Vol 13| Issue 1 (2025) | pp. 149-170

JOURNAL OF
Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice

https://jpaap.ac.uk/

Detour from the studio: Novelty and walking as an approach to decentre studio learning

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Abstract

This small-scale case study explores the effects of paired walking with Year 3 (SCQF Level 9) interior design students. It seeks to understand how outdoor walks away from the studio foster pertinent and contextual discussions, both during the walk and within their ongoing studio activities. I introduced students to a new small-scale practice-based activity of paired walking, the design of which drew inspiration from collaborative learning, art walking practices, and musical walking scores. Utilising Reflexive Thematic Analysis, I conceptualised the students' engagement, management, and recognition of the value of their experiences during the activity and its impact on their project development. Using a purposively selected cohort as a *critical case sample* (Bryman, et al., 2021, p. 379) working on a project related to, and timely to, the area of research, I asked all learners in this cohort to complete the walking activity as part of their learning.

The results highlight the entangled multi-modal learning experience of paired walking, revealing the interplay of expectations and experiences of this 'decentred' learning environment. The decentring, moving a central narrative to the side to understand alternative perspectives of space and the influence of *more knowledgeable others* away from the studio and the tutor enabled a complex renegotiation between the learner, subject, and context. This research underscores the potential for novelty to engender robust experiential learning experiences. However, a *decentred* approach to learning may make the recognition of learning less accessible due to its unfamiliar and displaced nature, potentially impacting participation. Participants reported cognitive shifts in their immediate project and their approach to utilising spaces beyond the formal teaching areas as learning tools. These findings encourage us to consider ways to embed novelty and support learners in recognising 'decentred' activities as learning moments.

Keywords: studio-pedagogy, paired walking, decentering, engagement, experiential learning

Introduction

> The eye is quick, active, it thinks it has understood everything, grasped it all. When you are walking, nothing really moves: it is rather that presence is slowly established in the body.
>
> (Gros, 2015, p. 38)

Research context

Exploring projects' sites, architecture, community, and context through walks is widely believed to be valuable learning (Springgay & Truman, 2018). This approach enriches learners' understanding and fosters their decision-making skills, as several researchers suggest (Batic, 2011; Chiarella & Vurro, 2020; Kesim & Yöney, 2021). In my experience, conversations with learners during site-visits have been intriguing,

insightful, and inspiring. However, it is important to note that these site-visits are rare and demand significant staff and organisational resources. While a valuable process, with students bringing unique experiences back to the classroom, it is not a common part of studio activity.

Informal observations and reflections on learners have motivated me to explore walking discussions (Kinney, 2017) with my learners within the current culture of studio pedagogy, which privileges desk-based research and activity over live, contextual observations. The learners who are the focus of this study were undertaking a project that required them to select a site and project typology using relevant and timely real-world contextual observations. Amato (2004) describes how "the walker moves and becomes the city he or she walks" (p. 273); Goertz (2018) builds on this by considering how walking transforms gathered information into original, innovative thinking. Within walking interviews, Bilsland and Siebert (2023) examine how walking side by side reduces power imbalances and encourages spontaneous conversations. Inspired by the potential to activate observation and foster discussion, it provided an impetus to conceive an activity that structures movement through the city, offering a flexible framework for site-visits not confined to a specific location.

Research aim

This study aimed to explore Year 3 (SCQF Level 9) learners' experiences of walking discussions. The introduction of this new element of teaching was part of the learners' Interior Design program at Glasgow School of Art, specifically the *Manifesto Project,* which ran from January to April 2024. The purpose was to investigate whether walking influences the students' discussions during their design project, both during the walk and in subsequent studio-based activities, to explore the potential of using walking as a pedagogic tool for place-contingent student projects.

Miles and Libersat (2016) describe a connection between the artistic act of walking and the structures and pedagogies of arts education. They focus on the link between walking and mapping and how this "creates connections between sites, people, and communities and engages the walker in interpretation and manipulation of the built environment" (Miles & Libersat, 2016, p. 354). Furthermore, they prioritise *travel over destination* and link play, power, and pedagogy, suggesting the value of getting lost as both practice and metaphor for education.

These observations prompted me to consider my approach to defining destinations and capturing a collective physical mapping of routes. Initially, I intended to frame destinations as open-ended invitations for exploration. However, by sharing a photograph of each location, I unintentionally introduced a challenge. Additionally, asking participants to record their routes on a shared map to visualise the collective mapping of the city created a sense of responsibility to design interesting journeys. These actions inadvertently gamified the experience, somewhat undermining the original intention of encouraging participants to embrace the possibility of getting lost.

Through observations and initial reading, I aimed to understand better how I can support my learners in mapping the city, translating their observations and embodied experiences of being in a place, and bringing these back to the studio context to enable sharing and collective creative development.

I explore the role of the studio as a place and enabler of discussion; walking as a research method; how artists direct walkers through instructions, voice, and artefacts; and how walking is generally understood in Higher Education around well-being, orientation, and field trips.

Research question

Through a qualitative case study, the following research question will be explored:

> *To what extent can small group walking activities promote relevant and contextual place-contingent discussions among interior design students?*

Building on literature and my experience in education; walking as an artistic practice; walking as a research method; educational site visits; and places, I have formulated hypotheses that have guided my research question. I propose that a semi-structured walking activity can initiate a discussion between students relevant to their current study and that these discussions can be place-activated by the locations they visit. These conversations can foster further discussions that build upon shared and divergent experiences during the walk and subsequent discussions in the studio.

Literature review

Studio pedagogy

The design studio, as a learning space in higher education and the projects within design education, is repeatedly conceived as a facsimile of professional practice; they are a *practicum* (Schön, 1987), where the studio and associated projects echo the real world of practice, simplifying and reducing risks and complications. While this description provides an insight into how educators and students conceive the studio, it can negate the complexity of the specifics of the learning environment.

The Design Studio in education is both a place for learning and a way of learning. It is a "social learning environment where learning is visible and open to discussion through active participation" (Orr & Shreeve, 2018). Through creating a collaborative learning environment where discourse can lead to understanding and misunderstanding, Orr and Shreeve (2018, p. 152) examine the importance of providing learners with opportunities to consolidate their understanding and collaboratively explore differences to develop their knowledge. They also recognise that learners' prior experiences significantly affect their understanding of the specialised language used in the studio, and they highlight the importance of scaffolding conversations to support learners in accessing the learning opportunities of spoken language.

The nature of the studio as a social learning space means it provides continuous feedback through dialogic exchange in various ways: studio culture, discussion groups, iterative design process and reviews. Learning is through iterative *practice*, teaching supports and comments on that practice.

In my and my learner's context, the studio is a constantly available space *owned* by the program and the students that serves many functions. It is *ours* and provides a consistent, permanent physical location to make work in, leave work in progress, be active, be quiet, and come together.

