Accessing embodied knowledge of place: a method

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the method "Direct Me", a method designed to access embodied knowledge of place answering the question of *how*, that many papers extolling the importance of embodied knowledge leave unanswered. In presenting Direct Me, this paper hopes to illustrate how this knowledge of place can be effectively utilised to create more informed projects. The process by which this method was designed will be detailed, explaining its origins in hermeneutic phenomenology and artistic walking prompts, while demonstrating how it all came together. Through a discussion of its design, the paper will illustrate how this method offers up an alternative to participatory methods that require large time commitments from participants, and in doing so exclude sections of communities that do not have time to give. By detailing how the method was tested, this paper will demonstrate the kind of knowledge that can be generated through its implementation and what this data can be used for. Examples of findings and conclusions will be shown alongside discussion of how these can be taken further. This is complemented by a discussion of how subjective individual perspectives can be brought together into shared understandings.

Introduction

This research is concerned with the design of and testing, through implementation, of a method to access embodied knowledge of place. It is well argued that embodied knowledge, tacit, lay, or local knowledge, should be considered in understandings of place, however where many texts falter is in *how* we capture and utilise this knowledge. This research strove to answer this question with the development of a method that could not only access embodied knowledge in others but represent and synthesise it in such a way that it could be utilised.

Within this paper, the design process will be elucidated, discussing the philosophies and creative practice that the method (Direct Me) drew from. Additionally, it will discuss the results that were generated through testing Direct Me; commenting on not only what the process uncovered but how it functioned as a method. The paper will conclude with how Direct Me may be applied to other projects and its uses within research that address knowledges of place.

Challenging the everyday

The driving force for me to design the method Direct Me was the belief that we all know things about the spaces we inhabit that are not only important but inaccessible, sometimes even to those that hold it. We know the world through our bodily interactions with it, but it is also our bodily interactions that shape a place (Carolan 2008; O'Rourke 2013; Solnit 2014). This reciprocal relationship embeds knowledge within the body, a resource we tap into regularly as part of the everyday. Despite the prevalence and importance of this knowledge it is hard to access and therefore rarely consciously interacted with or collected. So how do we collect this embodied knowledge from those that do not realise they are accessing it? The starting point for engaging with this challenge was to look at how it has been theorised that we can pierce the veil of the habitual and the everyday to reach new understandings.

Like many aspects of the everyday, the interaction with embodied knowledge goes unnoticed, a matter-of-fact process that has little attention paid until it goes wrong (Lefebvre 2004; Matos Wunderlich 2008). There are many theoretical interpretations of this phenomena, however this research utilises approaches from Heidegger and Lefebvre; Heidegger for his phenomenological approach that gets to the root of the idea, and Lefebvre for an approach that ties more directly to the everyday and a notion of technique that led to the application utilised here.

For Heidegger, things are "ready to hand," a moment of "breakdown" occurs and then they are "present to hand." Morton describes this well when narrating having a fall in the supermarket;

> As you slip embarrassingly towards the ground, you notice the floor for the first time, the colour, the pattern, the material composition - even though it was supporting you the whole while you were on your food shop mission. (Morton 2021, 10)

In this example until the fall the floor is merely "ready to hand" and in falling it becomes "present to hand;" for Heidegger the only way to pierce the veil that hides the everyday from us was through breakdown, the most extreme example of this being death (Gillespie 1989).

Lefebvre talks about a similar notion in his work "Rhythmanalysis" and terms it arrhythmia; relating the term initially to its medical use to show what he means (Lefebvre 2004). When all rhythms are operating as usual, we do not notice them, it is not until one goes wrong, an arrhythmia, that we notice how the others are functioning.

These theories gave an interesting insight into how the hidden nature of the everyday could be challenged, but rather depressing or dramatic methods by which to accomplish it; it was in reading Lefebvre further that some inspiration for Direct Me was found. Lefebvre puts forward that another way to access the knowledge attained from an arrhythmia is through technique (Lefebvre 2004). This method needed to stimulate an arrhythmia to uncover the everyday knowledge that was being sought, not through illness or accident, but through a calculated challenge to the habitual.

Direct Me seeks to stimulate an arrhythmia in the understanding of place that the researcher holds, by presenting challenges to their everyday sourced from citizens who know a place. For the purposes of testing this method the people of Newcastle acted as the providers of the challenge. This theory formed the basis of the method's design, and it

was from here that other inspirations were explored to develop approaches of how best to present the challenge to the everyday (walking artists) and how to interpret the resulting arrhythmia (hermeneutic phenomenology).

