

A Walk on the Wild Side:

Steps towards an ecological arts pedagogy

ABSTRACT

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between home and school

walking a way to learning

life through the city.

(David Haley)

This article takes the reader for a stroll through a programme of ecological arts-led, performance-based research. The style is more poetic than scientific, although much ecological science is embedded within the art form. Indeed, Charles Darwin was known for his regular walks, as time and space for his reflections on evolution and his grandfather Erasmus Darwin was noted for the poetic form of his scientific treatises. Here also, the author breaks with academic convention to engage with walking and research as creative activities to deal with ecological issues. Of course, other artists like Richard Long and Hamish Fulton have walked as part of their practice, and there are a growing number of artists who consider walking as practice-as-research. In this article, the focus is specifically on walking as a creative form of inquiry, through community participation within urban contexts to create a critical dialogue focused on ecology in action.

INTRODUCTION

FOOT NOTE. The proposal for *A Walk on the Wild Side* was presented to the first arts research conference of the Bergen National College of Arts, Norway – *Sensuous Knowledge: Creating a Tradition* at Solstrand, 26–28 October 2004. The project had been initiated for Urbis, 'Museum of the City', Manchester, in June that year, and it represented an opportunity to develop and consider some issues about the relationships between climate change, biodiversity, species migration, urban design, spatial planning and watershed ecology. Other issues emerged as the project progressed, including the disciplinary 'ownership of issues' and the 'dumbing-down' strategies of local government and UK government agencies regarding these issues. In 2007, films of three of the walks were edited to produce one eighteen-minute film for exhibition in the BBC's *Breathing Places Festival* on the 'Big Screen' in Manchester's Exchange Square, with an estimated audience of 35,000. This was also screened at an eco-arts exhibition at *Taipei Artists Village*, a touring exhibition of Chinese arts universities (Beijing, Xiamen, Guongzhou) and ECOCENTRIC Video Lounge, Sonoma County Museum, Santa Rosa, California. *AWOTWS* received Arts Council England North West 'seed funding', promoted by Architecture Week 2006 and Manchester Science Festival 2007. Presentations included a keynote lecture to the Israeli Ecoarts Forum, University of Tel Aviv (2005), funded by the British Council; refereed papers to art, nature, culture, Washington State University (2005), Bergen National Academy for the Arts (2004) and Sustainability City, Urbis Manchester (2007). *AWOTWS* was also supported by the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, and Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Enterprise. Including the walks and screenings, the total estimated audiences and participants is about 49,000 to date. *AWOTWS* morphed into other initiatives, starting with a commission for three *Wild Walks* to propose ecologically connecting the main *A Walk on the Wild Side* parks in Liverpool for Gaia Project's *Alternative City of Culture'08*, funded by the Environment Agency. Then as *Walk the Talk to Many Futures: Making Time as a Matter of Urgency* for Cultura21's ASSIST International Summer School of Arts and Sciences for Sustainability in Social Transformation in Gabrovo, Bulgaria (2010), a walk challenging the town's development plans. As an interdisciplinary collaboration with the staff and students from all the faculties of Manchester Metropolitan University, between 2015 and 2016, *Walkabout the City?* made three walks in Manchester, commissioned by Manchester Festival of Social Science, Greater Manchester Walking Festival, Transport for Greater Manchester and Manchester European City of Science. Finally, in 2018, *Threads of Life: Walk the Warp and the Weft* explored the Fabric District of Liverpool for John Moores University as a reinterpretation of a place in transition.

Most people walk. It is one of the things that has defined our species since *Homo erectus*. However, walking to learn about how we live and where we live is not something we necessarily practice creatively. This article considers an art of walking with others to help us critically learn for ourselves about urban life. Its form is at times poetic and at other times analytical. It is inconclusive, but hopefully it will stimulate further discourse to walk on.

