

Article

# Questioning Walking Tourism from a Phenomenological Perspective: Epistemological and Methodological Innovations

Chiara Rabbiosi \*  and Sabrina Meneghello

Department of Historical and Geographic Sciences and the Ancient World, University of Padova,  
35141 Padova, Italy; sabrina.meneghello@phd.unipd.it

\* Correspondence: chiara.rabbiosi@unipd.it

**Abstract:** This article aims to illuminate the overlooked entanglement of space, material practices, affects, and cognitive work emplaced in walking tourism. Walking as a tourism activity is generally practised in the open air away from crowded locations; therefore, it is being encouraged even more in this (post)pandemic era than prior to the pandemic. While walking is often represented as a relatively easy activity in common promotional discourse, this article argues that it is much more complex. It revises the notion of tourist place performance, focusing on walking both as a tourist practice and as a research method that questions multi-sensory and emotional walker engagement. While extensively revisiting literature on walking tourism and the most novel methodological innovations, the article draws from a walking tourism experience undertaken as part of a student trip to demonstrate that the emotions that arise from walkers' embodied encounters with living, as well as inanimate elements, extend beyond what might be included in a simple focus on landscape "sights". In conclusion, it is suggested that a phenomenological approach to walking may prove particularly useful for understanding key issues associated with space, place, and tourism mobilities.

**Keywords:** tourist mobilities; student-cum-tourists; walking methodologies; place performance; embodiments; sensory experiences



**Citation:** Rabbiosi, Chiara, and Sabrina Meneghello. 2023. Questioning Walking Tourism from a Phenomenological Perspective: Epistemological and Methodological Innovations. *Humanities* 12: 65. <https://doi.org/10.3390/h12040065>

Received: 27 March 2023

Revised: 16 June 2023

Accepted: 6 July 2023

Published: 19 July 2023



**Copyright:** © 2023 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

## 1. Introduction

Walking tourism has increased in popularity over the course of recent decades, as demonstrated by the growing investments in infrastructure that may support this type of tourism, and as shown by the growing desire among tourists to engage with so-called "active" holidays; namely holidays that include sport and/or outdoor activities (Olafsdottir 2013; Weber 2001). A further element of success is described in terms of both the promotion and practice of former or newly invented pilgrimage routes (Munar et al. 2021; Scriven 2021) actualised under a post-secular understanding of spirituality (Nilsson and Tesfahuney 2018). A very representative example of this rise in Europe is the increase in the number of people walking the pilgrimage path *Camino de Santiago*; from approx. 55,000 to 350,000 between 2000 and 2019, only to fall back to 55,000 in 2020 with the introduction of "lockdowns" due to the spread of COVID-19. However, nearly 200,000 tourists/walkers returned to the *Camino* in 2021 (Oficina del Peregrino Catedral de Santiago 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022).

Walking tourism is currently chiefly classified under the "slow tourism" brand; a term that has earned fame in the last decade (Dickinson and Lumsdon 2010; Fullagar et al. 2012). From this perspective, walking tourism mainly denotes tourist experiences whose main motivation is the option to walk for an extensive time or distance (Dickinson and Lumsdon 2010). However, walking is also one of the most common mobility practices in the context of tourism (Ram and Hall 2018). For example, assuming an able-bodied position, tourist destinations can be readily explored by walking, strolling around, and experiencing places with all senses involved, in turn facilitating spatial engagement (Farkic et al. 2015; Hannam 2008).

Ecological, economic, educational, health, and social benefits are deemed to arise when engaging in on-foot leisure activities (Hall et al. 2018). In terms of the experiential benefits, walking provides a different prism through which people can encounter, be affected by, and affect (tourist) spaces, places, and landscapes (Rabbiosi 2021; Wylie 2005).

The aim of this article is to discuss walking tourism both as a tourist place performance and as an “emplaced” research method, so as to highlight how embodied sensations and emotions are entangled with affects, material practices, and cognitive reflections. The discussion in this article will be framed through a phenomenological lens influenced by two “turns” that have emerged in the last two decades in the Social Sciences and Humanities (SSHs), namely the performative (Bærenholdt et al. 2003; Coleman and Crang 2002; Edensor 2001) and the mobilities turns (Hannam 2008; Hannam et al. 2021; Hannam et al. 2006). Consequently, the article will also revise the advancements in phenomenological tourism scholarship in the past two decades.

The next section will briefly clarify what is meant by walking tourism in this article, before moving on to a discussion of the term “place performance”, focusing on how this latter concept intersects with mobilities debates from a phenomenological perspective. Phenomenological research focusing on the nexus between walking and tourism cannot be understood without explaining the associated methodological implications. In fact, phenomenological studies of walking tourism have also yielded significant methodological experimentations, which will be reviewed in the third section. A collective walking tourist experience performed by the two authors of this article—one as a researcher and the other as a university instructor—during a student trip will be referred to in the fourth section. This experience will be used to discuss the epistemological and methodological relationship associated with walking tourism research by focusing on embodied sensory experiences on the move, as well as the understanding of these by the group of walking students present on the trip. In conclusion, it is suggested that a phenomenological approach to walking tourism and the methodological experimentations this supports may prove especially useful for understanding the key issues connected with space, place, and mobilities, both for research and teaching purposes.