Designing the method

The design of Direct Me draws inspiration from artist walking prompts and methodological tools used within hermeneutic phenomenology. These elements were chosen as they are already utilised as ways to reveal and work with the everyday, but also owing to the importance of walking for experiencing and understanding place.

While walking is not, as some say, neutral, impacted by factors such as gender, race, class, and accessibility (Andrews 2020; Baugh 2022; O'Rourke 2013; Rose 2020; Solnit 2014), it does have a certain unifying factor when talking about the built environment. It provides a slow enough pace to really engage with our environments and synthesise together a wide range of informational inputs into a spatial understanding of place. These two ideas; the non-neutrality of walking and its unifying nature, offer up contradictory notions; however, Bruce Baugh explores this topic and offers up an alternative way of looking at walking (Baugh 2022). Inspired by Baugh, this research worked with a redefinition of walking as the processional movement through space, at such a pace so that the different perspectives we experienced could be synthesised as one. While walking remains unneutral impacted by a range of societal issues, viewed through this lens we can see it as a primary way in which we all understand place.

This understanding makes walking uniquely suited as a method by which to access and understand the knowledge citizens hold about place and highlights the suitability of working with walking prompts from walking artists.

Artists have the ability to take the everyday and work with it in such a way that it becomes extraordinary, revealing something to us in this transformation; a thought echoed in Kaprow's famous 1958 essay "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock."

> They will discover out of ordinary things the meaning of ordinariness. They will not try to make them extraordinary but will only state their real meaning. But out of this they will devise the extraordinary. (Kaprow 1958/2003, 24)

Walking artists are no exception to this and often push us to engage with our everyday spaces in new ways that reveal elements to us that would have remained hidden in our habitual motion. The walking prompt does exactly that asking a participant to go out into a space with a specific set of instructions governing how they move, more than likely at odds with the way they would normally move. The resulting experience produces a challenge to the everyday and a chance for knowledge to be revealed, an arrhythmia.

To compliment the walking prompt hermeneutic phenomenology was drawn from, an approach concerned with the interpretation of the lived experience of others, and methodologically it strives to find ways to not only access the hidden within the everyday but represent what it is the approach has uncovered (Suddick et al. 2020; Van Manen 2017). Fusing this philosophical approach with the creative methods of walking artists has allowed the development of a method that accesses and interprets every day, lived knowledge about place. These elements were brought together into a singular method for accessing embodied knowledge.

Implementing the walking prompt

In a reversal of the walking prompt used by many walking artists, this research asks the participants to provide a "direction" that will lead me to their city, and the researcher will follow it. There were multiple reasons this reversal to the well-known artistic approach was applied.

Firstly, this is a method for knowledge gathering; it is not an attempt to provide participants with a new point of view or understanding of place, but a way to learn from them. In this scenario, the challenge needs to be to the researchers everyday, making them the recipient of the prompt not the creator. Additionally, the focus of the knowledge gathering is so that information gained may be used on a greater scale, finding a way to utilise subjective knowledge beyond the individual. The difficulty of this task would only be increased if the revelations or challenges to lived experience resided solely within each separate individual. In its reversal, the prompt is not a singular delivered to many, but many delivered to the singular researcher. This approach allows multiple challenges to be made to a single every day, and in doing so shared understandings across prompts can be found.

Finally, this research takes into consideration the burden of labour often placed on participants in participatory approaches and strives to present a method that ensures that the burden of labour resides with the researcher. In efforts to strive to that top most rung of the ladder, empowerment (Arnstein 1969), participatory approaches have increasingly expanded the remit for what participation from citizens looks like, and in doing so have asked for more and more time from them. These approaches assume the availability and desire of citizens to take part, if only they were offered the option (Baker, Coaffee, and Sherriff 2007; Inch 2015; Kill 2021). Low attendance or engagement is often attributed to the idea that people do not want to participate (Baker, Coaffee, and Sherriff 2007), without addressing the time constraints and mental load that day-to-day life places on many of us. In a world that is increasingly chaotic, we need to find a way for citizens voices to be heard that does not encroach on their precious time.

Direct Me, needed to be developed in such a way that as many people as possible could contribute with as little effort as possible. In this way as broad, an understanding of place as possible from as many of those that inhabit it as possible, could be garnered. Within the method participants become provocateurs, and the amount they want to contribute is governed by them. Opportunities were provided to deliver directions via multiple outlets so not only was how much they contributed governed by them, but also how and in what format it was delivered. The researcher becomes the lens through which all the participant provocations are embodied and essences of knowledge about the city are produced.

Once directions are collected an appropriate way to work with them needs to be implemented, one that allows for a challenge to the everyday to occur, an embodied relationship with place to be enacted, and embodied knowledge of place to be interpreted as a result. For the development of this process, processes from hermeneutic phenomenology methodology were drawn from.