Collaborative learning

Slavin (1996) proposes a set of themes to explore collaborative learning through Social Cohesion and Cognitive Elaboration, which are particularly relevant in the studio context. These lenses allow me to explore learners activating existing memory and knowledge and sharing and reframing that within a shared experience, both processes made tangible in the studio context. The opportunity to elaborate and explain consolidates the knowledge for the explainer. Notably, O'Donnell and Dansereau (1992) highlight that while

discussion benefits learning more than no discussion, the person who receives the greatest benefit is the sharer of previous knowledge. This highlights a perennial challenge of the studio environment: relocating the role of more knowledgeable others (Vygotsky, 1978) from lecturer to student and moving towards student to student. Allowing learners to work directly on reframing and re-contextualising creates a significant learning opportunity by creating a framework for exploring ownership and value of preexisting knowledge and how the role of learners can be supported in creating agency within the group dynamics.

Considering power dynamics and creating agency in discussions, an exploration into walking research methods suggested to me that paired walking (Holton, 2014; Kinney, 2017; Carpiano, 2009) offered a strategy that has the potential to address power imbalances, which aligned with my existing recognition of the impact of *side-by-side* conversations as relevant to supporting peers to work effectively together. Additionally, walking outwith the physical studio allows for the leveraging of an alternate context to support a productive conversation. However, these walking interviews are based on the assertion that an interviewer is acting as an enabler. One of my questions about O'Donnell and Dansereau's (1992) observations on the benefit of sharing knowledge is whether there is a way to create an artefact that acts as an enabler, handing over the role of interviewer to the learners so that the role of an expert can move freely between the participants.

When thinking about how artefacts can enable conversation, I considered Janet Cardiff's works, *Night Walk for Edinburgh* (2021) and *The Missing Voice: Case Study B* (1999), which are both works which overlay recordings of Cardiff's voice with sounds. She guides her audience through spaces, allowing her to distance herself from the participants' experience while still acting as a guide or prompt. She takes participants on journeys through urban places, constructing stories that interact with locations she and the participant co-occupy at different times. This trace of participation and participation process exists in a personal experience, as the audience is wearing headphones. This technology would limit learners' ability to talk to one another effectively, but it invited me to explore other art walking practices, theoretical and practical.

Art walks

Situated as I am within an Art School, the term flâneur is in common parlance, which I need to be cognisant of when framing a discussion around walking as a practice for art school students. Bassett (2004) provides a helpful overview of the flâneur within a framework of psychogeography, an activity that demands new ways of mapping and embracing feelings and consciousness. Both Gros (2015) and Solnit (2022) explore the flâneur, a concept conceived by philosopher Walter Benjamin as a solo observer, a subversive act, taking time to slow down, to be intentionally unintentional. This act has no destination in mind but rather an invitation to explore. While this practice of walking and observing may provide insight, it challenges formal teaching and discussion. Furthermore, the unfocused exploration devalues the site-contingency that Interior Designers can leverage in their research and exploration.

In Fredric Gros's *A Philosophy of Walking* (2015), he goes beyond the concept of flâneur and explores the values of walking solo, including solitude, silence, and escape. This provides insights into the potential benefits of solo walking, slowness, energy, and repetition, as well as points of departure for exploring paired walking.

Artist, visual, music, and performance scores provide a set of methods for exploring pace, place, and participation. Elena Biserna's *Walking From Scores* (2022) provides a comprehensive compendium of "site-specific protocols, instructions and textual and graphic scores centred on walking" (Biserna, 2022, p.

19). The flâneur and the work of Janet Cardiff are explored; beyond these approaches, a whole section of the book is curated for their collective and participatory construct, which interacts with space, place, and society. Later in this study, I highlighted several scores that influenced my research design, especially concerning navigation, rhythm and participation.

LISTEN (1966) by Max Neuhaus (1979, ft. in Biserna, 2022 p. 311) was initially conceived as a walking tour led by Neuhaus and evolved into a physical invitation, a postcard or sticker that invites anyone whose gaze lands on it to listen (Murph, 2017) creating an open do-it-yourself approach to listening. This provided an approach for exploring the tension between my role as teacher, as the active agent in the discussion, and the possible relocation of this responsibility into others' control and random interactions. As Murph highlights, Neuhaus is interested in creating meaning through interaction by removing the composer or enabler from the location of the work, relocating this guiding voice to an artefact.

Walking as pedagogy

Walking as Pedagogy by Karein K. Goertz (2018) from the *Routledge International Handbook of Walking* provides an insight into how millennial students and institutions perceive and value walking in US college education. Recognising the influence of the US college campus layout and the move away from car ownership among students, the chapter provides an affirmative invitation to embrace walking. Goertz explores a broad range of walking contexts, including student as walker, orientation, academic skill and practice. Goertz highlights well-being, a recurring theme in walking and higher education literature (Ferdman, 2019; Ribeiro-Silva, et al., 2022); however, this is not the focus of my investigation.

Goertz claims that becoming a student coincides with becoming a daily walker; this is true for several learners within my context. However, my experience points to many students not exploring their surroundings through walking. I consider my observation parallel to Goertz's assertion that walking provides an effective way to develop spatial orientation and discover the campus and beyond (Goertz, 2018, p. 57). There is value in specific walking activities to encourage this engagement with the place. Furthermore, it highlights the value of walking side-by-side to promote more open conversation (Goertz, 2018, p. 61), which aligns with Kinney's (2017) observations on paired walking. This indicates that paired walking is an appropriate approach to enabling valuable discussion among students as a pedagogy that can leverage conversation beyond informal chat and towards sense-making.

In my research and reflections, *walking* could be a loaded term. It is used as shorthand for a physically contingent act of navigating and moving through space, embodying more than mere locomotion—it encompasses the journey's spatial, sensory, and contextual dimensions. The implications of both the word and the act of walking are explored further in the research design.

De-centring

De-centring is approached from various perspectives throughout this case study. While a comprehensive review of de-centring is beyond the scope of this paper, I include touchpoints on how I conceived the term and approached the task of relocating the familiar loci of study for my learners. While examining where Vygotsky's (1978) *More Knowledgeable Other* could exist within my teaching practice, testing the relocation of the physical setting of the studio, and using the city as a resource for the expansion of the reference framework for interior design students, I was informed by the insights of hooks (2014) and Freire (2015),

which seeks to explore alternative narratives and challenge assumptions about knowledge acquisition as a passive, packaged process.

Synthesis

Through a focused literature review, I explored collaborative learning in an art and design studio setting. My exploration has emphasised the importance of discourse in promoting understanding and has underscored collaboration to consolidate knowledge and explore differences. Additionally, I have acknowledged the impact of learners' prior experiences on their understanding and highlighted the need for scaffolding conversations to facilitate access to specialised language.

Drawing insights from Orr and Shreeve's (2018) and Slavin's (1996) works, I have analysed collaborative learning through the lenses of social cohesion and cognitive elaboration, which are highly relevant to a studio environment. The review has emphasised the significance of discussions in learning and their value for knowledge sharing. I have also delved into walking research methods to address power imbalances and facilitate productive conversations outside the studio.

Furthermore, the review has explored the role of artefacts as enablers of conversation, drawing parallels from works by Janet Cardiff and Max Neuhaus. I have considered the use of walking as a pedagogical tool and its implications for spatial orientation, discovery, and open conversation among students.