In Nora Bateson's film, *An Ecology of Mind* (2010), her father, Gregory, explained that when most physiologists study the evolution of the human hand, they focus on skeletal and muscular aspects, but they miss the ecology: the spaces between the fingers and thumb. This is 'the pattern that connects' (Bateson 2010). Framed in a similar way, this article considers the emergence

of taking a walk as a learning arts practice, based on a programme of more than twenty walking performances, in nine cities in five countries, over fourteen years. Each walk created the space for the participants (Wild Walkers) to consider their interdependence between themselves and their environment. Furthermore, the walks situated this ecological arts practice within an ancient non-formal education system of pedagogy as a 'fundamental culture' of urban life (Morin 2008: 96). The form of taking a walk, as opposed to merely walking from A to B, may generate a space between its start and end – a dynamic sequence of time and a performance of place becoming, as an embodied experience (Ingold 2013: 5; Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 12). As Paul Klee's *Pedagogical Sketchbook* takes a pencil for a cosmological walk, a walk in the city may take us on a cosmological sketch of urban life (Klee 1989).

One evening in 2003, walking from my university to the rail station, on my way home, I noticed a small tree growing, high up, on a grand Victorian insurance building in Manchester, United Kingdom. Amused by its audacity, then curious about how it got there, how nature survives almost unnoticed in the city, this moment of curiosity developed into a fourteen-year programme of inquiry, *A Walk on the Wild Side* (*AWOTWS*). As an artist, having studied climate change from 1992 and learning that southeast Britain is warming faster than the northwest, I wondered what happens to different species migrating across Britain to find a cooler climate when they are confronted by a city? More questions emerged into an arts-led, performance-based method of inquiry, an ecological understanding of pedagogy and a series of many *Wild Walks* in different towns and cities, with many people. This activity became an integral element within the interdisciplinary, 'Making Our Futures' university courses and community climate resilience projects in the United Kingdom, Europe and South East Asia as a method of question-based learning or critical dialogue (Freire 2017: 56; Haley 2011: 603). As Michel de

Certeau wrote, '[p]ay attention to the flow [...] art is what attention makes with nature' (1985: 17). With each *AWOTWS* walk, or *Wild Walk*, the potential role of the artist grew from being an artful trickster (Hyde 2008) to include that of pedagogue – leading diverse groups of twenty people to learn for themselves how they live with/in their city. Generating more questions about how and why most of the world's human population live in cities, the walks became a 'conversational drift', or Socratic dialogue to intervene in the systems of education and spatial planning, and provoked a politically poetic means of synthesizing people's psychosocial world-views for ecological resilience (Beuys 1990: 86; Bohm 2008; Gunderson and Holling 2002: 28; Harrison and Harrison 2008; .



Figure 1: David Haley, *Buddleia Refuge*, 2003. Manchester. *Buddleia* growing four stories high on one of Manchester's iconic Victorian insurance buildings, challenging maintenance capabilities.

Meadows 1999). It may even be claimed that transdisciplinary knowledge emerged across, between and beyond all disciplines and sectors of those who participated (Nicolescu 2008: 2). Given that most humans are now dependent on urban dwelling, this article finally asks if we need to learn to walk differently to develop 'capable futures' (Haley 2008: 8).

with intent to learn
without determination.
walking to make time

becoming the walk
yielding to many futures
walking gracefully

AWOTWS: LIFE IN THE CITY

Foxes rummaging in dustbins, cats and rats fighting over fast-food debris, insect infestations, and buildings succumbing to the ravages of ivy, fungi and buddleia. And, the sweet summer song of a blackbird sat on a TV

aerial, wildflowers swaying across redundant railway tracks and the dappled shade of 1. a mature plane tree. Set in the present context of:

- a world of increasing urban dwelling,
- a world designed and defined by spatial planners, 5.
- a world experiencing the accelerating effects of climate change – emergency – crisis.

