need to re-record several sound clips distorted by interference through wind. The effect of this imbalance was to provide us with a representation of the city that was skewed towards the visual.

The imbalance in gathered data is suggestive of a considerable inconsistency between our enactment of the excursion and the theoretical interests of multimodality that informed the approach more generally. Our attention to the qualities of the city that might be adequately recorded and reproduced immediately privileged a narrow range of visual and aural phenomena. This sits in opposition to our expressed intention to construct meaning from the full repertoire of modes and the meaning that would

emerge from their juxtaposition at particular moments in time. In those instances where we paused to take photographs or make audio recordings we diverted our interest from the wider repertoire of meaning-making phenomena to instead focus on the digital representations of the city on our smart-phone screens. Having earlier highlighted how a stream of traffic afforded an opportunity to construct meaning from the assemblage of music, spoken instruction and other sensory material, it is likely that we missed further opportunities by consciously seeking out or prioritising data that might be recorded for later consumption. This point was reiterated by a sense of detachment from the street as we re-viewed the gathered data. The images displayed on the laptop screen were suggestive of the hard-ness of the pavement and the coldness of the air, however as we sat in the warmth of our accommo-dation the difficulty of adequately reproducing a broader range of semiotic material became apparent. Although the images and sounds offered useful representations of the city, the affective, sensational and embodied ways we had constructed meaning in the street could not be recaptured after the mo-ment. To borrow from Kress (2011), we lacked the apparatus to adequately categorise or transcribe taste, smell, texture and resources that contributed to our meaning-making. Our experience here therefore evokes the argument that Dicks makes about the 'challenge to researchers to attend to the world-as-sensed rather than as communicated' (2014: 671). This experience reiterates for us the im-portance of methodology as performance, where 'realisations of emotional and environmental condi-tions through walking are situated somewhere between an external looking-out vision and an internal escape or self-reflective vision' (Lee and Ingold 2006: 73) that in turn help us to make sense of the surrounding city.

By drawing attention to the limitations described here we are seeking to demonstrate how the enact-ment of this methodology was inconsistent with our initial interests in exploring the city through the act of walking. Instead, we became overly concerned with gathering representations of the city which in turn narrowed attention to the broader range of meaning-carrying phenomena and how they come together in a way that shapes understanding of the urban environment. At the same time, with the benefit of hindsight we can now more clearly see the value of those moments during our excursion where we paused for rest or refreshment and spent time discussing experiences. Rather than being counter to the nature of our walk, the moments spent in the park or public house enabled us to reflect on the coming together of body, mind and material whilst still within proximity of the street.

Finally, having acknowledged the time constraint upon our exercise by enacting it on the eve of the Multimodal Methodologies conference, it is interesting to consider how we might have differently experienced the city through a walk of a longer duration. It is possible for instance that an excursion over a period longer than a five-hours might reveal different patterns or rituals and phenomena. Furthermore, the experience would surely have taken a different course if undertaken at a different time of year and in different weather conditions, foregrounding again the role of embodiment and sensory feedback into this urban ethnography. The influence of time and timing present us with future avenues of investigation.

Towards a methodological contribution

Before making the case that our work represents a methodological contribution, we first wish to discuss some existing research that has combined multimodality with an interest in movement through space. Beginning with research that we have already touched on, in their early discussion of multimodality and ethnography, Dicks et al (2006) discuss the potentialities and limitations of different forms of multimedia as they analyse meaning-making practices within a science visitor centre. Faced with the inability of written field notes or photographs to satisfactorily reproduce 'the multi-modal, living, material, kinetic environment' of the science centre' (2006: 87) , Dicks et al spend time moving through the exhibition hall, an embodied experience that enables consideration of meaning conveyed through the texture and weight of the various exhibits, combined with the way that the physical space of the science centre affects the flow of visitors. The study of movement particularly comes to the fore within Hackett's (2012) research around young children's meaning-making and movement in a museum. Once again combining an interest in multimodality alongside approaches from ethnography, Hackett uses data gathered in the museum setting to argue that walking and running can be understood as essential parts of the communicative practices of children. Moving from the museum to the art gallery, McMurtie (2013) proposes spatiogrammatics as a way of investigating movement through the built environment and its associated role in meaning-making practices. Drawing on work in systemic functional linguistics, multimodal discourse analysis and spatial semiosis, McMurtie proposes movement through the built environment as being a fundamental social practice in its own right, thereby challenging the tendency to see movement simply as supportive of meaning-making. Of particular relevance to our own work is McMurtie's argument that through movement, meaning-making becomes a co-constituted practice between the individual, the exhibition space and the objects with which she might interact.

With their interest in movement, multimodality and ethnography, there is a clear parallel between these examples of research and the methodological approach advanced in this paper. We believe however that our work is different from these studies for the following reasons. To begin, the city presents a level of diversity that is reflected in the in the flexibility of our approach combined with an openness to the full range of meaning-carrying phenomena. Compared to the science centre, museum and art gallery, the sprawling and often unpredictable organisation of the city particularly lends itself to the unscripted excursion proposed here. Furthermore, whereas the research concerned with multimodality and movement tends towards observation of a group of research participants, in this methodology the experience of the researcher comes to the fore as she simultaneously traverses the street and reflects on her own relationship with the surrounding phenomena. Finally, rather than gathering video, photographic or other data for subsequent analysis, in our approach the emphasis is placed on in-situ meaning-making that takes place within the performance of the walk through the city.