## 2. Walking in, and around, Tourism

Walking tourism, travel, or holidays all refer to tourist experiences, the chief motivations for which are provided by the option to walk for an extended time or distance. Often, these forms of tourism are labelled under the umbrella term “slow tourism” (Cisani and Rabbiosi 2023). The term is commonly used today to describe forms of holidaymaking or travel that differ from mainstream contemporary tourism in the context of more affluent countries (Dickinson and Lumsdon 2010; Fullagar et al. 2012). According to Lumsdon and McGrath (2011), slow tourism can be broken down into four main dimensions. The first is a counter-cultural perspective, which this kind of holidaymaking may represent in front of the encouragement to fast consumption that is typical of Western society. The second strand concerns the interaction with the locality, which is supposed to be more richly intertwined with slow tourism rather than other “faster” means of travelling or so-called “mass” tourism. The third relates to the mode of transport chosen to move within and reach the locality. Finally, one dimension of slow tourism may be listed according to the environmental consciousness that this form of tourism apparently demonstrates. Walking holidays are often performative of all four dimensions of slow tourism.

Walking encompasses time and rhythm (Küpers and Wee 2018), which, in the specific case of walking tourism, awakens the senses, facilitating a deeply situated spatio-temporal engagement (Rabbiosi 2021). This allows travellers to engage more, not only with the host community, the surrounding environment, and the local culture but also with themselves and each other. Greater self-esteem, relaxation, freedom, and absence of stress are some of the feelings associated with the experience of walking tourism (Davies 2016). These features make walking tourism a “caring” model, contributing to a shift towards a new type of lower environmental impact tourism that is said to promote responsibility and

solidarity ethics, as well as more profound community involvement (Kato 2018). Finally, intense temporary relationships among walkers can be developed due to the team spirit that the shared journey may generate (Scriven 2021).

However, walking is not necessarily a convivial, automatically incorporated, inclusive, and de-politicised act (Springgay and Truman 2019). First of all, for those who have been disabled since birth, through ill health, old age, or a physical accident, walking cannot be taken for granted and may require assistive technology. Secondly, walking tourism can be considered a “commodity” exclusive to Western societies, therefore it is no less intimately exclusive and colonialist than any other form of tourism. Where and who can walk is bound to the intersection of social structures, such as class, gender, culture, and religion, and this also concerns walking tourism. Recent criticism has highlighted the scant attention devoted to divergent bodies in walking tourism, such as queer and disabled bodies (Stanley 2020).

The notion of place performance was introduced at the end of the 1990s to stress the limitations of essentialised definitions and understandings of tourism (Edensor 1998). Tourism is, by contrast, a phenomenon in which definitions expressed in the form of a number of tourist arrivals or overnights, or by the visual of a postcard or an Instagram post, are always overcome on the grounds of practice. The notion of place performance has been widely theorized in tourism geographies, merging the influences of different thinkers within SSHs, from Erving Goffman to Pierre Bourdieu, and from Nigel Thrift to Judith Butler, to quote just a few. The performance or performative approach (the two terms are often used interchangeably, albeit having a different origin) in tourism chooses instead to focus on the “what happens” component of tourism, moving away from disembodied definitions of the tourist, or from bounded and unlively accounts of tourist destinations, thereby being intimately phenomenological in its epistemology.

Focussing on socio-material enactments (Rabbiosi 2016, 2021), the notion of place performance pinpoints a dynamic locative dimension, such that places—far from being closed and static spatial circumscriptions—are open, interactive, and are “in becoming”, produced by, and at the same time producers of, assemblages of human, non-human (animals, plants, viruses) and non-living bodies (objects, technologies, atmospheric particles). This understanding marks a shift from earlier phenomenological considerations of tourist performances, which mainly focus on human beings and embodied perspectives (Bærenholdt et al. 2003) towards a more “post-phenomenological” stance.

Adopting such an approach almost inevitably means coming closer to a “mobile ontology”, one “in which entities, subjects, spaces and worlds all emerge out of complex interacting mobilities at multiple scales, from the nano-level to the planetary” (Sheller 2021, p. 8). In fact, performances are never static, and nor are they homogenous or “pure”. Human and non-human entities are dynamically entangled with spaces, representations, and affects. Indeed, Tim Cresswell (2004) suggested that places are unstable stages for our ordinary performances, always subject to transformation. The founders of the so-called New Mobilities Paradigm looked to performances and performativities to better understand embodied tourist mobilities, spatial entanglements, and their interconnection with other mobilities, such as migratory, labour, and others that are so fuzzy as to not be easily distinguishable from one another (Duncan 2012; Hannam 2008; Sheller and Urry 2004).

All these influences are central to developing a better understanding of walking tourism. For instance, if one accepts that walking tourism exists under the slow tourism label, then it must be assumed that slowing down is always relational (Vannini 2014), a far less intuitive and complex action than is generally acknowledged (Cisani and Rabbiosi 2023). Walking tourism is about material practices merged with cognitive work and the emotions that arise while performing decelerations through an assemblage of bodies, objects, media, technologies, and time-space (Rabbiosi 2021).

Emotions can be understood as sensory, proprioceptive impulses that generate action, based on the production of visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile, and taste stimuli that only secondarily transform into feelings that can be articulated. Sensual and emotional engagement

play a significant role in tourism (Picard and Robinson 2012). Tourists may be confronted with previously unfamiliar places or return to familiar places to revive the memories and emotions connected with them (Seyfi et al. 2020). They can experience sensations of superficial excitement, but also deep connections with nature or the divine. Emotions can also be understood as ways of knowing, being, and interacting with places in the broadest sense (Anderson and Smith 2021). Associating attention with emotions creates concern for lived experiences and their representations, as well as for doing and performing that which is beyond representation (Pile 2010; Thrift 2008). This coming together is strictly connected to the phenomenological approach, which blends notions of self, bodily experience, and perceptual environments.