AWOTWS explored the civic conflict between fecund nature and concrete urbanism, through an expanded urban aesthetic. Set against the continuing civic politic that proclaims domination over nature, this project promoted public participation in spatial planning for diverse walking participants. As the realities of climate change become clear, how will societies' built environments and lifestyles cope with rising temperatures, increasing rainfall, storms, flooding, droughts and the migration of species (including humans) in search of habitats? Will we offer ecological refuges, or try to fight against plagues and pestilence of biblical proportions? What are the creative opportunities for AWOTWS? Starting in January 2004, a year-long field studies survey of Manchester's flora and fauna set forth on a series of eight *Wild Walks*. Each walk was filmed and three were combined to make an eighteen-minute film for exhibition. Through its participants, the project synthesized natural science, social science and arts practices as an interdisciplinary collaboration to promote participation from Manchester's rich mix of culturally diverse communities and demographics. Designed to promote creative responses to climate change, this ecological art and education programme of projects developed three themes that converged in the conceptual drawing of the Mersey Basin, on the ground, as an ecological form. Its main areas of activity were:

1. eco/urban field studies to develop *observation and reflection* as core skills to promote communities of enquiry,
2. biodiversity corridors to be recognized, valued and created in response to *species migration*,
3. diverse cultures to be encouraged to *participate in spatial planning* to design our futures.

The realization of these objectives could only be achieved collectively through an ongoing dialogue with collaborators, participants and partners. The initial collaborators were a group friends, colleagues and acquaintances who responded to an email call-out, identifying themselves to be sympathetic to the idea exploring urban wildlife. They contributed directly and by introducing others as a network/dialogue, like a creative virus to affect a broad ecocentric cultural shift (Bohm et al. 1991). This was the crux of the project – to contribute to change and attempt a shift in attitudes to urban aesthetics. But first, there were a few issues to be resolved.

OBSERVATION AND REFLECTION

Unfortunately, electronic forms of data collection, analysis and recovery have diminished field study skills among the present generation of natural 50. scientists (Firbank et al. 2009: 233). Scientists at ecological research centres spend most of their working lives in front of computer screens considering future landscape scenarios based on remote statistical data-gathering monitoring stations, rather than experiencing the landscape itself (Firbank et al. 2009: 236). Similarly, in the United Kingdom, observational drawing as a core skill for reflection and communication has almost vanished in graduate and postgraduate art education (Haley 2017: 3). Among the effects of our society's increasing dependence on remote and virtual forms of engagement is the trust that is placed in prescribed and predetermined systems that diminish our senses and capabilities to rely on objectified data, rather than experiential knowledge (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 36). Gregory Bateson pursues this notion of misplaced belief in representation-as-reality as misconceived perception of what may be experienced:

We say the map is different from the territory. But what is the territory? Operationally, somebody went out with a retina or a measuring stick and made representations which were then put on paper. What is on the paper map is a representation of what was in the retinal representa- tion of the man who made the map; and as you push the question back, what you find is an infinite regress, an infinite series of maps. The terri- tory never gets in at all [...] Always, the process of representation will filter it out so that the mental world is only maps of maps. (2000: 460)

Indeed, increasing reliance on computer software programmes like geographic information systems (GIS), global positioning system (GPS), computer-aided design (CAD), virtual reality (VR) and artificial intelligence (AI) takes us even further from the territory by substituting our lived experience with pre-programmed views of reality (Haley 2017: 3; Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 35).



Figure 2: David Haley, *Wild Walkers*, 2006. Manchester. Students, families and community leaders discovering places and wildlife habitats, normally considered to be out of bounds.