Overall, this literature review reinforces the importance of exploring the agency of place in research and sense-making and the potential of novel approaches like paired walking to foster conversational moments within the studio context. It has encouraged me to reconsider pedagogical practices to leverage walking for observation, collaboration, and deep learning (Figure 1).

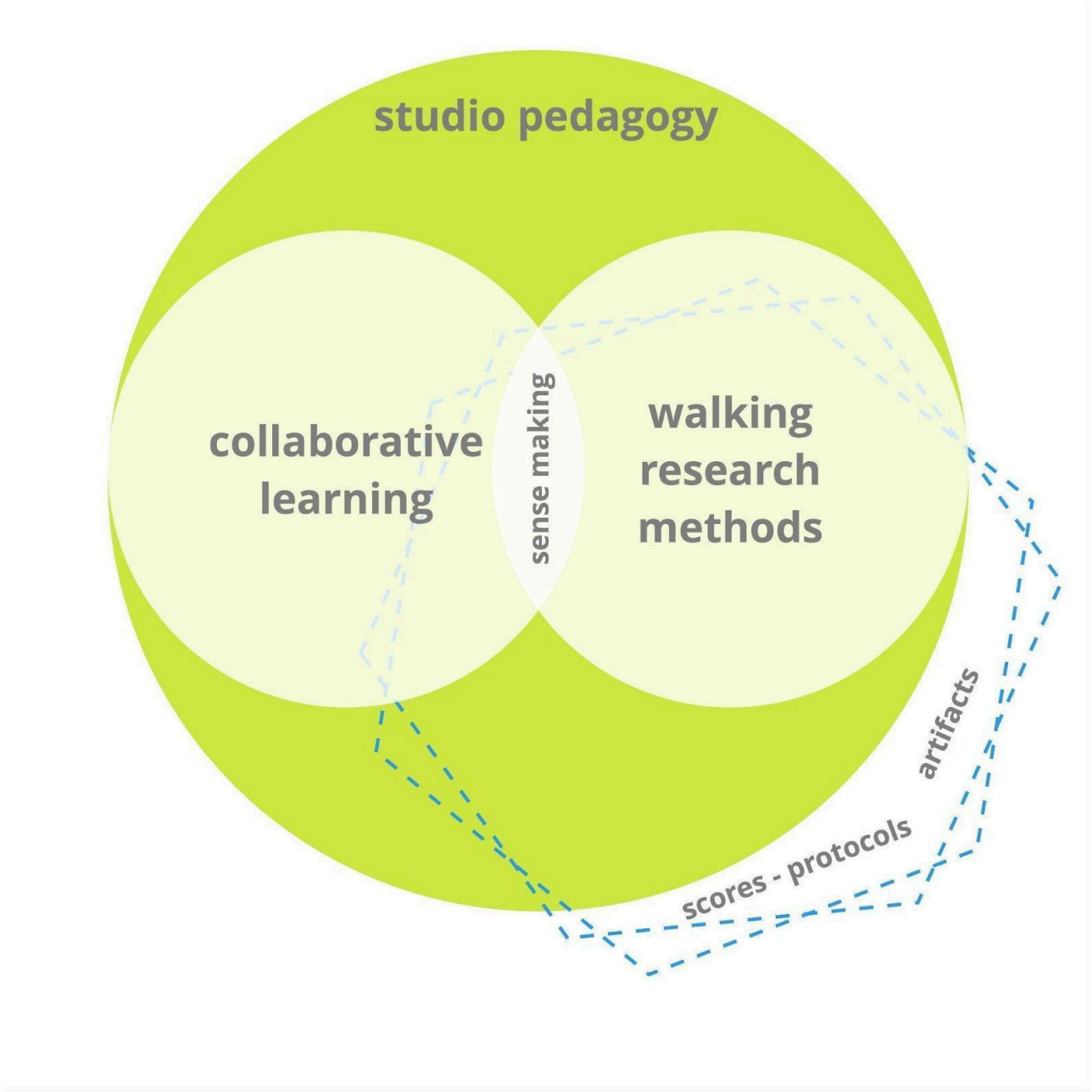

Figure 1 Theoretical framework

Case study design

This case study sits within the existing two-part *Manifesto* project on which Year 3 (SCQF Level 9) Interior Design students work. In the first part, learners define a project brief for a site they have personally selected, considering the context of place, community, and other self-imposed design considerations. In the second part, students design the project for which they have created the brief. For these learners, it is their first opportunity to create their brief and choose a building to design within.

The new walking activity introduced to this project for my case-study was in the first part of the project, which focused on research, contextual awareness, and brief writing.

The case study did not allow for an exploration of students' expectations of studio learning as a point of comparison. However, the thematic analysis revealed the participants' perception of the differences in this activity compared to their prior experiences. Most participants have at least two and a half years of experience in student learning within the program or similar institutions.

Introducing two paired walks (Holton, 2014; Kinney, 2017; Carpiano, 2009) and subsequent studio discussions provided a unique experience for learners to experience and embody the city (Gros, 2015). The use of discussion groups after the activity investigates the impacts of the activity on the learners individually and collectively.

Figure 2 Zines

The city centre location of the starting point and the radial pattern of the invited destinations provided ample opportunity for self-defined routes. They allowed students to negotiate their routes to manage comfort and fitness. There would be ample opportunity for rest, recovery, and comfort breaks on any route. Walking as a term was discussed between me and students with different mobility needs, and it was agreed to be appropriate and descriptive of the task of navigating the city to explore and observe. It was decided between us to be appropriate and inclusive in this context. I acknowledge that walking as a description is not neutral and would benefit from ongoing exploration within the context of further iterations and studies; for this case study, walking provides a clear description of the intended activity. In other contexts, alternative language may be beneficial, but it would need to consider the articulation of an immediate connection to the surroundings.

The first walk happened on the project's launch day and had almost total attendance. The second walk happened in week three of the project and had approximately 50% attendance, possible reasons for which I will discuss later.

Each walk lasted approximately one hour. Before each walk, I led a 20-minute priming activity where I explained the nature of the walk, giving suggested timings, routes, and discussion prompts. I gave each participant a zine: an A3 double-sided print folded and cut to make an 8-page booklet (Figure 2, 3) with a proposed location to walk towards and a series of discussion prompts. Walk One’s prompts were about place and Walk Two’s prompts were about users and community. These zines offered an artefact for the paired walkers to leverage (Figure 3). After the walk, the session concluded with a 40-minute activity in the studio, marking the route taken on a map on the studio wall (Figure 4) and a discussion. These discussions were less successful than I had imagined due to the inevitable inconsistency of return time, which unintentionally prioritised my voice in discussing their collective experiences. This, alongside the reduced energy level of participants as they re-entered the studio, is an area for me to consider in further iterations of the activity.