Looking beyond the studies around multimodality and movement, we believe this methodology also makes a contribution beyond the previously discussed approaches that focuses on the aural, visual or olfactory. Whereas these approaches tend to set out with an particular interest in sight, sound or smell (although not necessarily to the exclusion of other meaning-carrying resources), the enactment of our excursion through the city is intended to be guided by the experienced phenomena. To be clear, we are not challenging the value of these approaches: on the contrary, these studies each bring insights as a result of focusing critical attention on particular phenomena. Neither are we suggesting that these approaches exclude the possibility that meaning is conveyed in ways beyond the sensory modes that are the central interest of that research. Our point is simply that, consistent with multimodality's belief that meaning is constructed by the full repertoire of modes, and how these different resources sit in juxtaposition at a particular moment in time, in this methodology the researcher seeks to be guided by encountered phenomena rather than bringing a particular form of semiotic resource to the fore.

Conclusion: avenues for further exploration

In November 2016, an invitation to contribute towards a programme of seminars at our institution, the University of Edinburgh, provided an opportunity to revise and enact this methodology based upon the opportunities and limitations previously experienced in London. On this occasion we were joined by

14 participants, including students and lecturers from a range of academic backgrounds, as well as educational technologists and others working outside formal education. Although participants were free to record the excursion around Edinburgh as they wished, a much greater emphasis was placed on the experiencing of the city rather than gathering data for later consumption. At the same time, there would be no subsequent stage of review therefore a greater emphasis was placed on discussion and reflection whilst undertaking the excursion itself. Freed from the pressure to gather representations of the city, we were instead able to construct meaning from the particular juxtaposition of meaning-carrying phenomena we encountered, as well as the meaning the phenomena carried within its particular context. Conversation explored how we gained insights into our relationship with the city though the combination of sights, sounds and smells of Edinburgh's Old Town, as well as through the sensation of feet walking over cobbled streets, the cold air of a November afternoon and beyond. Different interpretations of semiotic content were shared, based upon personal disposition, that in turn shaped how we understood the city around us. Also learning from the experience in London, time was set aside to interrupt the walk by stopping for refreshment, providing a further opportunity for reflection, still within immediate proximity of the street. It was during these conversations that participants explained how they felt this methodology might be used in a range of different educational settings: the study of literature by school children; enabling residents to surface what is significant about their hometown; helping International students to better understand and engage with their host city; the possibility of taking conceptual work around commuter rituals "out into the real world".

In this paper we have proposed a methodological exercise that draws on theoretical assumptions of multimodality, combined with approaches from ethnography and urban walking, as a way of investigating our relationship with the city. We have pointed to important common ground shared by multimodality and ethnography, including an interest in the full range of semiotic resources and how they enable us to interpret meaning and make sense of our world. Through experiences in the EC1 district of London and the subsequent enactment of a revised excursion through Edinburgh, we propose a walking methodology that can be adopted and adapted by researchers, students, teachers and anyone else who wishes to walk the streets in search of meaning.

References

Adami, E (2017) Multimodality and Superdiversity: Evidence for a research agenda, Tilburg Papers in Culture Studies: 177.

Andron S (2017) Interviewing Walls: Towards a Method of Reading Hybrid Surface Inscriptions. In: Avramidis K and Tsilimpounidi M (eds) *Graffiti and Street Art: Reading, Writing and Representing the City*. London: Routledge.

Author (2014) Being 'at' university: the social topologies of distance students. *Higher Education* 67(5): 569-583.

Becker H (1996) The epistemology of qualitative research. In: R Jessor, A Colby & R Shweder (Eds) *Ethnography and human development: context and meaning in social inquiry*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press: pp. 53–72.

Bezemer J (2012) 'What is Multimodality'. University College London. Available at https://mod-e.ioe.ac.uk/2012/02/16/what-is-multimodality/.

Crang M and Travlou, PS (2001) The city and topologies of memory. *Environment and planning d: society and space* 19(2): 161-177.

Curtis E (2008) Walking Out of the Classroom: Learning on the Streets of Aberdeen. In: Vergunst JL and Ingold T (eds) *Ways of Walking: Ethnography and Practice on Foot*. Oxford: Routledge, pp. 143-154.

Davidson C (2009) Transcription: Imperatives for qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 8(2): 35-52.

Dicks B (2014) Action, experience, communication: three methodological paradigms for researching multimodal and multisensory settings. *Qualitative Research* 14(6): 656-674.

Dicks B, Flewitt R, Lancaster L and Pahl K (2011) Multimodality and ethnography: working at the intersection. *Qualitative Research* 11(3): 227-237.