Crafting stories

The process whereby the direction is received, engaged with, followed, and reflected upon is the one that is influenced by hermeneutic phenomenological ideas. One of the methodological aspects of the hermeneutic phenomenological approach is crafting stories from interview transcripts via an engagement with the hermeneutic circle (Crowther et al. 2017; Van Manen 2017). The idea is to get to the essence of the lived experience being shown through the transcript and is only achieved through a deep level of reflexive thinking (Crowther and Thomson 2020; Horrigan-Kelly, Millar, and Dowling 2016).

For Direct Me this approach was applied to the directions gathered; the method requires three instances of crafting stories for each direction. Initially, the direction itself takes the place of the interview transcript and the researcher enters into a conversation with this, generating a story but also a plan of how they intend to follow it. Once this is completed, direction is followed, and in its following, alongside reflection of the following, another story is created; in this instance the action of following and reflecting upon that process serves as the interview transcript. Additionally, it is important to note that the term story here is used quite loosely and has elicited responses such as, word art, maps, prose, and collage. Finally, the two previous stories are brought together to act as the interview transcript, from which a story is created that reflects a learning, or new knowledge uncovered from this direction. An overview of this process can be seen in figure 1, however it must be noted that while displayed in a linear way, in practice this process naturally moves back and forth with multiple levels interacting with one another.

This method pushes the researcher to step into the participants' shoes and in walking through the space under the guidance of another, reactivating traces they have already left in space, the researcher's expectation of the place is challenged. It is in this challenge to expectation that the new knowledge is revealed. This process operates within the understanding of place as palimpsest, not just layers but a tangled amalgamation of annotations from different authors (Corboz 1983; Flint Ashery and Stadler 2021; Viganò 2020). That place is formed via our embodied motion through it and in reengaging with these traces of movement we are able to activate and access the knowledge imbued within them (Andrews 2020; Baugh 2022; Carolan 2008).

Each following of a direction produces its own piece of knowledge reflective of trying to understand the place in the same way that the person who volunteered the direction does. However, collective knowledge of place cannot be derived from the knowledge of a singular person; to develop knowledges of a place that are reflective of the experience of many, a way to draw together these understandings into one image needed to be developed. In working towards what I have termed shared understanding I drew from multiple philosophical standpoints to understand how multiple perspectives can come together into one understanding of place.

Working towards shared understanding

For this method to work and produce knowledge that translates to practice it needed to be able to bring together the ideas generated by each individualistic exercise; to generate what this research describes as shared understanding. Shared understanding, the process
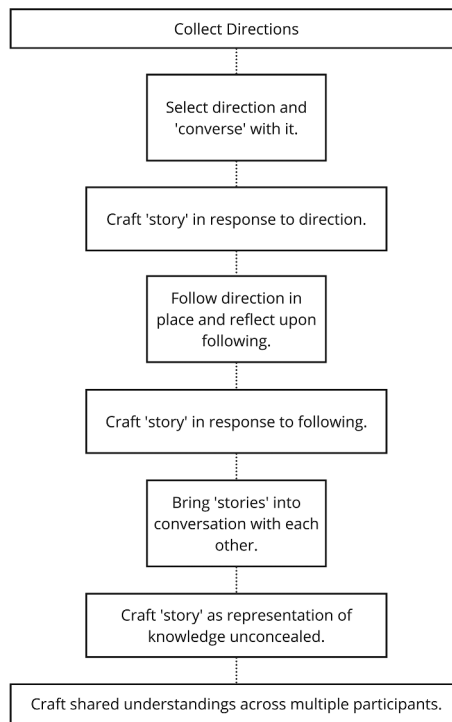
Figure 1. Overview of the direct me process.

by which pieces of knowledge are unconcealed across multiple participants, place, and researcher, begins with the ideas of hermeneutic phenomenology and brings in other elements to build an approach that brings in the synthesising possibilities of walking and poetry that Direct Me utilises.

Hermeneutic phenomenology methodology argues against generalisation, thematisation and categorisation; the theory of a fusion of horizons being a key process that supports analysis avoiding these (Crowther et al. 2017; Spence 2017; Suddick et al. 2020). To support the ideas presented in fusion of horizons the researcher additionally drew more widely bringing in ideas from Coleridge's theory of imagination and perspectivism from Nietzsche (Baugh 2022).