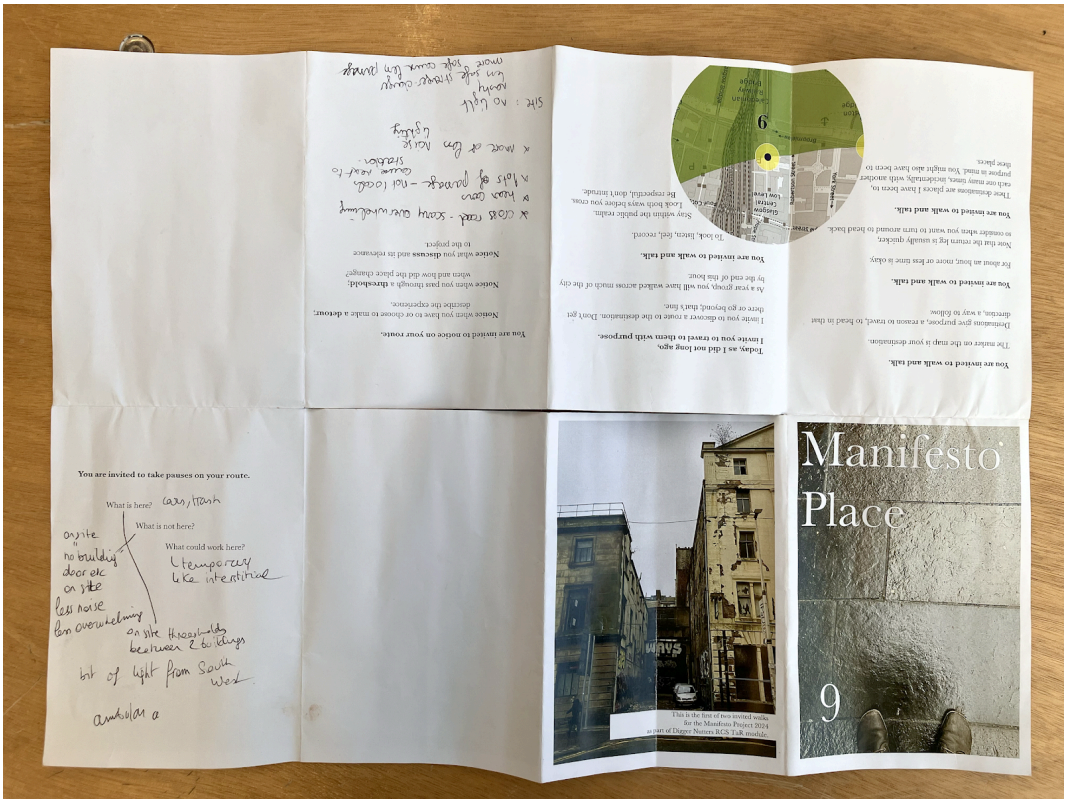

Figure 3 Notes recorded in the zine

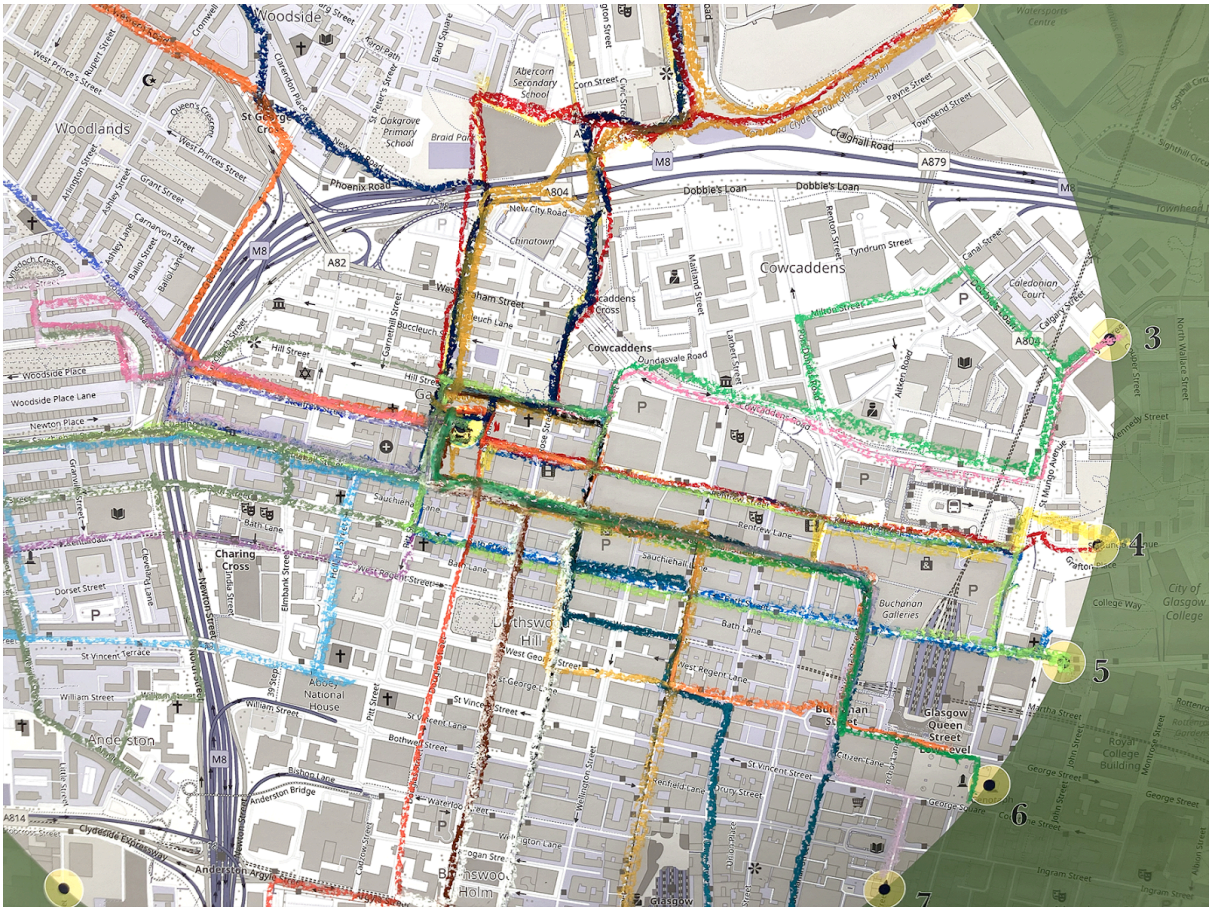

Figure 4 Section of the map on the studio wall after students had marked their routes

I created a map with the studio at the centre and marked 22 destinations around it for the paired walkers. I confirmed the suitability of each area by walking to it and taking photographs (Figure 5), which I added to the zines. Four scores influenced my approach:

- The invitation to walk from *Three Films About Walking for Francesco Gagliardi* by G Douglas Barrett (2009, ft. in Biserna 2022, p. 234).
- The circle as a tool to define the locations from *Borders #1* by Oliver Ginger (2019, ft. in Biserna 2022, p 284).
- My taking of a photograph to record my presence from *Composition 1960 No. 10 to Bob Morris* (Young, 1960, ft. in Biserna 2022, p 222).
- Neuhaus (1979, ft. in Biserna 2022, p. 310) invited participants to *listen*; I proposed 'notice' and 'pause' (Figures 6 and 7).