FIELD STUDIES – DRAWING ON LIFE

Walking and experiencing a place is different from the use of remote data-gathering equipment. The former address pre-programmed questions, while the latter permits the place to pose unexpected questions. Professor Les Firbank, head of the Land Use Section at the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH), Lancaster University (a National Environmental Research Council-funded organization that generates research on behalf of the government, local authorities and corporations), collaborated on several ecological arts projects to gain an understanding of the environment from an other-than-scientific, computer-generated data perspective of the landscapes and ecosystems he researched (Firbank et al. 2009: 233). The CEH Countryside Information System used a set of landscape category datasets, combined with satellite images, verified by field studies to arrive at their GIS mappings. However, it became increasingly difficult to find new employees who were versed in field studies, and even more difficult to deploy such skills, as management were obliged to justify their investment in electronic hardware and virtual intelligence systems (Firbank et al. 2009: 236). Intuitive, improvisational or creative methods of inquiry became stifled (Firbank et al. 2009: 236).

This situation was mirrored with drawing practices as acts of studying, exploring and representing the world we see, and here David Hockney's words resonate: 'the way we depict space determines what we do with it' (1984: n.pag.). Historically, it may be argued that Renaissance rectilinear perspective and Descartes' global grid are philosophies of cultural and political domination. Likewise, GIS, GPS and other digital systems of spatial recognition and interpretation now control the way we perceive the world (Haley 2017: 3).

Reflective observation, taking time to draw and form questions are – it may be argued – fundamental methods of human inquiry, sadly lost to a generation of artists and scientists alike (Haley 2017: 3; Morin 2008: 113). To address these issues, *AWOTWS* aimed to raise awareness of the participants through the process of walking – analogue cognition and systems thinking beyond digital dissonance. The walks also developed an awareness of

'phenomenological drawing' – a resensitization to pattern recognition in our everyday experience and a means of valuing that which has drawn itself (Haley 2004: n.pag.). In this instance to evolve another aesthetic – how nature and serendipity make their mark on our built environment.

To do this, each *Wild Walk* became an interdisciplinary surveying team, formed from community representatives, students and 'experts' to conduct field studies of local neighbourhoods, watercourses and transport corridors. The data they generated and shared through walking and on film generated visions and proposals for future spatial planning. Through this reprivileging of field study skills, the project developed capabilities and sensibilities across the sciences, arts and communities. Taking time to experience, question and understand our environment at local and large scales relates directly to all who inhabit it, manage it and then to relationships with each other as embodied ecology.



Figure 3: David Haley, City Skyline from the URBIS Roof, 2005. Manchester. As part of Manchester's urban regeneration, URBIS was opened in 2002 as the 'Museum of the City'. The view from its roof presents the dominant urban aesthetic, and proposals for a wildflower roof meadow were rejected. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urbis>. Accessed 26 November 2020.

A BRIDGE TOO FAR: A LEAP OF THE IMAGINATION

As one example of AWOTWS's explorations, a redundant railway bridge at Castlefield, Manchester, provided interesting discoveries. This pioneer tree-lined structure from the nineteenth century may be seen as a metaphor between paradigms – a romantic gesture depicting the fall of empire and the resurgence of life, or the neglect and dereliction of past industrial glory. Despite its heritage status, the bridge had become a wilderness icon in the public domain and an urban myth. As an antidote to public art, this once-exquisite expression of power and technology – the epitome of the Industrial Revolution in its glorious functionality – is now a symbol of human vanity. As an example of phenomenological drawing, it draws itself into a new identity – a transition of its own history and the trajectory of an undetermined future destination. Defying description as an official biodiversity corridor, because that was not the purpose of its design, that is, however, its destiny. The art was in recognizing this transformative relationship. To illustrate the point, this brief exchange is a summary of a conversation from one of the walks:

The eco-scientist:

This can't be a 'real' biodiversity corridor, because it was not designed as such. It doesn't have the right scale or the right type and variety of specified species. It would be dangerous to draw people's attention to the bridge, because they might want to see for themselves and then destroy what is there. And the structure might not be safe – it might not support them.

The eco-artist:

Then maybe it's a Public Artwork waiting to be recognised, or a biodiversity interval, or interlude in an intensely urban landscape – a layer of de-urbanism, the antithesis of development? Maybe it's a bridge/metaphor between the monotonous cacophony of the metropolis and the embodied ecology of our origin and destiny – an invention, an improvisation, an imagining of hope for new life, under stress.