In the same way that multiple attributes of an object come together to allow us to understand the object as a whole (as put forward by Nietzsche) (Baugh 2022), bringing together multiple perspectives from many citizens allows you to understand a place as a whole. Bringing these perspectives together works in much the same way that a fusion of horizons is formed within hermeneutic phenomenology, or how Coleridge suggested imagination was the process by which multiple experiences could be brought together into to one form of representation, particularly poetry (Alford 2020; Baugh 2022; Coleridge 1817/1956; Suddick et al. 2020). The process of crafting stories, carried out with each participant, slowly adds to the collective shared understanding that is formed by multiple citizens perspectives

on the same place. The ideas and understandings reveal themselves through the process, more rewriting, more walking, more thinking, until the knowledge unconceals[1] itself.

In essence, by using this method, through a further engagement with the hermeneutic circle, this time bringing outputs from across the participants into conversation with each other, shared understandings about the place in question can be unconcealed. Knowledges or representations that even if the reader had not experienced themselves would believe another had; that they could perceive as a truth about place even if it existed outside of their personal experience. This is reflective of the phenomenological nod sought out in hermeneutic phenomenology and something that the outputs of Direct Me should aim to meet (Crowther and Thomson 2020).

To further develop the method Direct Me it was implemented within the city of Newcastle where the researcher is based; testing the method helped to explore different elements of the practicality of the process while seeing if what had been theorised could be possible.

Implementing direct me in Newcastle; a test

While it is proposed that Direct Me could be well utilised to promote a "getting to know" function in relation to place, the initial testing was carried out in Newcastle, a place well known to the researcher. This decision was made so that the potential for this method to stimulate an arrhythmia to understanding of place could be more fully tested, by carrying out the testing in an area which the researcher already held a habitual relationship with the arrhythmia would need to occur to existing lived experience of place rather than just a perception of it.

This method derived much support from writing on hermeneutic phenomenology throughout its development and implementation. Within hermeneutic phenomenology there is a value placed on what the researcher brings with not all presuppositions being seen as negative (Crowther and Thomson 2020; Dowling 2011). Smythe and Spence illustrates this when they state "[r]esearch that uses a hermeneutic framework acknowledges the limitations of detached observer research" (Smythe and Spence 2012, 13). Finlay expands this further when discussing the phenomenological attitude stating that it "does not involve a researcher who is striving to be objectivistic, distanced or detached. Instead, the researcher is fully involved, interested and open to what might appear" (Finlay 2008, 3). The challenge becomes being reflexive about your own understandings, not to free ourselves from them but to acknowledge how they may be influencing our approach and challenge our own assumptions (Green, Solomon, and Spence 2021; Smythe 2011). Within the Direct Me method this working with, and acknowledgement of, the researchers previously held perceptions, beliefs, or experiences of the place become a central part of how the method operates and is ultimately successful.

The method has been tested in multiple iterations that allowed for the different aspects of the process to be refined and different research approaches to be explored. This is work that continues to be carried out by other researchers who have begun to implement Direct Me as a method in their own work.

Collecting directions

The multiple iterations of testing Direct Me through implementation offered up different opportunities for the method to be refined, honing the experience of both the participant and the researcher. The first attempt to test this method contributed most strongly to the process of collecting directions from participants and demonstrated how traditional research recruitment processes were ill suited to Direct Me. The initial recruitment was done through existing channels of a community group and followed the process of signing up to show interest, the running of a briefing event, and dissemination of a participation pack. Many of these elements were requested by the organisation but led to a miscommunication of tone and a perception that more was required from participants that this method intended.

From this process, two key lessons were taken forward into future iterations. Firstly, the completely open-ended nature of "direct me to your city" was daunting for some, in the same way a blank page can leave you with not knowing where to start. Attempts to mitigate this were implemented with the participant who attended the briefing session by providing "directions my 2-year-old might give" which eased the uncertainty; these are the example directions that were given in the pack that followed.

Directions my 2-year-old son might give:

- Never walk in a straight line.
- Circle every tree.
- Chase every pigeon.
- Step on every drain, cautiously.
- Change direction every 10 steps, do not be afraid to retrace your steps.
- Run. Stop and examine your location. Run again.
- He might send through a stick and encourage me to explore the world through it.

Second, the drawn-out process of this recruitment seemed to put people off and belied the passive participation Direct Me was designed to achieve. The briefing document and session, plus the consent form placed this work into a more formal place in participants minds, resulting in the impression that they were required to complete a lot of work to take part. This was reflected in one of the responses received, which was not one direction but a mass of information where they attempted not only to help me understand their city but justify why they were providing this information. The other respondent suffered from this less as they attended the briefing session and were able to take the tone of that conversation forward.

In the second iteration of direction collection, a new process was put in place to mitigate the identified issues by approaching the collection in a more passive, incidental way. The work done during the first iteration was exhibited in "How We Live Now" in the city centre of Newcastle, an exhibition at the NCA that was celebrating the different voices in the built environment. It was during this exhibition that the new direction collection method was trialled.