The locations did not specifically have a building attached to them; some were proximate to a building. The zine had relevant text for each of the two walks (Figures 6, 7, and 8). Rather than talking into their ear to navigate like Janet Cardiff, which would have impacted their ability to speak to each other, I provided the marker on the map as a destination. However, I left it open regarding how each group could engage with the destination.

Figure 5 Photographs recording my visit to the chosen destinations

Figure 6 You are invited to walk and talk. Zine People

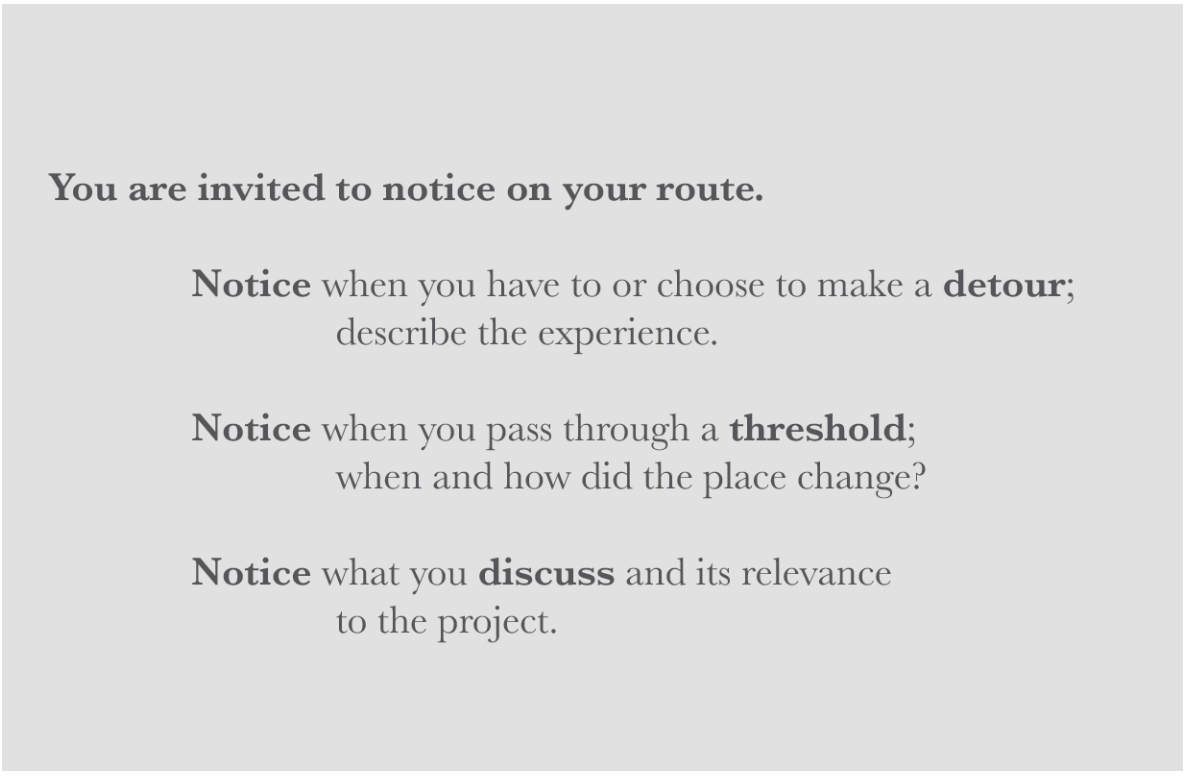

Figure 7 You are invited to notice on your route

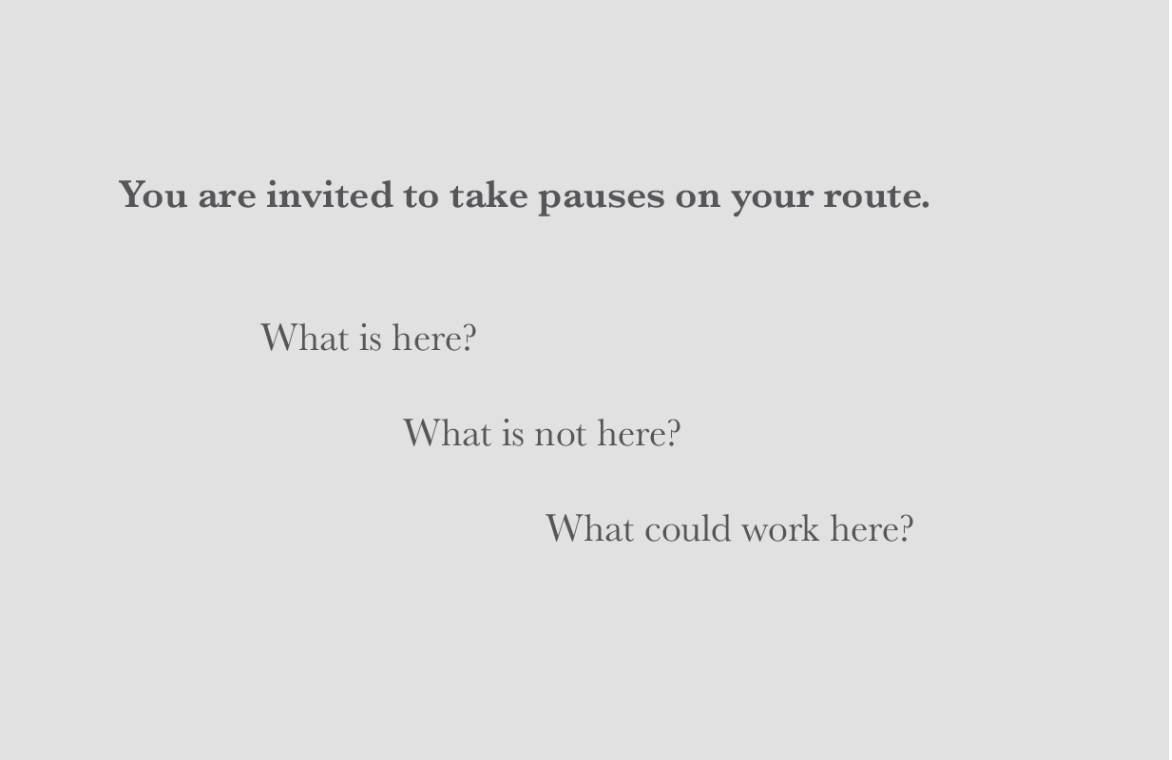

Figure 8 You are invited to take a pause on your route

Data collection and participant selection

Before the start of the project and data collection, I sought guidance, and approval was granted on December 6th, 2023, by the internal MEd Ethics panel at The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, as this study was undertaken as part of MEd in Learning and Teaching in the Arts program. This research has been conducted following the approved ethics application.

I gathered data in two ways. Firstly, through a whole cohort questionnaire, and secondly, through audio-recorded focus groups of six selected participants. I used a combination of 'non-interventive' and 'empathetic' methods (Stake, 1995, p. 12).