This exchange illustrates possible approaches to spatial reading, writing and drawing the landscape we inhabit through walking and 'question-based learning' (Haley 2011: 603). Spatial planning is a powerful and complex concept that incorporates developmental policies and strategies. It need not be complicated. It need not be the sole territory of technocratic professionalism. If the general public is prevented from participating in spatial planning, then the majority of people are being denied a voice and even capability to survive climate change, as they have no access to such decision-making (Kahn 2010: 12). Through expanded notions of walking as arts practice, people may develop the potential to open up this process, to take responsibility for and be accountable to the future.

WALKABOUT THE CITY? (2015–16)

In November 2015, *Walkabout the City?* was developed from *AWOTWS* for the ESRC Manchester Festival of Social Sciences by the Ecology in Practice research group at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) with the Università di Firenze Sustainable Airports Project, to create two walks, for 30 multi-sector participants, staff and students from all MMU faculties. The walks started with one key question, '[h]ow is the city a place to protect and nurture life support systems now and for the future?' (Prowse and Vargas 2015: n.pag.). MMU's new Birley Fields Campus and the city itself prompted questions of sustainability and the most pressing social, cultural and environmental issues of our time. Within each walk, the Biospheric Foundation, an intensive farm project created by MMU Ph.D. student Vincent Walsh, prompted discussion about the viability of urban food. As a psychogeographic convergence of diverse thinking and physical practice, this project saw the emergence of transdisciplinary research being generated by the participants (Nicolescu 2002).

Although urban sustainability is relevant to everyone, people rarely have the time and space to question it, but the walks stimulated a *dérive* of future thinking, ranging from local and international transport to biodiversity, food production, poverty, health, housing, adaptability and climate change. Evoking the paradox of *Sustainable Airports*, the walks compared the 'passenger experience' of the constructed city centre at Manchester International Airport with the 'real' thing, reflecting on 'aerotropolis' – the merging of city and airport that includes contested 'wild' landscapes (Haley et al. 2017: n.pag.).

The walks gained wider public participation as they appeared on video linked to a blog, thereby making the space for epistemic complexity and opportunities for the students on the 'Making Our Futures: Ecological Arts and Sustainable Design' MA Art and Design Options Unit to develop their own projects. The aim of the project was to explore how an emergent participatory curriculum could be co-created in art and design subjects to support sustainable development. The concepts of humanity, self, agency and identity were organically incorporated through the walk, probably due to the fact that few had met each other before and also because of the informal setting. Therefore, people brought personal views to the walk, and their identities agency seem to have had a stronger presence than if the discussion had taken place in an academic setting (Haley et al. 2017: n.pag.). Walking, in practical terms, provided a less hierarchical dialogue within the group, which is a fundamental factor for fostering emergent knowledge (Darling 2014: 217). This supports the participatory creation of curricula and the emergent aspect of this exercise to promote ecological resilience and embodied capabilities to adapt to the uncertainties of future indeterminacy, thereby addressing vulnerability perpetuated by myths of certainty and sustaining the values of environmental and social injustice (Haley et al. 2017: n.pag.).



Figure 4: David Haley, *Walking the Brownfields*, 2013. Manchester. Wild walkers from Manchester, Salford and Manchester Metropolitan universities considering the potential for connecting urban wastelands to promote biodiversity.

This, in turn, as Nicolescu comments, has profound ethical and moral consequences. Transdisciplinarity Knowledge, TK, corresponds to a new type of knowledge – in vivo knowledge. This new knowledge is concerned with the correspondence between the external world of the Object and the internal world of the Subject. By definition, the TK knowledge includes a system of values. (Nicolescu 2008: 75) *Walkabout the City?* was a way of creating a space for all disciplines to participate in addressing their own capabilities for a collective view of many futures. The future is thereby opened up as a place for genuine concern and potential creative opportunities, rather than adherence to the unsustainable status quo of perpetual growth development. From this initiative, transdisciplinary knowledge may emerge, and from this a curriculum for ‘capable futures’ may be formed (Haley 2008: 198).