Alongside the exhibited works a poster was presented detailing the project itself. This poster detailed the researcher's affiliation, ways to contact them, and then invited readers to contribute. On a table in front of the poster was a collection of slips with the

provocation written on them and an attached demographics survey; they were accompanied with a collection of writing implements and a slotted box to drop finished slips into.

The collected demographics were age bracket, gender, and connection to the city of Newcastle. It was initially thought that this would be information that would be beneficial when completing the first conversation for crafting a story with the direction, that this information would help shape the perspective from which the direction had been given. However, in practice, other than the connection to Newcastle, the collected demographics proved to hold little influence over the process or unconcealed knowledge. In fact, in other iterations of this testing the decision was taken to not collect demographic information at all choosing instead to focus on the knowledge about place that the participants were willing to offer.

It is noted that the location of this collection within an art gallery presupposes a particular kind of audience that may have impacted the collections taken, however this process was subsequently tested in alternative environments and continues to be done so with a variety of communities.

In presenting the request for directions alongside finished works the vagueness of the provocation became less daunting while still leaving room for participants to do their own interpretations. The poster allowed for the same information as a briefing document to be presented alongside what they were agreeing to by taking part. No personal details were taken beyond demographics and the table was unmanned so no pressure was applied, or anonymity broken. The simplicity of the slip and the box to post it in being available in the moment conveyed that this was something that they could do quickly. The passivity of this approach proved to be much more successful with 20 directions being collected over the course of the exhibition. The directions themselves were also more visceral getting right to the heart of what it was they were trying to show about the city; it was almost as if by not giving them too long to think about it the response was truer, less manufactured.

Respondents were provided, via the poster, with options to also respond via text, voicemail, email, and post, however no one took this option. This is an indication that the passive in the moment response is preferred. It is hoped that methods for direction collection can continue to be tested that strike the balance between a passivity of participation and ethical research practice.

Corresponding with directions

Participants responded with a variety of directions which enabled a thorough testing of how the process of reflexive engagement and crafting a story worked with different kinds of materials. The emphasis in the method of openness and responsivity to what is being provided, meant that working with different types of materials was easy to integrate; each direction could be engaged with in a way that made the most sense to its format and the elements it contained. Some responses required a greater level of engagement to be able to derive an actionable way to follow them, whereas others contained a straightforward direction that required more reflexivity in the response of following. Remaining true to the philosophical ideals this method was designed upon, allowed for each direction to be responded to in a way that made the most sense to it rather than sticking to rigid steps.

Most of the directions were followed alone by the researcher, a process that made sense based on the contents of the directions; there were two notable occasions upon which the directions were followed with others.

The first was a direction (Figure 2) that pointed to a specific locale to have an ice-cream and sit by the river. As soon as I read this direction, I conjured up an image of my smiling toddler covered in ice-cream, the joy that the direction seemed to ooze felt more appropriate to a family excursion than a solo meander. Carrying out this direction with my family brought to the fore a different version of myself than the one I had been bringing into other directions; the part of my every day that is closer to citizen than researcher. It felt important when working on a method that extols the virtues of our own presuppositions or lived experience, to embrace carrying out this direction with a different version of myself. An arrhythmia was still achieved, and new understandings of space still clarified, however in this instance they were under a different lens, one that made more sense to the direction given.

The second instance was a collection of directions (Figure 3), that to me, represented an engagement with the social imaginary of Newcastle as a city. A different kind of engagement with place than that of the lived experience. It was still felt there was the possibility of unconcealing knowledge from these directions but by engaging with a juxtaposition between researcher lived experience of these spaces and the perceived social imaginary that they represented. To exacerbate this interaction on the following a collaborator was invited; Simon King who had no personal experience of Newcastle along with me on this walk. Asking an "outsider" to walk alongside the "insider" perspective of the researcher, gave voice to the perceptions of Newcastle that are held, but additionally in his walking with the researcher Simon acted as a living arrhythmia pointing things out that had already faded into the researcher's every day.