The learner population I recruited was 40 Year 3 (SCQF Level 9) students. I purposively selected this cohort as a 'critical case sample' (Bryman, et al., 2021, p. 379) as they were working on a project related to, and timely to, the area of research. I asked all learners in this cohort to complete the walking activity as part of their learning.

I asked all learners in this cohort to fill out two short voluntary questionnaires, one after each walk, to provide feedback on their participation in the activity and to identify any barriers or benefits of each iteration of the walking activity. These questionnaires allowed all participants to contribute to the research process and feel valued, regardless of whether they were selected for the focus groups. The first questionnaire received 28 responses, approximately three-quarters of the cohort, and the second received nine responses, less than a quarter.

The second level of sampling to form a Focus Group used the approach of 'non-probability opportunistic sampling' (Bryman, et al., 2021, p. 379). I selected 'information-rich' participants from the class discussions

within the teaching activity, inviting participants whose pairs engaged in the walking activity and expressed opinions about the experience in the studio-based group discussions. I aimed to balance participants who were more to less discursive in usual classroom settings and avoided 'pre-existing 'social networks' (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013, p.64) to elicit diverse perspectives.

The availability of participants and space had a significant bearing on the availability of participants, which led to a ‘first come, first served’ selection model. I ensured that no ‘walking pairs’ were included in the focus groups.

The first focus group (FG1) had five participants, two of whom participated in both walks, two only in Walk One, and one only in Walk Two. The second focus group (FG2) proved significantly more challenging to constitute, and although four participants indicated they had availability and would participate, only one attended. I asked the student who attended FG2 if they were comfortable participating in a solo interview setting. The interview followed the same structure and questions proposed for the focus group. However, I was particularly mindful of taking time and giving space for the participant to explore, remember and be comfortable.

Although my intention for the two Focus Groups was to build 'communitas' (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013, p.72), this was not possible, and something to consider in further work is the challenge of this in informal and random group/pair creation and student availability.

Analysis

Data Analysis

I analysed data from Questionnaires to assess the level of engagement in the walking activity within the selected cohort and any barriers to engagement.

Data from the recordings of the focus groups was transcribed using Otter.ai and coded, and then I used a process of Reflexive Thematic Analysis with this data. This approach to analysis used the key stages set out by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2022).

All participants have been anonymised for this analysis. I have used randomly assigned names rather than numbers for ease of comprehension.

Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) is a recursive process moving from familiarity to sense-making, acknowledging the researcher's context, and conceptualising meaning from a situated engagement with the data. I used the original audio recording and text transcripts, coding digitally and through physical notetaking.

Considering the discussions around the risks of Reflexive Thematic Analysis, I drew on Pillow (2003) to help me explore and recognise the 'conflicts and tensions' (p. 175) present within a reflexive research process and proposes 'reflexivity of discomfort' (p. 188) as a way to interrupt the process and to support boundary crossing in the process of accounting for the experiences of the participants through analysis.

When considering the ethical implications of this research, I was mindful of the power dynamics involved in working with and assessing a student group I regularly work with. Kamberelis & Dimitriadis (2013, p. 894) discuss the benefits of using focus groups to better manage power dynamics compared to one-on-one interviews.

This is a small-scale case study, and participation within the focus groups was self-selecting participants who were broadly positive about their experience. The findings may be representative of only some of the group's experience. The decline in attendance in walks and focus groups was significant but not understood through this study.

Early theme conceptualisation

As I analysed the data from the five FG1 participants, I noted that the discussion moved between participants. Comments were built upon and contested across the group. The participant in FG2 shared and discussed, and through their reflection, they refined and developed their position over the session.

As outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), I spent time undertaking the first two stages, familiarisation and coding, which supported my production of stage three of initial theme generation with the data from the FG1. This reflexive process informed how I coded the data from FG2, as I had primed myself to look for examples of semantic code clusters. I had approached FG1 inductively; FG2 was more deductive. As I familiarised myself with FG2, I was cognisant that I was reverting to a more semantic level of coding. I purposely sought to apply a more latent approach to the initial coding of FG2. Through reflexive thematic analysis, I revisited FG1 with this alternate perspective, looking for the linking discussions and latent meaning.

While I considered an emergent hypothesis based on novelty and agency, more work understanding the perceived relevance and participation would benefit future studies.

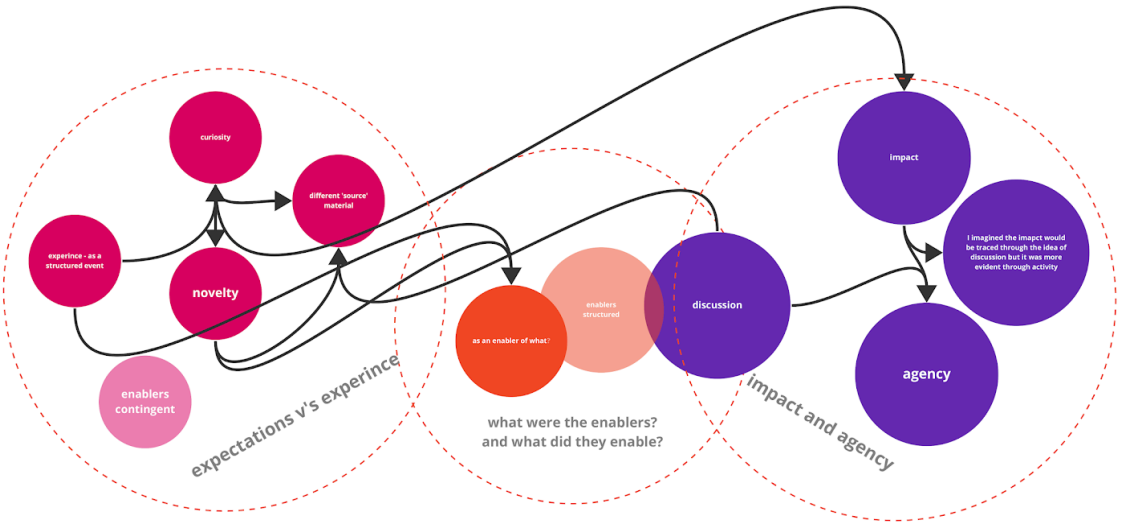

Figure 9 - Early theme conceptualisation

Discussion of findings

I will explore the significant differences in participation between Walk One and Walk Two before exploring the three themes I conceptualised that delve into the multiple modes of engagement: students' modes of engagement in the activity; the role of detour and novelty in making new meaning; and finally, how conversations developed as they moved in and out of perceived relevance to each participant. As a reflexive researcher situated in the research and the teaching surrounding it, I acknowledge in these themes the influence the shift in participation from Walk One to Walk Two had on my interpretation. This influenced my interrogation of the students' agency and their experience in influencing the activities, approaches, and perceived values.

There was a significant difference in attendance between the two walks, with a full attendance of 40 students for Walk One, whereas only half participated in Walk Two. This reduction was mirrored in the focus groups and responses to questionnaires.

