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The Walking Cure

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The Walking Cure

A photograph of a narrow, cobblestone street in a European city. A person with grey hair, wearing a light-colored jacket and a patterned skirt, is walking away from the camera down the center of the street. The street is flanked by tall, multi-story buildings with various facades, including light-colored stone, red brick, and blue-painted walls. Black street lamps with multiple lanterns are mounted on the buildings. A small green plant is visible on the left side of the street. The sky is overcast.

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Making Sense of the City



Disposition

1. Sensing and Sense Making
 - “Urban Psychology”
2. Architecture & Perception
 - Atmospheres and Experiences
3. SEB-site

Distraction

“City spaces must never be meaningless. The urban landscape should rather provoke curiosity and present the citizen with challenges.”

(Stig Lennart Andersson)

Making Sense of the City

- Sensing and Sense Making
 - How do people actually
 - Use (“move around”, “go about”)
 - Perceive and experience
 - Imagine and conceptualize
 - The city
 - Research questions
 - What is urbanity to them?
 - Where does the centre start and stop? (Boundaries)
 - Pulse, atmosphere
 - The users’ perspectives
 - Not planners’ etc. assumptions
- The city
 - Aalborg
- People
 - Residents
 - Inner city
 - Suburbs
 - Visitors
 - Demographics, lifestyle
- Methods
 - “Walking”: trajectories, itineraries while moving through space
 - Experiments (e.g. mental maps, disturbances)
 - Observations and interviews
 - Photos, films, drawings ...

Making Sense of the City

- What people encounter when walking/moving through the city
- Micro-aspects of people-environment interaction
 - Studying how being and living in the city is experienced and performed from the point of view of those people who are actually *in* the city.
 - Exploring how life unfolds in the urban landscape: in the streets, along sidewalks, on benches, in and between buildings, in parks, etc.

Mind and body

- Exteriority: urban space as external to mind and body
 - “Physical surrounding”
- Embeddedness: urban space as internal to mind and body
 - “Ecology”, which people live in, live with, live through

Exteriority and Embeddedness

"I confront the city with my body; my legs measure the length of the arcade; [...] my body weight meets the mass of the cathedral door, and my hand grasps the door pull as I enter the dark void behind. I experience the city through my body, and the city exists through my embodied experience. The city and my body supplement and define each other. I dwell in the city and the city dwells in me.

(Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin*, Chichester 2005: 40)

Sensing and Sense Making

- Objective features
 - The urban landscape
 - Agents acting in this landscape (Latour)
- Subjective features
 - Affective predispositions
 - Cognitive predispositions
 - Knowledge, Discourses
- Situational factors, circumstances

Making Sense of the City

1. The city as a multi-sensory landscape

- Which sensorial impressions and feelings does the urban landscape generate (atmosphere, experiences)?
- Which kind of bodily expressions does this landscape allow for (performativity)?
- How do people's presence (movements) affect this landscape

2. Representations of the city

- How is the city represented mentally?
 - Maps: Memory
- How do people define the “centre of the city” (and periphery)?
 - Signs: Interpretation, Narration
- How is everyday urbanity tackled in a quotidian way?
 - Bodily schemata: Habits, Navigation, Auto-piloting

Architecture & Urban Psychology

- Representations:
 - How does a coherent concept of the city emerge from the numerous impressions available in the urban landscape?
 - Mental maps, signs
- Feelings:
 - What excites, involves, scares, attracts, thrills or disgusts people about this landscape?
 - Emotions, atmosphere
- Habits:
 - How do city dwellers go about performing their daily routines in what to newcomers may seem an amalgam of chaotic sensory data?
 - Bodily schemata, navigation

Architecture & Perception

- Architecture of Seeing
 - Visuality
 - Ideal: Utopia (future) (Visionary)
 - Distance: Control (power)
 - Image, branding
 - Transparency & symmetry: Orientation
 - Showing (off)



Ocularcentrism: Seeing is believing?



Architecture & Perception



- Architecture of sensing
 - Multi-sensual: Complex
 - Haptics, olfaction, audition, gustation, vision
 - Balance, thermoception, kinesthetics (Proprioception)
 - Pain/pleasure (Nociception)
 - Bodily: Embeddedness, Immersion
 - Immediacy: Spontaneity, Now
 - Being (rather than Becoming)
 - Presence: Non-Symbolic, Non-Interpretive (Gumbrecht, Sontag)

Presence: Materiality



Architecture of Sensing

- Atmospheres (Böhme)
 - Moods: relative stable state
 - Continuity: ambience
 - Generated by “inside”-agents
 - Sensed by “outsiders”
 - Liminal: “Containers”
 - Buildings, interiors
 - Plazas, squares
 - Streets, alleys ...
 - Neighbourhoods, pre-modern towns
 - “Scapes”: soundscapes and other sensescapes
- Experiencing
 - Emotions: “activation readiness” (Frijda)
 - Discontinuous: rupture, disturbances
 - Performative: brought upon participants
 - Provoked: “Obstacles”
 - Artwork
 - Urban furniture: benches, trees ...
 - Waste, billboards, noise, crowds
 - Stages, playscapes, festivals ...

Container: Urban Interior





Obstacles: Nuisances







Making Sense of SEB

- Sensing and Sense Making
 - How do people actually
 - Use (“move around”, “go about”)
 - Perceive and experience
 - Imagine and conceptualize
 - The SEB-Site
 - Research questions
 - Abstract vs. concrete (geometry)
 - Nature vs. culture (landscape, spatiality)
 - Universal vs. relative (code)
 - Atmospheric permanence vs. emotional moment
 - Where does the site start and stop? (Boundaries)
- People
 - Employees
 - “En passant”, circumstantially
 - City dwellers, purposefully
 - Skaters
 - Neighbours to the site
 - Tourists (incl. architects)
- Methods
 - “Walking”: trajectories, itineraries while moving through space
 - Experiments (e.g. mental maps, disturbances)
 - Observations and interviews
 - Photos, films, drawings ...



Placing the buildings in the context of their landscape; Placing this complex in the context of its surroundings; Placing the surroundings in the context of an urban transformation site; Placing this site in the context of a larger cityscape.



“Sensing SEB”

1. **Movement: “Walking”**
 - Rhythms
 - Pace
 - “Styles”
2. **Containers**
 - Buildings
 - Urban interior?
3. **Obstacles**

- **Boundaries (“Walls”)**
 - Materiality
 - Transparency
 - Permeability
 - Private/public
 - Temporality
 - Permanent
 - Legitimacy
 - Skaters accepted; entrance contested
- **Slopes**
 - Movement
 - Obstacles
- **Skaters**
 - Obstacles
 - Obstructed by non-skaters



Exit: Cured?



Urban Psychology

Architecture

- Architecture of sensing
 - Atmosphere (Böhme)
 - Experiences
- Architecture of sense making
 - Psychogeography (Debord)
 - Mapping (Lynch)

Psychology

- Perception
 - Moods (Thayer)
 - Emotions (Frijda)
- “Socio-cultural” cognition
 - Microgenesis (Valsiner)
 - Mapping (Milgram)