However, it must be asked how walking tourism can be explored from such a perspective. After having presented the epistemologies of walking tourism and place performances that result from a mobile ontology, the next section will examine methodologies that have been recently experimented with to better understand walking tourism within these frameworks.

### 3. Investigating Walking Tourism through Methodological Innovations

Researching walking tourism from a phenomenological perspective has always been a task closer to qualitative methodologies, as they draw attention to practices and their meanings. Ethnographic methods have played a major role in phenomenological studies of tourism (Andrews et al. 2018; Leite et al. 2019), including those inscribing the performance/performative and mobilities turn (Bærenholdt et al. 2003; Coleman and Crang 2002). However, the transformations that inform both ethnographic methods and walking tourism place performances have paved the way for a variety of fuzzy and creative methodological experimentations.

For instance, Witte (2021) revisited participant observation by taking a mobilities perspective. Inspired by the methodology of walkalongs (Anderson 2004), she explored walking tourism experiences in China, walking with walking tourists on one of the trails of China's Ancient Tea Horse Road. She was able to observe the socio-material entanglements walking tourism proffers, how walking tourist bodies were affected by the environment and their presence, as well as the interpretations walking tourists made of their experience while in motion. Witte (2021) effectively juxtaposed the predominant role of sight as a sense infusing the place performances of some tourists (in her case, this was mostly the case of Chinese tourists) against the role of other senses and feelings, which were, on the contrary, more impactful and important for other walking tourists (namely, European walkers searching to immerse with an unknown place, in the case she analysed). "Walking with walking tourists" helped the researcher understand that fatigue can be considered a positive feeling for some walkers, as it is felt as an embodiment of engagement in an outdoor, challenging activity. Fatigue emerges through socio-material relations, entangling bodies, imaginaries, and the specific material dimension, including way-finders, ground, animals, and vegetables, along the trail (Rabbiosi 2021).

Walking with walking tourists allows reflection upon a variety of diverse performances along the same walking trail, some more explicitly scripted by walking/tourism promoters, and others representing the challenge tourists pose to that same script. This method has been used by Sarah Peters (2019a) with creative intent. In her case, the understanding of socio-material relations along the famous *Camino de Santiago* through such a method served as a basis for playwriting, culminating in a verbatim theatre piece significantly called *Blister* (Peters 2019b). This enabled her to perform the nexus between the mental and physical challenge of long-distance walking, the inner travel that walking tourism might prompt, and the collaboration among walkers on all these sides as she performed on the trail.

Gathering transient feedback on what people do, and say about their doing, is not easy. Focussing on the North Wales Pilgrim's Way, Scriven (2021) distributed some pre-stamped postcards along the way, designed to facilitate walkers recording their experiences of walking on the route, and their motivations. This method proved valuable as a way to understand motivations as "animating forces that form the substance of understanding and



representing the path, adding to its layers" (Ingold 2007; quoted in Scriven 2021, p. 69) and the diverse personal, social, and spiritual interests of walkers, as well as how the pilgrimage route represents a challenge, a liminal space and a way to engage with both landscape and cultural heritage alongside the route. This approach reveals the agentic character of the route itself: the route offers personal and/or spiritual renewal, which emerged as a successful element in the research, whereas the harmony and generosity of the people who were met along the way afforded emotional encouragement. Finally, the research identified how immersion in nature was felt through spiritual lenses.

In his research into the experience of walking along the North Wales Pilgrim's Way, Scriven (2021) backed up data collected through postcards with auto-ethnographic accounts. This latter method was used by Rabbiosi (2021) to discuss the relationship between space, material practices, cognitive work, and emotions at work during a personal walking holiday. In this way, she contributed to the broader debate on walking tourism, revisiting the concept of "dwelling-in-motion" (Sheller and Urry 2006, p. 214), focusing on pace and rhythm, mundane technology, and affective atmospheres. In fact, auto-ethnography may serve the dual aim of providing a method of data collection, and a mode of analysis emphasizing the role of emotions, situated knowledge, and perception (Moss 2001) that could not be otherwise expressed.

Embodied learning is also at the core of Küpers and Wee's (2018) phenomenological understanding of walking as a way to reveal and revalue what is generally "unfelt, unseen, untouched, untasted and unsmelled and hence unknowable, unthinkable or unrealizable" in most tourism studies (p. 379). Their argument is that a phenomenological perspective can rework and reintegrate "embodied practices of learning and embodied learning in practice" (Küpers and Wee 2018, p. 379), thereby coming closer to Peters' (2019a) understanding of walking as a public pedagogy (see also Springgay and Truman 2019). In fact, Küpers and Wee (2018) refer to a field trip for a tourism education module they teach, in which walking was considered not only as an ordinary tourist practice, but also as a method to rethink tourism education in line with recent advancements in tourism studies (see also Meneghello et al. 2022).