Conceptually having a physical collaborator was useful as outlined, but it also provided the opportunity to test how this method may work if a team were to enact it. If this method were to be used by others either researchers across different projects or practitioners while trying to get to know a place, it is unlikely they would all be operating on
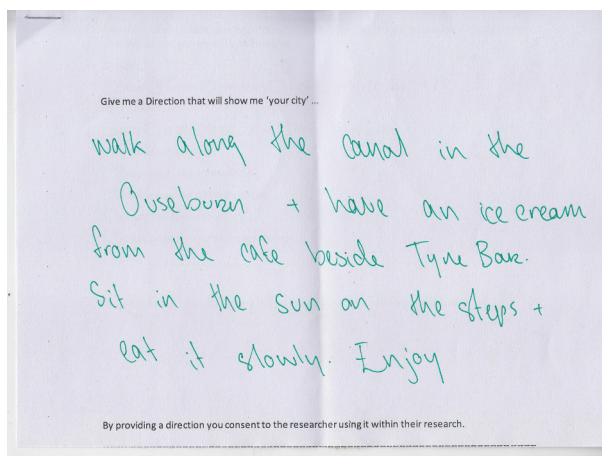

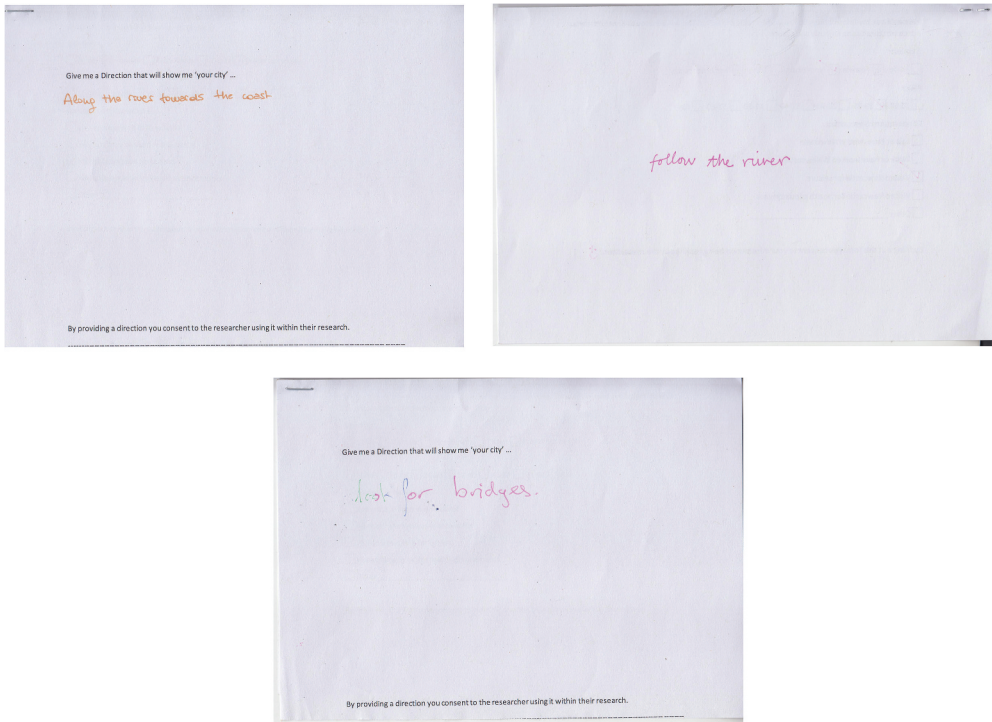Figure 2. Direction issued by participant 015.

Figure 3. Directions from participants 006, 021 and 022 which formed the basis of collaboration with Simon King.

a solo basis. The experience of completing the walking aspect of the method with another showcased that it is in no way a detriment to the method. While the company put a different slant on the walking portion it became apparent that the aspects that are most important for solo reflection are the contemplation before when planning the walk, and directly after it is completed. Walking with another allowed for additional challenges to the everyday to be enacted and potentially a wider range of observations to be made, however the reflective process by which new knowledge is unconcealed and recognised must be carried out alone. This is not to say that fruitful discussion of the crafted "stories" and a redrafting cannot occur with the walking companion, but an initial moment in which the researcher can reflexively digest what they have experienced or engaged with is crucial. This process is illuminated on more fully in the collaborative paper produced by the author and Simon King (Bamford and King 2023).

As reflected at the beginning of this section the method requires an openness and a flexibility to work in ways that makes sense to the directions collected. This sentiment is mirrored in the representations of knowledge that are produced. While some knowledge that was unconcealed was easily transformed into pieces of prose others required a more visual output or an amalgamation of the two. It is important to present the knowledge in a way that makes sense to your understanding of it, while creating outputs that are legible to others that inhabit the place that you are representing. A "reader" should be able to imagine that someone had experienced the city in question in the way represented even if they have no direct experience of it that way.

In the process of testing out the functionality of the method it was carried out in full which produced outputs in the same way the method would when applied to a research project. Producing these outputs has allowed the opportunity to experiment with what would equate to the analysis of findings, reflecting on knowledge that had been unconcealed.