THREADS OF LIFE: WALK THE WARP AND THE WEFT (2018)

In 2018, Liverpool John Moores University commissioned a walk to explore and celebrate the emergence of the Fabric District within the knowledge quarter of the city. The walk featured Richard Scott, director of the National Wildflower Centre, who had taken part on many of the *AWOTWS* walks. Serendipitously, it also included three city guides. The district being walked had once been the centre for Liverpool’s textile and clothing industry, but was in the process of being demolished and redeveloped for an expected burgeoning student population. The area was a mix of dishevelled shops, student start-ups, ‘street art’, demolition sites, car parks and tower block building sites. The guides never took people to this area, as it had become so run-down, but adjacent to it, between two main thoroughfares, was a stunningly beautiful island of wildflowers planted by Richard. The guides were fascinated by this and other aspects of their city that could now be explored with tourists, and they also started to question the process of development and the potential impact that thousands of new students might have on this and surrounding areas, given the transient nature of their residency. What did the branding of city destinations mean, were they relevant, and who creates them? Many other questions emerged around the seeding of wildflowers in city settings and the potential for ‘natural’ urban planning.



Figure 5:

David Haley, Valeria Vargas and Paolina Ferrulli, *Walkabout the City?*, 2015. Salford. Walkers visit the Biospheric Foundation, an intensive urban farm and Permaculture forest, created by Dr Vincent Walsh to promote healthy food for local communities.

CRITICAL REFLECTION 1: SURRENDER TO INDETERMINACY

In a 2010 interview for *The Guardian* newspaper, the ex-Roxy Music keyboard player and 'godfather of ambient music', Brian Eno, identified the differences between 'control' and 'surrender' in our society. Considering how this is reflected in the contemporary imbalance of values in art production, he alluded to the history of ship-building to illustrate his point. Old wooden ships leaked, so they needed to be 'caulked' constantly. As technology in construction advanced, they built structurally superior, water-tight ships; however, these broke up because they were rigid. Shipbuilders, therefore, returned to leaky 'ships that had flexion'. The vessels that surrender allow themselves to respond to changing circumstances. And this is not about a nostalgic return to the halcyon days of an idyllic feudal lifestyle, nor the renaissance of Luddite technologies. This is 'something more complex' (Eno 2010: n.pag.).

Referring to his artworks and his directorship of that year's Brighton Festival, Eno explained, 'I set up situations that involve abandoning control and finding out what happens' (2010: n.pag.). In a similar way, the *Wild Walks* abandoned the control of the artist taking the lead and the expert interpreting what was encountered. A situation for the participants was set up to walk with local experts to find out what happens. For some, the terrain was strange; they were challenged by the unfamiliar or stimulated by uncertainty. For others, it was at first familiar but then became a source of surprise as they saw anew. The artist in the group simply introduced some questions for the alchemical dialogue of indeterminacy to start, perhaps to yield rather than surrender – that is, 'give way to gain' (Haley 2018: 5).

Furthermore, in tandem with Donella Meadows' *Leverage Points: Places to Intervene in the System*, such walking practices may open up alternative ways of thinking, including systems thinking, and give permission to play: There are no cheap tricks to mastery. You have to work at it, whether that means rigorously analyzing a system or rigorously casting off your own paradigms and throwing yourself into the humility of Not Knowing. In the end, it seems that power has less to do with pushing leverage points than it does with strategically, profoundly, madly letting go. (Meadows 1999: 106)