Today, tourism research is traversing major methodological innovation, which may identify new potential areas of application for both quantitative and qualitative methods to answer the need for more sustainability in tourism (Xu et al. 2020). On one hand, technological tools are increasingly used to track flows of objects and people in the contexts of tourism and other forms of mobility (Shoval and Ahas 2016), which allow for analysing masses of data (Bertocchi et al. 2021). However, these tools have a weak capacity to acknowledge situated, embodied details and meanings. In contrast, the methodological experimentations described in this section permit the exploration of representations, meanings, and practices enacted through walking tourism place performances. All of these share a common interest in going beyond essentialist ways of understanding walking tourism and entering into interpretive positioning, which includes multi-sensory and emotional engagements. The studies they are a part of all consider walking tourism as both an object of observation and a "tool" with which to conduct enquiries. The majority of the methods presented respond to the call for mobile methodologies (Büscher and Urry 2009; Büscher et al. 2011) to align with the shift from a fixed ontology to a mobile ontology in SSHs (Sheller 2021; Urry 2000), as we have explained. Along these lines, we will present our own methodological and analytical experimentations in walking tourism in the next section.

#### **4. Sensory Embodiments and Place Performances on the Move along the St Anthony's Walk**

In this section, some results that emerged from a walking tourism experience performed as part of a student trip will be used to show that the emotional and sensory aspects of walking tourism are far wider than what may be revealed through a simple focus on landscape "sights". Data supporting this argument emerge from a combination of different methods in line with the methodological innovations that have been reviewed in

the previous section. In particular, data originated from walking ethnography as a mobile method (Witte 2021) and a geo-questionnaire. A geo-questionnaire is an online survey designed to allow for the easy collection of spatial data but is also effective for collecting data while moving, as it is provided on smartphones via an app (Czepkiewicz et al. 2018).

In the autumn of 2021/2022, Chiara (Author 1) and Sabrina (Author 2) had been separately working on a specific walking route, namely St Anthony's Walk. For Sabrina, this was part of her PhD research, which had a wider intent to enquire into the tourism–landscape nexus (Meneghello 2021, 2023); for Chiara it was a way to explore in more depth her work on the place performances of walking holidays (Cisani and Rabbiosi 2023; Rabbiosi 2021). In addition, for Chiara, it was a way to test a form of a mobile experiential learning approach to teaching (Küpers and Wee 2018), as part of a wider project on mobilities and pedagogy. Together, Chiara and Sabrina organised a two-day walking trip along St Anthony's Walk for some students as part of the activities developed in a course unit devoted to tourism and landscape promotion at the University of Padua, Italy (see also Meneghello et al. 2022). St Anthony's Walk is a walking trail that is currently being developed from a limited devotional route in the Italian north-eastern areas into a long-distance cultural route, extending from the far south of Italy to Padua. Due to this transformation, St Anthony's Walk is attracting the attention of institutions and operators within the framework of national and local tourism development strategies (Meneghello 2022).

The walking trip reported here expanded along 30 km from a “rurban” area—a hybrid sociospatial form where the rural and the urban are blurred (Woods 2009), which is typical of the northern region of Padua—to the city centre. The trip was performed by the two authors and 15 “student-cum-walking tourists”. In this article, this expression is used to reflect that students had been asked to engage in the trip not as researchers in search of an objective reality “out there” in the fieldwork, but as tourists. Students were asked, though, to be reflexive tourists—in line with the postmodern turn in tourism (Minca and Oakes 2006)—paying attention to their own embodied practices and sensorial reactions to the landscape they encountered. In this sense, tourist performativity was encouraged, not in order to influence the study presented here—albeit this situational context inevitably did—but as a way to learn about the topic of the course unit that framed the trip from their own walking experience, in line with auto-ethnographic principles (Rabbiosi 2021) and embodied learning (Küpers and Wee 2018). It is important to add that, during the trip, students were testing the digital geo-questionnaire that Sabrina was implementing as a primary tool in her research to capture the perceptual-emotional, spiritual, and social-recreational dimensions of the walking practice (Meneghello 2023).

The following analysis will consider both ethnographic notes collected through the geo-questionnaire, during the walking tourism performance, and the collective discussion among the participants that took place one week following the trip. As far as research ethics are concerned, students were informed in advance that they would be taking part in research during the walking trip. This was anticipated in class prior to the trip, while consent was obtained through the geo-questionnaire as well as by means of oral agreement recorded on the day of the collective discussion. Students have been given pseudonyms in the article to limit personal identification.

#### 4.1. Multisensory Experience

While performing the trip, student-cum-walking tourists were asked through closed-ended questions included in the geo-questionnaire how much their senses were involved; they reported that sight and hearing were the senses most engaged during the experience (Table 1).

This result is in line with broader research conducted all along St Anthony's Walk (Meneghello 2022). However, students' open-ended comments submitted through the geo-questionnaire, and the collective discussion that took place soon after the trip, revealed a more nuanced sensory experience, stressing that walking tourists' place performances are comprised of much more than visual engagements with the landscape.

**Table 1.** How much have your senses been involved?

	Sight	Hearing	Touch/Physical Contact	Smell	Taste
A lot or rather	14	13	7	5	2
A little or not at all	1	2	8	10	13
	15	15	15	15	15

Results from student-cum-walking tourists provided during the walking trip along St Anthony's Walk (12–13 November 2021).