Examples of findings generated by testing direct me

While the primary focus of the fieldwork conducted was to test the method itself, by carrying out the method with citizens of Newcastle, findings were generated in the same way as if the fieldwork had been conducted for this purpose. In this section, examples of the types of findings or outputs that have been produced from the method Direct Me are presented.

As already indicated above, outputs are generated across multiple points within the method; the more the method was tested the more fluid these points felt. Information swelled back and forth between the points of reflection stimulating new thoughts on elements that had already felt finished. There is a clarity that comes from allowing this reflection to move back and forth and the pieces of prose feel richer for it. The below examples of generated prose (Figure 4) and graphical representations (Figure 5) are reflective of multiple stages of creation, different participants, and moments of shared understanding across multiple participants.

These are representations of an embodied engagement with Newcastle through not only the researcher's own experiences, but the traces left by others; even though you may not, as a reader, have any direct experience of Newcastle or the places

> How far is it? How long will it take? The narrative surrounding these ideas normally equates them to minutes and metres, especially if you ask Google for the route. But we do not approach the world algorithmically. We have our own ideas of how we want to move. Closeness is not always a matter of proximity.
> A steep hill. A busy street. A line of trees over a line of back alleys. The sunny side of the street. The pretty window displays. Stairs, pedestrian crossings, loose cobble stones, leafleteers, music, people, the familiar, and the unsafe. We factor these things into how we move. A route planned is so much more than the most direct route, and how long it will take is influenced by much more than walking speed.
>
> Today my route takes longer as I wind my way along avoiding the stairs. I cross the road to walk in the sun, and then add five minutes to the route to walk past the trees dropping springtime blossom into the meandering breeze. It did not feel longer. The smelly backstreets that shave off time feel longer as they colour my thoughts with distaste. The stairs feel longer as I hitch my load of unread books up each steep step. The shaded side of the street where I already was feels much longer in the cold that does not belong to the sunny spring day. I choose to move directed by what feels longer not by what an algorithm tells me is.

Figure 4. Crafted story in response to participant direction and following of direction.
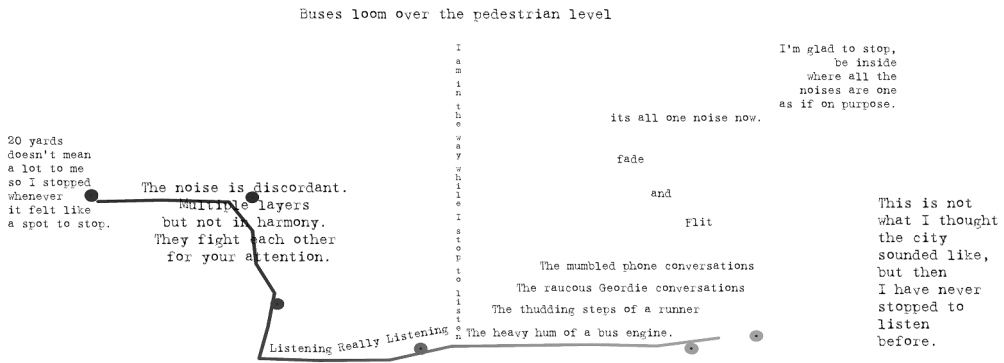
Figure 5. Crafted story created after following a direction.

represented here, there is a hope that you feel a validity in what they represent. The phenomenological nod or as Gaston Bachelard referred to it phenomenological reverberation (Van Manen 2007), the moment when you read something and think I may not have experienced this myself but I believe that someone out there has (Dowling 2011; Smythe 2011; Van Manen 2017).

In reading the generated responses you add to the understanding they represent; you bring them into connection with the knowledge you already hold of place, most likely linking the ideas you have understood to a place you know better than Newcastle. In doing so you create another shared understanding, one that exists between this work and yourself; the hermeneutic circle keeps going.

However, for this method to be successful it needs to go beyond the phenomenological nod; this instead becomes the initial step where we know we have been able to produce a knowledge that is true. From there the work becomes how can this knowledge be used, in what way does it inform my perception of a place, how may this knowledge be infused into project design or decision making in the place?

How can findings from direct me be used?

The method Direct Me is focused on knowledge collection, its openness operates against a push to answer a specific question and instead aims to collect all knowledge available to the researcher, so that research questions may be formed or gaps in knowledge highlighted. This could be utilised in many different research settings, and centres on research that endeavours to better understand place. Direct Me allows for a "getting to know" of a place to occur guided by those that already know it, and in doing so the knowledge gathered creates a more informed position from which research, plans, and projects could be developed.