Although not mandatory for any learning and teaching activity, attendance is the primary form of visible engagement with the programme and community of learners. Furthermore, I framed these activities as experiential activities with no formal output expected. *Sophie* (all participant names are pseudonyms to ensure anonymity) clarifies this understanding: “the walks definitely felt optional, encouraged rather than a really important part of the course”.

There is no clear sign in the FG1 or FG2 data on why this reduction happened, but this change has provided me with a point of reflection. *Charlotte* highlights the impact of familiarity through the activity, the people she is walking with, and the place I directed her to, “[Walk One] was something new. So, then the second [...] I think it was for me, too familiar. Which is why it was less successful.” The experience each learner gained from Walk One, positive or negative, influenced the decision to participate in Walk Two.

> If it's been pointless the first time you just think the second one's [also] going be pointless
>
> Jessica

It is important to note that though the reasons for the variance in participation are unclear, they could still be significant. Kahu's (2011) *Framework of sociocultural influences* places the student at the centre of a psychosocial process to explore student engagement. While engagement is far richer than attendance, Kahu’s framework could provide insight into why and how students choose to engage. This is outside the scope of this current research but could support my further understanding of the modes of engagement in future research.

How I set up the activity, influenced by Neuhaus’ do-it-yourself approach, informed how I framed the activity, gave it a sense of optionality, and conceivably recentred the ownership of the task away from the program to the individual.

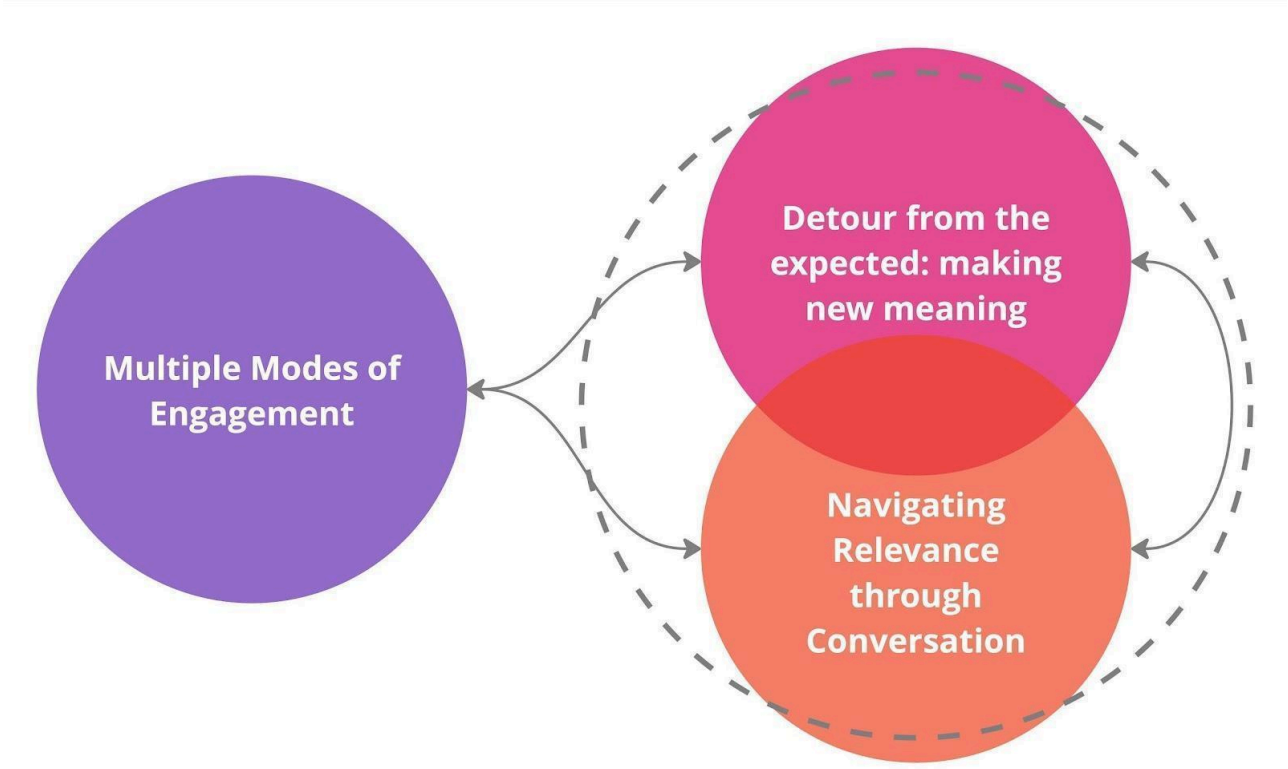

Figure 10 Resolved thematic conceptualisation

Multiple modes of engagement

> I really liked the questions, actually, I thought they made me conscious and notice things. [...] The way I looked at the questions or the way we answered the questions definitely changed depending on who I was on the walk with, that was interesting as different people changed the way I wanted to look, and how I felt.
>
> Sophie

Reflecting on the experiences described by the focus groups, it is apparent that the range of enablers I provided alongside the participant's context created multiple modes of engagement in the walking activity. The individual interests and personalities of the pairs, the experiential act of walking through the city, the teaching inputs in the studio surrounding the walking activity, and the zine that provided direction for both location and action all played their part.

The focus groups describe no clear, consistent mode of engagement or approach. *Sophie* explained, “It felt like you opened a door you can go there if you want to”. *Hannah* described the difference in approaches between her and her partner; hers was more documentary, and her partner's was more speculative. There was a mixed response to how participants used the zine; *Jessica* described how she used it to “refocus the conversation”. *Sophie* and *Hannah* discussed how the open-ended questions allowed them to be “conscious and notice things” and make sense of the relationship between what she observed and her point of view.

Through a range of different approaches described by the focus group participants of how they engaged in the walking activity, I infer that the range of ways to engage provided an opportunity for each pair to conceive, enact and evaluate a range of ways to make sense of their location and their thinking iteratively, moving to a new approach as needed to develop the conversation or prompted by the context.

Through the focus group, the conversation highlighted this broad range of experiences, aligning with Batic (2011) and Kesim and Yöney (2021) thinking on Field Trips but via a less elevated activity. Furthermore, through this sharing, they recognised when their ways of engaging shifted from a more formal focused activity towards an informal or unrelated discussion. Although there was no predictable rhythm or activator to these shifts, all focus group participants reported these shifts. Through the different approaches to the activity, participants had valuable discussions promoted by things seen, diversions taken, and new places visited. Though this is not unexpected, the discussions prompted by this experiential activity were generally perceived as being relevant, not always in the moment but often through the ongoing project, with participants reflecting on a sense of delayed recognition of learning.

> I feel sometimes, personally, I don't see the point straight away. Weeks or days later, I'm like, oh, that's actually useful, now I understand.
>
> Jessica

Detour from the expected: Making new meaning

> I was expecting a group walk where everyone is together and we don't have to worry about the destination, we just follow.
>
> Lucy

Students arrive at teaching activities with expectations; when the session is less familiar, like in the case of this activity, these expectations may be further away from reality. The distance between the expectation and the reality provides a space for novelty to be leveraged by both teacher and learner.