Marco—a student—commented that he did not feel much involvement of sight, due to the monotony of the landscape along the walked part of the St Anthony's Walk. In fact, part of the trip was through a peri-urban area along a channel in the middle of a plain (it was also a grey, late autumn day). Marco continued: "The transition that took place between the small villages of the Veneto countryside, coming towards Padua, was really a perceived change, a change of landscape, and more than by sight it came to me by smell." A co-walker, Valentina, added that she smelt the scents of Padua's kitchens. Marco's and Valentina's declarations suggest that smell was a highly performative "emplaced" sense, marking the difference between moving through remote villages in the Veneto campaign towards the city of Padua. Marco added: "More than a specific smell, I perceived a change in the quality of the air; I felt it was unhealthier, harder to breathe," pointing to a more general atmospheric sensation—olfactory, but not only so—identifying the (bad) change in the quality of air the closer the walkers came to the urban area.

The rural/urban shift was also marked by changing haptic sensations, from the ground to the tarmac. Indeed, these aspects were supported by a significantly evolving soundscape, from a more silent one to a noisier, industrialized one. However, the student-cum-walking tourists also noticed the barking of dogs guarding the typical independent houses of the countryside and the sporadic but irritating noise of trucks driving along secondary roads. Possibly, the fact that they were breaking the silence in a solitary and idyllic landscape meant that dogs' barking was sensed more than it would have been in another, noisier situation. Another sound entangled in the walking trip place performance was that of the walking group's own voices, a sound connected to what characterized the experience: namely, walking together.

While taste appeared to be the last sense involved, our student-cum-walking tourists mentioned the meals over the two days as significant moments. Contrary to what one may imagine, the taste experience along the way was far from gastronomic. It was the sober character of the meals the walking group consumed during their walking trip that emerged as particularly performative. The group slept in a monastery and were delighted with an especially simple dinner, which many associated with their childhood experiences. On the second day of walking, the group walked with a packed lunch bag that had been provided by the monastery where they had slept. Once the bag was opened, the students realized it did not contain any of the branded "made in" delicatessens that are becoming increasingly characteristic in touristscapes. To their astonishment, the packed lunch included an "old-style" kind of cutlet sandwich, a nourishing but simple snack. Some ate this while walking, others decided to gather for an improvised picnic along the channel they were walking along, "mooring" on the riverbank. The picnic was performed in the company of a nutria (coypu) who was swimming from one side of the channel to the other. This taste-based performance was mentioned as much as the visual performance of the beautiful views experienced along the trip, and the sound performance provided by environmental sounds.

#### 4.2. Emotions and Feelings

Feeling tired was one of the sensations felt along the way, but it was not the most significant. As Marco declared in the collective discussion that took place after the two-day trip, tiredness was something that a walking tourist would expect a priori, something they would be ready to embrace, as reported by [Scriven \(2021\)](#) and [Witte \(2021\)](#). For some, it

was a researched element predicted to be present in such an experience, one not worthy of being identified as a negative feeling or sensation.

Sadness was generated by the encounter with heavy industrialization in the area walked through, especially as this became more evident approaching the town. As mentioned, place was performed through the blending of a variety of elements (sounds, atmospheres, buildings, traffic, animals, etc.) whose entanglements combined and recombined in a transient way, and the changing landscape was perceived beyond sight. Boredom was also a peculiar sensation, sometimes linked to the repetitiveness of the landscape we traversed.

At times, some student-cum-walking tourists experienced a sense of being “out of place” (Cresswell 1996) along the route. Valentina mentioned that she perceived her difference in front of other moving entities; for instance, in front of cars and trucks, as the walking route often coincided with the motorized road, something that, as a tourist, she would have not wanted to encounter. Other parts of the route brought together walkers and cyclists, and Francesca admitted that she felt herself to be a menaced minority relative to cyclists. In addition, having walked at least partially along a route that is not yet well known, some students noticed that their tourist walking body was perceived as an “intruder” by the local community. These sensations led the walkers to question the tourist appeal of the St Anthony’s Walk.

While this sense of separation in front of the walked environment was perceived, a sense of community was shared among the student-cum-walking tourists, a sense that actually increased the more they walked together. Walking together was perceived as a meaningful experience per se, not disconnected from a specifically emotional touch. Student-cum-walking tourists specified that the interaction generated by walking together infused them with a mutual sense of friendship in addition to personal feelings of serenity, strength, and energy. Carla, for instance, confessed that she experienced joy along the path, because of the “marvellous group” she was with. Indeed, positive emotions may emerge from the social dynamics generated through social interaction during a tourist experience (Sanagustín-Fons et al. 2020).

Paola listed her positive emotions while walking under the heading “sharing or the sense of belonging”. Notably, she had walked with a group of religious pilgrims she encountered along the way. She explained she was expecting a solitary and silent experience, albeit in a group. By contrast, she continued, the walking experience turned out to be a talkative one, involving shared comments on the landscape walked and even acts of solidarity (as in the case of Paola, who needed someone to carry her food as it did not fit in her backpack, and was rapidly offered help).

Some students also highlighted the relevance of animals and vegetables as non-human presences interacting in different ways with them along the route. Diverse reactions were recorded, from the annoyance at the frequent barking of dogs inside private properties (whose sound was also noted as a sensory part of the experience) to the positive feeling of hope for the discovery that some interstices of non-human living life (grey herons, coypus, and a goat) still exist amid densely urbanized areas.