As an alternative to sourcing opinions on projects that have already been designed where the responses incited are more likely to be negative and harder to respond to, or asking participants to respond within the framing of what the researcher perceives to be the problem; this knowledge gathering approach would create an informed platform of citizen knowledge from which to act on. In addition, asking people for their knowledge instead of their opinions eliminates the tendency towards negativity

and moves towards what people want you to know about a place being at the forefront. This is replicated in its ability to, by not restricting to information related to a specific research question, encourage participants to volunteer the information they feel is important not what the researcher wants to hear.

In the crafting of "stories" done throughout the method musings of how this knowledge might be used begin to emerge; the reflective nature of the method allows for these "on the way" conclusions to be made. The process does not stop there, however, and further reflection or interrogation of the unconcealed knowledge should be done. This can be an ongoing process whereby the knowledge generated can be revisited as an idea is reviewed, or when new information is unconcealed. The knowledge that this method generates becomes a live data source that can be continually worked with and added to.

Figure 6 is an example of a piece of prose reflective of "on the way" conclusions.

The prose teases at ideas but does not develop any concrete conclusions, it does, however, indicate that we should be considering alternative ways to traverse a space when we are developing them. From this a greater interrogation of the knowledge that this came from could be performed, or alternatively a new focused project launched. This small nugget of knowledge generated by the method could be transformed into an investigative project that experimented with encouraging alternative ways of moving, such as walking for daydreamers, or a project that tried to collect all the alternative ways people already move about a space.

Knowledge produced in this manner provides an insight into the ways in which people more in a place by engaging, not just with the trails one would leave behind through movement in place, but a felt approach that engages the sensory, and emotional relationships people have with place. Presenting the outputs from Direct Me as prose like the above acts as a starting point from which further inquiry can be instigated, but a starting point infused with knowledge, and more that a knowledge derived from citizens. A stable platform from which informed research can be built. While it may not present specific

> Proximity. Closeness. Fastest. Closest. Most direct. Is this really how we move?
> Ask for directions and it is the assumption operated under. Why not flattest,
> quietest, or most pleasant. Which walking route best promotes daydreaming?
> Which will lead me to find something new? Which route allows me to grab a
> coffee on the way?
> More than working out how to move to seek out these things, how do we design to
> stimulate them? Could we include quiet, calm routes in city planning? Flat routes
> for pushchairs and those that struggle with mobility? Routes that stimulate thought
> or embrace nature. Or maybe we need to signpost different ways to walk in
> existing space. Take the next left to uncover something new.
> The move to GPS has dulled our navigational senses but it has not eradicated them.
> We still make these choices all the time in the spaces we know well. This
> knowledge should be embraced, utilised to help others navigate, and maybe even to
> design spaces that nurture ways of walking we strive for already.

Figure 6. Example of shared understanding developed across participants and followings, reflective of an 'on the way' conclusion.

answers as other methods do, it provides insight in ways that they cannot. In addition, the openness in which findings are presented allows for creative approaches in taking the research forward such as designed interventions that originate in citizen knowledge.

Direct Me as a method strives to collect and make available knowledge that was previously unavailable or unnoticed. By doing this it provides a multitude of informed starting points from which interventions, ideas, and research can be formed; ideas derived from a solid foundation of knowledge that is reflective of a place as lived.

Conclusion

Basing this method in the embodied activity of walking gives it access to knowledge that is often overlooked, yet vitally important to our understandings of place. Utilising artistic ideas to challenge the everyday provides the researcher with a method to uncover knowledge about place that others hold. Moreover, this approach does so in such a way that the contribution from the participant can be as minimal as needed providing the opportunity to reach a wider range of audiences, including those that have been previously excluded by the time commitment needed to participate. Offering an alternative to more labour-intensive walking participatory methods such as walking interviews and go alongs. Founding this method in philosophical approaches allows for a plurality of knowledge that respects the plurality of place while still uncovering knowledge that can be used widely.

Asking the recipient of the directions to go out and have an embodied engagement with place under the guidance of a person that knows that place allows for not only the embodied knowledge of the direction giver to be unconcealed but new embodied knowledge to be generated within the recipient. Following the entire process of Direct Me allows for this new and unconcealed knowledge to be represented and understood in such a way that it can be utilised to engage with the built environment from an informed perspective.

It is this researcher's hope that this method can be used to understand ideas of place generating a raft of data that can inform future changes to the built environment or more detailed research projects to interrogate ideas discovered. More than anything, the method invites you to walk in another's shoes and learn from it.

Note

1. "Unconceals" is derived from Heideggerian terminology within hermeneutic phenomenology and is used throughout the methodological approach to refer to the way knowledge presents or reveals itself to the researcher (Crowther et al. 2017; Morrison 2003; Van Manen 2017).

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