Participants expressed expectations that aligned with their experiences of previous site visits. *Lucy* described her expectation of the journey, and *Jessica* imagined what she would be doing on arrival: “I was expecting the site visits, every time we went on a walk before it was ‘get your scale ruler and measure a building’” and *Hannah* expecting to “do some measurements and talking about this building”. There was agreement that the experience was novel, beyond what they expected, and valuable. However, there was a sense that an opportunity was missed for a more formal, technical, tutor-present experience.

Building from the multiple modes of engagement, I conceptualised the embedded opportunity for something beyond simply novelty, instead, a way of interacting with the activity. The variations experienced by the walking pairs were more unintentional, in the spirit of the flâneur, or prompted by the *protocols* I introduced (Biserna, 2022) than considered intentional acts by individuals or a collective body. These variations sit more comfortably within a sense of aberration or detour. *Lucy*, who earlier articulated the expectation of a directed walk, described and valued how she actively enabled getting lost, choosing to follow her sense of direction and getting slightly lost in the process. *Hannah*, who reported initially wanting a more technical experience, later reflected on her experience of delayed recognition and the impact of the different experiences on her.

> …you don't know the main idea or the endpoint of this activity unless you do it. After we got back to class, and we had the [group] conversation, it was mind blowing! Seeing different perspectives and points of view. That makes you think about things that you didn't think about in that moment.
>
> Hannah

All participants in FG1 and FG2 had a strong sense of valuing being outside the studio. They appreciated the change in pace and place. I also noted that in Walk Two, on average, participants spent almost twice as long outside as on Walk One.

> I liked the time it meant we could just stroll, which I never really do.
>
> Sophie

There was an evolving discussion around being out of the studio centred on comparing the walking activity and discussions within the studio. This highlighted how the studio *contains your thinking*, and the discussion focuses on the work on the bits of paper or screen. In contrast, the discussions outside were wider-ranging and more flexible. This was described as *less focused* but perhaps points more towards flexibility and novelty afforded by the different contexts. I conceptualise that this detour from the usual mode of discussion allowed participants to create new meaning relevant to them and their work.

> So, what do I want to do? And why do I want to do that? So, then you get to think about a lot of things? And why we're choosing them. I became very aware.
>
> Sophie

Navigating relevance through conversation

> We were chatting about everything but the project. Holidays, what countries we want to go to. Once we were at the place, [we used] the questions [in the zine] to make sense of what we had to do, the question made us aware of the direction we had to take.
>
> Jessica

The FG participants broadly had two types of discussion: relevant, perceived as being on task, and irrelevant, chatting about anything perceived as off task. There was further tension around wanting to *do it properly* and being unsure of what they should achieve. This is not to say that the relevance to the task dictated a sense of value, as most participants expressed value in spending time with another person, especially if they were less well-known to each other. Participants perceived less value in familiar places and with familiar people.

Participants were aware of when they felt the conversation had switched, enabled by a range of triggers: reaching the destination, an observation, or a participant wanting to get something concrete from the experience. The conversations either naturally shifted or were intentionally refocused. *Jessica* described using the zine to refocus conversation, “if one of us got carried and you don't want to say, ‘can you stop talking?’. You just ask a question [from the zine]”. Although the zine and the context prompted these conversations, some were perceived as off-task. However, I conceptualise that even in these moments of irrelevance, learners are building and orienting (Goertz, 2018) both their place and understanding.

As discussed in the literature, Orr and Shreeve's (2018) and Slavin's (1996) work examines collaborative learning through the lenses of social cohesion and cognitive elaboration, which they propose is highly

relevant to studio practice. In this alternate setting, the participants clearly describe the conversation's navigation repeatedly, pointing to a sense of social cohesion. *Megan* highlights that "the discussion as two people walking is easier than four or five, six people around the table."

Conclusion

This small-scale case study explored interior design students' experiences of paired walking activities and sought to understand how outdoor walks away from the studio foster pertinent and contextual discussions.

Through a Reflexive Thematic Analysis process, I conceptualised three themes:

- Multiple Modes of Engagement
- Detour from the expected: making new meaning
- Navigating Relevance through Conversation

There was a broad range of conversation throughout the walking activity, perceived as moving between relevant and irrelevant to each participant. In reference to the research question of whether walking activity impacts discussion during the walk and onwards into related studio activity, there was little evidence of the walking discussion being explicitly referenced in later studio discussions. However, participants stated that the activity impacted their individual decision-making processes and project development, explicitly highlighting further self-directed walking activities and the project's site choice as key impacts.

I reflected on the position of conversation and both mine and the participants' privileging of interpersonal didactic talking as the agent for development. Instead, what happened was more personal development, internal monologue, and the shared community of practice as active agents in alternate modes of conversation. I plan to investigate how I can better capture this in further research.

I also recognise the sense of uncertainty that the learners experienced due to the open-ended nature of the walk's outcomes. I found it a significant challenge to balance an overly descriptive set of intentions for the activity to foster a sense of familiarity and security versus a more open and uncertain task. I chose a more open task to allow individual experiences, confidences and questions to be explored, entangled, detangled and processed without the clarifying focus of a defined output or aim. I am aware that in the future, I will need to carefully balance this desire from the students for clarity versus providing openness that will allow learners to make meaning and recognise the cognitive shifts they make.

Students observed that the paired walking activity led to the development of new interpersonal relationships and the strengthening of existing ones. This has implications for creating a more impactful *community of practice* (Wenger, 2008) within the cohort. However, it is worth noting that since the focus groups were self-selecting, information on where relationships did not work may be missing. Nonetheless, there were no signs of this during the post-walk studio activity, but it is a potential limitation to be aware of.

Participants consistently recognised the positive impact of walking on well-being. This is a recurring theme in the literature on walking pedagogy. While it is beyond the scope of this research, their experience supports understanding the positive effects of walking on learners.

My previous visits and photographing of the *destinations* unexpectedly influenced the activity, with many students seeking my exact destination. Many invested time and energy in locating the same spot that I had shared as a guide to the location. Some students replicated the photos of my feet and took pictures of the

view with the Zine held up in the shot. This highlights a sense of co-signature and gamification that could be valuable for future study.

The case study suggests that there is value in employing a range of interconnected actions to support learners, which Fawns (2022) identifies as an entangled pedagogy. This entangled approach is considered valuable yet complex to dissect. Further exploration into decentring the studio through walking activities would be beneficial in detangling the specific impact of these activities on learners.

Considering the significance of diverse engagement modes and the varied ways of creating meaning for students found in my analysis prompts me to ponder the potential of utilising a range of activities, similar to paired walking, to *decentre* expectations of the studio and enable meaningful learning opportunities. Further exploration and comparison of the impact of these activities on student learning and engagement could provide valuable insights into their potential for enhancing studio pedagogy.

Biography

Digger Nutter is a Lecturer in Academic Development at the Glasgow School of Art and leads the Image|Imaging|Interior research cluster. He is a recognised leader in studio pedagogy at GSA. His research focuses on innovative studio pedagogy, leading on in-person, blended, and online understanding in studio learning and teaching.

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