“Co-dwelling in motion” has been experienced in a variety of ways during the walking/tourist experience. As mentioned, St Anthony’s Walk is a pilgrimage route and can be experienced either with a religious, a spiritual, a more mundane point of view, or sometimes a combination of the three (and more). Our student-cum-walking tourists mostly declared no religious intent, with some even criticizing the devotional rituals other walkers were performing along the way. The majority of the students did not even know the story of St Anthony. On the second day of walking, while moving along the straight “monotonous” leg of the path, Franco decided to search on his smartphone for the list of miracles that make St Anthony the object of religious devotion among Catholics. Then, he started reading aloud the miracles, in a very emphatic way, while continuing walking; not only did this performance generate hilarity, but also helped compact the moving group around the walking performer. In addition, the performance provided useful information connected with



the devotional heritage of the route on which the walking trip was performed. Later on, the performance also helped the participants turn into something intelligible the sculptures and paintings of the life of St Anthony that decorate the interior of St Anthony Cathedral in Padua, our walking trip's final destination.

## 5. Conclusions

As already emphasized, collecting data about transient experiences is not an easy task. While recent positivist and post-positivist accounts of tourism are largely reliant on tracking technologies, principally for sustainable tourism management (Xu et al. 2020), in this article we have explored place performances "on the move", namely walking tourism performances. In doing so, this article has contributed to phenomenological perspectives with regard to tourism studies by offering a novel methodological approach combining different walking methods, including walking ethnography, auto-ethnography, and the use of a geo-questionnaire administered while walking.

A phenomenological perspective seeks to pay attention to the embodied sensory experiences of tourism as much as its interpretation. The study presented here was not able to encompass large-scale research, but the wealth of data generated by the suggested phenomenological epistemology transformed into a research methodology should not be underestimated. Indeed, phenomenological epistemologies and methodologies may represent "trouble" for tourism theorizations (Franklin and Crang 2001). However, Carina Ren (2021) concurs that it is important to "stay" with this trouble if the aim of a study is to deliver richer accounts of tourism. To this end, Ren advocates the contribution of relational feminist thinking (Haraway 2016; Puig de la Bellacasa 2017) and alternative and collaborative ways of knowing. This study responds to this invitation, as what has been presented here is the result of collaboration among researchers, but most importantly between researchers and students, as much as between space and landscape, human and non-human entities.

Not only in terms of research, walking together emerged as a significant component of the tourist experience along St Anthony's Walk. Both data collected through the geo-questionnaire and the ethnographic fieldnotes highlighted how sensual and emotional reactions depended on the inter-subjective relationships experienced while moving. Indeed, most walking tourism place performances correspond to performances of co-dwelling in motion within a group of walkers, as much as with local inhabitants, nature, and atmosphere. These interactions have forged diverse assemblages of sensory and emotional experiences and have challenged the common image of walking tourism as a solitary experience.

The study at the origin of this article is indeed subjective, as it was the result of a specific walking trip, and the situational context of the designed research may have encouraged some forms of identity performances. The fact of being part of a student trip, the joint experience of walking together, as well as the use of a geo-questionnaire, characterized the experience. These aspects forced insightful reflections, pushing the student-cum-walking tourists to be reflective and, in so doing, learn from their own experiences. In this sense, while we have followed the suggestions of Küpers and Wee (2018) with regard to using walking as a pedagogy for learning about tourism, we have merged it with a further tool—the geo-questionnaire—enhancing both the learning potential of the experience and methodological experimentations in mobilities and performance/performative tourism research.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization, C.R.; methodology, S.M.; formal analysis, C.R.; data curation, S.M.; writing—original draft preparation, C.R.; writing—review and editing, C.R. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Funding:** This research has been performed under the framework of the Centre for Advanced Studies Mobility & Humanities (MoHu) of the University of Padua's Department of Historical and Geographic Sciences and the Ancient World (DiSSGeA).