Dicks B, Soyinka B and Coffey A (2006) Multimodal ethnography. *Qualitative Research* 6(1): 77-96.

Dourish P (2001) *Where the Action Is.* Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Edensor T (2000) 'Moving through the city' in Bell, D and Haddour, A. (eds) *City Visions*. London: Prentice Hall.

Edensor T (2005) The Ghosts of Industrial Ruins: Ordering and Disordering Memory in Excessive Space. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 23(6): 829-849.

Ehret C and Hollett T (2014) Embodied Composition in Real Virtualities: Adolescents' Literacy Practices and Felt Experiences. Moving with Digital, Mobile Devices in School. *Research in the Teaching of English* 48(4): 428.

Flewitt R (2011) Bringing ethnography to a multimodal investigation of early literacy in a digital age. *Qualitative Research* 11(3): 293-310.

Fluegge E (2011) The consideration of personal sound space. *Journal of Sonic Studies* 1(1).

Author (2016) The sonic spaces of online, distance learners. In L Carvalho, P Goodyear and M de Laat (eds) *Place-based Spaces for Networked Learning*. Sydney: Routledge.

Green J and Bloome D (1997) Ethnography and ethnographers of and in education: a situated perspective. In Flood J, Heath SB and Lapp D (eds) *A Handbook for Literacy Educators: Research on Teaching the Communicative and Visual Arts*. New York: MacMillan, pp. 1-12.

Green J, Franquiz M and Dixon C (1997) The myth of the objective transcript: Transcribing as a situated act. *TESOL Quarterly* 21(1), 172–176.

Hackett A (2014) Zigging and zooming all over the place: Young children's meaning making and movement in the museum. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy* 14(1): 5-2.

Hammersley M and Atkinson P (2007) *Ethnography: Principles in Practice* (3rd Edition). London: Routledge.

Hannerz U (2003) Being there... and there... and there! Reflections on multi-site ethnography. *Ethnography* 4(2): 201-216.

Hurdley R and Dicks B (2011) In-between practice: working in the 'thirdspace' of sensory and multi-modal methodology. *Qualitative Research* 11(3): 277-292.

Ingold T (2004) Culture on the ground the world perceived through the feet. *Journal of Material Culture* 9(3): 315-340.

Ingold T and Vergunst JL (eds) (2008). *Ways of Walking: Ethnography and Practice on Foot*. Oxford: Routledge.

Jenks C and Neves T (2000). A walk on the wild side: Urban ethnography meets the Flâneur. *Journal for Cultural Research* 4(1): 1-17.

Jewitt C. (2009) An Introduction to Multimodality. In *The Routledge Handbook of Multimodal Analysis*. London: Routledge: pp. 14-27.

Jewitt C, Bezemer J and O'Halloran K (2016) *Introducing Multimodality*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Kress G (2009). *Multimodality: a Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication.* London: Routledge.

Kress G (2011). 'Partnerships in research': multimodality and ethnography. *Qualitative Research* 11(3): 239-260.

Kress G and Van Leeuwen T (2001) *Multimodal Discourse: The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication*. London: Arnold.

Labelle B (2010) *Acoustic Territories: Sound Culture and Everyday Life*. London: Continuum.

Lee J and Ingold T (2006) Fieldwork on foot: perceiving, routing, socializing. *Locating the field: Space, place and context in anthropology* 42: 67.

Lemke J (2013) Thinking about feeling: Affect across literacies and lives. In: O Erstad and J Sefton-Green (eds) *Identity, community, and learning lives in the digital age*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 57-69.

McMurtrie R (2013) *'Spatiogrammatics: a social semiotic perspective on moving bodies transforming the meaning potential of space'*. PhD Thesis, School of the Arts and Media, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of New South Wales.

Michael M (2000) These boots are made for walking...: mundane technology, the body and human-environment relations. *Body and Society* 6(3-4): 107-126.

Middleton J (2010) Sense and the city: exploring the embodied geographies of urban walking. *Social and Cultural Geography* 11(6): 575-596.

Mills D and Morton M (2013) *Ethnography in Education*. Newcastle: Sage.

Pink S (2009) *Doing sensory ethnography*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Pink S (2011) Multimodality, Multisensoriality and Ethnographic Knowing: Social Semiotics and the Phenomenology of Perception. *Qualitative Research* 11(3): 261-276.

Powell K (2010) Making sense of place: Mapping as a multisensory research method. *Qualitative Inquiry* 16(7): 539-555

Scollon R and Scollon SW (2003) *Discourses in Place: Language in the Material World.* Abingdon. Routledge.

Serlin D (2006) Disabling the Flâneur. *Journal of Visual Culture* 5(2): 193-208.

Springgay S (2011) 'The Chinatown Foray' as sensational pedagogy. *Curriculum Inquiry* 41(5): 636-656.

Van Leeuwen T (1999) *Speech, Music, Sound*. Basingstoke: Macmillan

Walford G (2008) The Nature of Educational Ethnography. In: Walford G (ed) *How to do educational ethnography*. London: Tufnell Press, pp. 1-15.