CRITICAL REFLECTION 2: PATTERNS OF LIFE

Another aspect that became apparent from the *Wild Walks* was the 'phenomenological drawing' mentioned above; being sensitive to the way things draw themselves – buddleia claiming refuge, high on an insurance building, ivy tracing its pattern of growth onto the side of a house; lichen symbiotically colonizing a rock; the silver trail of slime from a snail; a tree deciding now is the time to cast down its leaves to make earth for the future; or the way clouds rise as castles and morph into dragons. Famed for turning the act of walking into a sculptural form, the UK artist Richard Long explains:

My work has become a simple metaphor of life. A figure walking down his road, making his mark. It is an affirmation of my human scale and senses: how far I walk, what stones I pick up, my particular experiences. Nature has more effect on me than I on it. I am content with the vocabulary of universal and common means; walking, placing, stones, sticks, water circles, lines, days, nights, roads. (2009: 145)

CRITICAL REFLECTION 3: WALKING AS TRANSDISCIPLINARITY

Professor Hans Dieleman wanted to initiate an art-walk for his transdisciplinary course at the Urban Design Centre, Universidad Autónoma de la Ciudad de México. So he asked for some information about AWOTWS in Manchester. These are some practical answers to his questions:

1. What aspects to address?

For me there were several issues that I wanted to address, some overtly before the walks and others introduced while walking – (a) the city as an organism within an ecosystem (watershed), (b) the discovery of/ need for 'biodiversity corridors' to facilitate species migration caused by climate change, (c) the lack of time for proper observation and reflection in science and art, (d) the walk as performance-as-artwork – the act of walking generates different ways of thinking, looking and questioning, (e) people's participation in spatial planning' – what is it? who makes the decisions? how democratic is it? what is decided on behalf of biodiversity? etc.

2. How to introduce the project, what information to give beforehand and what not; do you give a central question to all of them, or do you leave the exercise as open as possible?

I provide a simple information sheet and a photocopy of a route map on the day. Health and safety and comfort are big practical issues. I always did a reconnaissance with a local guide to check for timing, safety and comfort issues and to prime myself with questions. Usually, the participants or 'Wild Walkers' on the *Wild Walks* were the local experts and I was the lost artist who has big ideas and concepts but needs local knowledge. On every occasion, people would say, 'we have lived here for ten years and we never noticed'.

3. How much time do you plan for the walks?

It was important to 'take time as a matter of urgency'. These were not fitness hikes, or marches, but exploratory meanders – people were encouraged to bring binoculars, cameras and drawing materials to stop, look, listen, smell and feel the place. Mostly, I use the convention, 'all in a day's work'. For practical purposes, this was 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. Once you include a 30-minute lunch break and two fifteen-minute comfort stops that always overrun, the time gets quite short. If the time is limited, then the walk is shortened accordingly.

4. How do you make teams, or do you let the participants make their teams (if at all you do)?

I generally limited the numbers to twenty. You can engage with twenty people in a day while walking. This built a kind of comradeship and occasionally approaches a 'dialogue'. If you have more than twenty, then make separate teams to walk on different days, or different times, or different routes – this could help you to 'map' a connected larger area or provide interesting comparisons.

5. What skills or capacities are required to organize and guide such an activity?

Eyes, ears, nose, fingers, feet and tongues. It is good to prepare and organize beforehand, so that your walkers feel comfortable and safe and focused, but then improvise and let intuition take over – this is where experimentation gives way to exploration, and fun!

6. (And I added) It is good to include a stream or river, if you can, and try to make the route a circle.

CONCLUSION: ECOLOGICAL ARTS AND PEDAGOGY IN DIALOGUE

Stepping out from the classroom, lecture theatres, laboratories and studios, to walk onto the streets to learn about where we live and how we live, *in situ* and *in moveo*, *in cieo*, *in concieo*, walking-as-art-as-ecology-as-pedagogy may be seen as the point of antithesis that marks the shift from ‘traditional education’ to innovation (Dewey 2015: 17). Indeed, the art of AWOTWS resisted ‘imparting knowledge to the novice in a type of transactional banking model of learning’ (Selkrig 2017: 347). In this way, AWOTWS may be aligned in many ways to Paulo Freire’s development of ‘eco-pedagogy’ that emerged from his theory and practice of critical pedagogy (Freire 2017: x). As a response to education that is often tied to state- and corporate-sponsored interests that become part of the problem, eco-pedagogy strategically tries to be relevant to excluded communities. Richard Kahn describes the three main goals of the eco-pedagogy movement to be:

1. Creating opportunities for the proliferation of ecoliteracy programs, both within schools and society.
2. Bridging the gap of praxis between scholars and the public (especially activists) on ecopedagogical interests.
3. Instigating dialogue and self-reflective solidarity across the many groups among educational left, particularly in light of the existing planetary crisis. (2010: 8)

The idea of ‘eco-pedagogy’ integrates an approach to learning within and with its context as a creative arts practice (Haley 2017: 9). Two ancient Greek words and concepts converge to provide a starting point to explore their meanings:

- Ecology or ‘oikos’ concerns the design of a house to harmoniously integrate the family members within their civic and cosmological context. Living in one’s right place did not necessarily preclude a person from changing their place, provided this was done within the mores of the culture.
- A ‘pedagogue’ was a trusted slave who led a child, typically male, by the hand from their house to the teacher’s house. Before the teacher imparted formal knowledge, the child learned from walking and talking with the slave – a dynamic process of seeing the world from diverse perspectives. Other artists and thinkers who have coined the word pedagogy include Paul Klee’s *The Pedagogical Sketchbook* (1989) and Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2017). Augusto Boal’s Forum Theatre and *Theatre of the Oppressed* (2008) and Joseph Beuys’ practice of social sculpture (1990) expand the idea.

Together, ‘eco-pedagogy’ may, therefore, mean the process of connecting formal, informal and non-formal ways of learning about our interconnect- edness with the world. It may provide a necessary form of unconventional education, but we need to learn from the learners what the learners need to learn (Haley 2017: n.pag.). This process is often missing from deterministic, solution-led, problem-based curricula above junior school level. As Freire points out:

Education which is able to resolve the contradiction between teacher and student takes place in a situation in which both address their act of cognition to the object by which they are mediated. Thus the dialogical character of education as the practice of freedom does not begin when the teacher-student meets with the students-teachers in a pedagogical situation, but rather when the former first asks herself or himself *what* she or he will dialogue with the latter *about*. (2017: 66, original emphasis)

For some, a brief stroll in an urban context became a moment of epiphany, a paradigm shift or a quiet confirmation of what Francisco Varela refers to as ‘mindfulness/awareness’ (Varela et al. 1993). David Bohm expands on the process of dialogue as a similar experience:

Because the nature of Dialogue is exploratory, its meaning and its methods continue to unfold. No firm rules can be laid down for conducting a Dialogue because its essence is learning – not as the result of consuming a body of information or doctrine imparted by an authority, nor as a means of examining or criticizing a particular theory or programme, but rather as part of an unfolding process of creative participation between peers. (Bohm et al. 1991: n.pag.)



Figure 6:
David Haley, Valeria Vargas, Fabrizio Cocchiarella, Eddie Fox, Pomona Encounters, 2016. Manchester. Postgraduate landscape architecture students from Manchester Metropolitan University questioning urban development that eradicates wildlife from mature brownfield sites.

Embedded in the curricula of all courses across all disciplines, from primary school to university, eco-pedagogy derived from the lived experience of walking to question where and how we live could be liberating for teachers and students alike. Despite the literature that is sympathetic to such activity, in practice, in the United Kingdom and many other countries, this kind of activity is rare. AWOTWS may, therefore, be understood as grounded research and poetry in motion to discover an eco-urban aesthetic. In step with each other as equal participants, sharing the same horizon as we walk, stimulates cognitive patterns for quantum conversations. Walking in time, learning to walk and walking to learn together.

map becomes seeing

crystalize and then dissolve

time becomes being.

(David Haley)

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