**Informed Consent Statement:** Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## References

- Anderson, Jon. 2004. Talking Whilst Walking: A Geographical Archaeology of Knowledge. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 36: 254–61. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Anderson, Kay, and Susan J. Smith. 2021. Editorial: Emotional Geographies. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 26: 7–10. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Andrews, Hazel, Takamitsu Jimura, and Laura Dixon, eds. 2018. *Tourism Ethnographies: Ethics, Methods, Application and Reflexivity*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge.
- Bærenholdt, Jørgen Ole, Michael Haldrup, Jonas Larsen, and John Urry. 2003. *Performing Tourist Places*. Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate.
- Bertocchi, Dario, Nicola Camatti, and Jan van der Borg. 2021. Tourism Peaks on the Three Peaks. Using Big Data to Monitor Where, When and How Many Visitors Impact the Dolomites UNESCO World Heritage Site. *Rivista Geografica Italiana* CXXVIII: 59–81. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Büscher, Monika, and John Urry. 2009. Mobile Methods and the Empirical. *European Journal of Social Theory* 12: 99–116. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Büscher, Monika, John Urry, and Katian Witchger, eds. 2011. *Mobile Methods*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge.
- Cisani, Margherita, and Chiara Rabbiosi. 2023. Exploring Tourism ‘Slow’ Mobilities. In *Reimagining Mobilities across the Humanities*. Edited by Lucio Biasiori, Federico Mazzini and Chiara Rabbiosi. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, pp. 156–69.
- Coleman, Simon, and Mike Crang, eds. 2002. *Tourism: Between Place and Performance*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Cresswell, Tim. 1996. *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Cresswell, Tim. 2004. *Place: A Short Introduction*. Malden: Blackwell Pub.
- Czepkiewicz, Michał, Piotr Jankowski, and Zbigniew Zwoliński. 2018. Geo-questionnaire: A Spatially Explicit Method for Eliciting Public Preferences, Behavioural Patterns, and Local Knowledge—An Overview. *Quaestiones Geographicae* 37: 177–90. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Davies, Nick. 2016. Who Walks, Where and Why? Practitioners’ Observations and Perspectives on Recreational Walkers at UK Tourist Destinations. *Annals of Leisure Research* 21: 553–74. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Dickinson, Janet, and Les Lumsdon. 2010. *Slow Travel and Tourism*. London and Washington, DC: Earthscan.
- Duncan, Tara. 2012. The ‘Mobilities Turn’ and the Geography of Tourism. In *The Routledge Handbook of Tourism Geographies*. Edited by Julie Wilson. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, pp. 113–19.
- Edensor, Tim. 1998. *Tourists at the Taj: Performance and Meaning at a Symbolic Site*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge.
- Edensor, Tim. 2001. Performing Tourism, Staging Tourism: (Re)Producing Tourist Space and Practice. *Tourist Studies* 1: 59–81. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Farkic, Jelena, Dusan Peric, Miha Lesjak, and Mitja Petelin. 2015. Urban Walking: Perspectives of Locals and Tourists. *Geographica Pannonica* 19: 212–22. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Franklin, Adrian, and Mike Crang. 2001. The Trouble with Tourism and Travel Theory? *Tourist Studies* 1: 5–22. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Fullagar, Simone, Kevin Markwell, and Erika Wilson, eds. 2012. *Slow Tourism: Experiences and Mobilities*. Bristol: Channel View Publ.
- Hall, Colin Michael, Yael Ram, and Noam Shoval. 2018. Introduction. Walking—More than Pedestrian. In *The Routledge International Handbook of Walking*. Edited by Colin Michael Hall, Yael Ram and Noam Shoval. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, pp. 1–24.
- Hannam, Kevin. 2008. Tourism Geographies, Tourist Studies and the Turn towards Mobilities. *Geography Compass* 2: 127–39. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Hannam, Kevin, Gareth Butler, Alexandra Witte, and Dennis Zuev. 2021. Tourist’s Mobilities: Walking, Cycling, Driving and Waiting. *Tourist Studies* 21: 57–69. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Hannam, Kevin, Mimi Sheller, and John Urry. 2006. Editorial: Mobilities, Immobilities and Moorings. *Mobilities* 1: 1–22. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Haraway, Donna J. 2016. *Stay with the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Ingold, Tim. 2007. *Lines: A Brief History*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge.
- Kato, Kumi. 2018. Walking to Care. Pilgrimage as Slow Tourism Development—Kumano-Kodo Pilgrimage, Wakayama, Japan. In *The Routledge International Handbook of Walking*. Edited by Colin Michael Hall, Yael Ram and Noam Shoval. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, pp. 232–41.
- Küpers, Wendelin, and Desmond Wee. 2018. Tourist Cities as Embodied Places of Learning: Walking in the ‘Fields’ of Shanghai and Lisbon. *International Journal of Tourism Cities* 4: 376–90. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Leite, Naomi, Quetzil Eugenio Castañeda, and Kathleen M. Adams, eds. 2019. *The Ethnography of Tourism: Edward Bruner and Beyond. Anthropology of Tourism*. Lanham Boulder and London: Lexington Books.
- Lumsdon, Les, and Peter McGrath. 2011. Developing a Conceptual Framework for Slow Travel: A Grounded Theory Approach. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 19: 265–79. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Meneghello, Sabrina. 2021. The Tourism–Landscape Nexus: Assessment and Insights from a Bibliographic Analysis. *Land* 10: 417. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Meneghello, Sabrina. 2022. In Cammino sulle Orme di Sant’Antonio. Georeferenziazione dei Paesaggi Significativi tra Esigenze Spirituali e Valorizzazione dei Territori Attraversati. In *Itinerari per la Rigenerazione Territoriale tra Sviluppo Reticolari e Sostenibili*. Edited by Luisa Spagnoli. Milano: FrancoAngeli, pp. 501–9.
- Meneghello, Sabrina. 2023. Mapping Tourist Landscapes in Pandemic Times: A Dwelling-in-Motion Perspective. *Tourism Geographies* 1–16. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

- Meneghello, Sabrina, Monica Meini, Andrea Petrella, and Chiara Rabbiosi. 2022. The Landscape-Tourism Nexus as a Learning Object. Comparing two Italian Experiences in Geography Higher Education. *J-Reading. Journal of Research and Didactics in Geography* 2: 51–61. [CrossRef]
- Minca, Claudio, and Tim Oakes, eds. 2006. *Travels in Paradox: Remapping Tourism*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Moss, Pamela. 2001. *Placing Autobiography in Geography*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.
- Munar, Ana María, Jane W. Meged, Mads Bødker, and Cecilie Dam Wiedemann. 2021. Existential Walking. *Annals of Tourism Research* 87: 103118. [CrossRef]
- Nilsson, Mats, and Mekonnen Tesfahuney. 2018. The Post-Secular Tourist: Re-Thinking Pilgrimage Tourism. *Tourist Studies* 18: 159–76. [CrossRef]
- Oficina del Peregrino Catedral de Santiago. 2019. Informe Estadístico. Año 2018. Santiago de Compostela. Available online: <http://oficinadelperegrino.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/peregrinaciones2018.pdf> (accessed on 27 March 2023).
- Oficina del Peregrino Catedral de Santiago. 2020. Informe Estadístico. Año 2019. Santiago de Compostela. Available online: <http://oficinadelperegrino.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/peregrinaciones2019.pdf> (accessed on 27 March 2023).
- Oficina del Peregrino Catedral de Santiago. 2021. Informe Estadístico. Año 2020. Santiago de Compostela. Available online: <https://catedral.df-server.info/est/peregrinaciones2020.pdf> (accessed on 27 March 2023).
- Oficina del Peregrino Catedral de Santiago. 2022. Informe Estadístico. Año 2021. Santiago de Compostela. Available online: <https://catedral.df-server.info/est/peregrinaciones2021.pdf> (accessed on 27 March 2023).
- Olafsdottir, Gunnthóra. 2013. '... Sometimes You've Just Got to Get Away': On Trekking Holidays and Their Therapeutic Effect. *Tourist Studies* 13: 209–31. [CrossRef]
- Peters, Sarah. 2019a. The Pedagogy of Pilgrimage on the Camino de Santiago Written into Performance. *Journal of Public Pedagogies* 4: 74–80. [CrossRef]
- Peters, Sarah, dir. 2019b. Blisters. Available online: <https://apt.org.au/product/blister-3/> (accessed on 14 July 2023).
- Picard, David, and Mike Robinson, eds. 2012. *Emotion in Motion: Tourism, Affect and Transformation*. Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate.
- Pile, Steven. 2010. Emotions and Affect in Recent Human Geography. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 35: 5–20. [CrossRef]
- Puig de la Bellacasa, María. 2017. *Matters of Care. Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds*. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press.
- Rabbiosi, Chiara. 2016. Place Branding Performances in Tourist Local Food Shops. *Annals of Tourism Research* 60: 154–68. [CrossRef]
- Rabbiosi, Chiara. 2021. Performing a Walking Holiday: Routing, Immersing and Co-Dwelling. *Tourist Studies* 21: 367–86. [CrossRef]
- Ram, Yael, and Colin Michael Hall. 2018. Walkable Places for Visitors. Assessing and Designing for Walkability. In *The Routledge International Handbook of Walking*. Edited by Colin Michael Hall, Yael Ram and Noam Shoval. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, pp. 311–29.
- Ren, Carina. 2021. (Staying with) the Trouble with Tourism and Travel Theory? *Tourist Studies* 21: 133–40. [CrossRef]
- Sanagustín-Fons, M. Victoria, Luis B. Tobar-Pesántez, and Rafael Ravina-Ripoll. 2020. Happiness and Cultural Tourism: The Perspective of Civil Participation. *Sustainability* 12: 3465. [CrossRef]
- Scriven, Richard. 2021. A 'New' Walking Pilgrimage: Performance and Meaning on the North Wales Pilgrim's Way. *Landscape Research* 46: 64–76. [CrossRef]
- Seyfi, Siamak, Colin Michael Hall, and S. Mostafa Rasoolimanesh. 2020. Exploring Memorable Cultural Tourism Experiences. *Journal of Heritage Tourism* 15: 341–57. [CrossRef]
- Sheller, Mimi. 2021. *Advanced Introduction to Mobilities*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Sheller, Mimi, and John Urry, eds. 2004. *Tourism Mobilities: Places to Play, Places in Play*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge.
- Sheller, Mimi, and John Urry, eds. 2006. The New Mobilities Paradigm. *Environment and Planning A* 38: 207–26. [CrossRef]
- Shoval, Noam, and Rein Ahas. 2016. The Use of Tracking Technologies in Tourism Research: The First Decade. *Tourism Geographies* 18: 587–606. [CrossRef]
- Springgay, Stephanie, and Sarah E. Truman. 2019. Walking in/as Publics: Editors Introduction. *Journal of Public Pedagogies* 4: 1–12. [CrossRef]
- Stanley, Phiona. 2020. Unlikely Hikers? Activism, Instagram, and the Queer Mobilities of Fat Hikers, Women Hiking Alone, and Hikers of Colour. *Mobilities* 15: 241–56. [CrossRef]
- Thrift, Nigel. 2008. *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge.
- Urry, John. 2000. *Sociology Beyond Societies: Mobilities for the Twenty First Century*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge.
- Vannini, Phillip. 2014. Slowness and Deceleration. In *The Routledge Handbook of Mobilities*. Edited by Peter Adey, David Bissell and Kevin Hannam. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, pp. 116–124.
- Weber, Karin. 2001. Outdoor Adventure Tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research* 28: 360–77. [CrossRef]
- Witte, Alexandra. 2021. Revisiting Walking as Mobile Place-Making Practice: A Discursive Perspective. *Tourism Geographies* 25: 334–56. [CrossRef]
- Woods, Michael. 2009. Rural Geography: Blurring Boundaries and Making Connections. *Progress in Human Geography* 33: 849–58. [CrossRef]

- Wylie, John. 2005. A Single Day's Walking: Narrating Self and Landscape on the South West Coast Path. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 30: 234–47. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Xu, Feifei, Nicholas Nash, and Lorraine Whitmarsh. 2020. Big Data or Small Data? A Methodological Review of Sustainable Tourism. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 28: 144–63. [[CrossRef](#)]

**Disclaimer/Publisher's Note:** The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.