

Accidental Tours and Illegal Tour Guides: Taking the Textbook out of the Tour

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Introduction

Actually walking through the built environment presents opportunities for the visitor to explore the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships in ways that are not solely dependent on visual observations but on a fusion of haptic indicators – connecting sense with site. Primary, unmediated utterances such as a sideways glance, muffled whisper, double-voiced, gesture, fragment, trace or stumble can problematise didactic interpretations of site and contribute to the formation of latent dialogue about that place. The nature of the tour and the remit of the tour guide can be crucial in determining the exposure of such utterances to the visitor. The nature of exposure is key to determining the mode of engaging a group of participants towards making associative connections on a tour that doesn't fall into the trap of a self-conscious, artificial set-up (in danger of disenfranchising the 'uninitiated'). It is important to move beyond the poetic image or a visual concern with spatial aesthetics into an exploration of authoring as dialogue in response to a multitude of haptic references. In this way, the tour that is concerned with active learning could enable participants in the event to be curious, moving through a pervasive scattering of located references.

The haptic realm is shown to play a tangible, tactical role in our communicative 'sense' of spatiality and mobility, thus shaping the texture of habitable space and, ultimately, mapping our ways of being in touch with the environment.

(Bruno 2002: 92.)

Part I: Associative theory

1.1 Considering the participant as productive

Considering how users might appropriate the guided tour questions institutionalised authority through engagement with happenings en route – as opposed to

presenting the end product as static, solitary, sanitised space. This paper makes a case for learning through discovering urban sites and consequently positions the tour and the tour guide as an intersection for considering conversations between critical and educational theories and practices.

There is always a lesser or greater degree of tension between the teacher's attempts to specialise space and technology rhythms to discursive purposes within the classroom and school and the pressures of everyday spatial rhythms of practice in the broader environment. Ultimately, pedagogic practice will be constituted in and through this tension. (Jacklin 2004: 387.)

Whilst Heather Jacklin suggests that a boundary exists between the institution-alised classroom and a 'broader environment' Jan Nesor argues that 'educational scale is defined by the spatial and temporal properties of networks in which people participate' (Nesor 2004: 311) and schools are not texts that can be read in isolation when studying spatialities of learning. The tour as a one size fits all educational experience negates the complexities of interaction from location and relational complexities of the body moving through space and time. Artists' walks, site specific and performance art have certainly blurred any perceived boundaries between art and audience often asking people to participate in the piece.

Bill Fontana creates sound sculptures of real time recordings that occupy both time and space in specific locations or sites. *Distant Trains* (Berlin, 1984)¹ links art with nature through a political issue concerning the preservation of trees outside the city centre. Microphones set up in the trees relayed real time nature activities to a space between the Art History Museum and the Natural History Museum in the city. This invisible transformation of sounds from the forest emerged from different levels – high/low, near/far, intermittent/repetitive, background/foreground – connecting the forest with the city centre. Janet Cardiff likewise demands that the audience participates in her work. She is interested in the way history and in particular a history is put together – not readily in a linear or chronological way.

They [Janet Cardiff and Georges Bures Miller] have mapped cities and institutions through audio walks that thread an intensified experience of the present with historical and fictional narratives. Their installations draw on cinematic genres to create dramatic scenarios which are both pictorial and spatial. (Whitechapel Art Gallery, August 2003.)

¹ Bill Fontana, Seminar on 'Sound Sculptures' at Goldsmiths College, University of London, November 16, 2004.

This is not a tour ... or is it? Motioning individuals around an area of East London in Missing Case Study B, Cardiff directs by signing or gesturing towards extra significant objects that play a part in her narrative. The train time board at Liverpool Street station, the Evening Standard newspaper headlines and a specific bookshelf at Whitechapel Library are all alluded to (through a 3D localised sound recording techniques) as the participant walks the route. The everyday practices that happen to be going on during the walk form part of the piece; as a participant I felt strangely vulnerable as I saw familiar streets appear to be simultaneously unfamiliar. It is Cardiff's presentation of multiplicity in both her subjectivity and the non-linear narrative that makes the piece the very antithesis of a guided tour. Indeed listeners may have difficulty in locating themselves as everyday 'background noises' are filtered out (sensory deprivation or heightened awareness?).

Spatial dislocation is not something usually experienced on a tour yet Cardiff's voice is very much the author-guide – albeit at times a disembodied one. The participant is asked to conceptually and physically move between times and spaces and it is this movement that actually creates the event; sensing our own movement in space rather than understanding it by way of sight or moving between rather than 'seeing' from one viewpoint. The combination of actual motion of the participant with multiplicity of narrative stimulates conversation with educational paradigms concerned with creative thinking and offers a context for taking the textbook out of the guided tour.

In understanding that the plan point of view or single viewpoint can be questioned we might be tempted to make an immediate application of Mikhail Bakhtin's 'polyphony' (Bakhtin 1981) to authoring the tour so that multiple viewpoints are all that's necessary to facilitate new critical practices in tour design. Denis Wood and John Fels (1992, chapter 2) argue that every form of mapping forms a discourse; maps are polemical, disputatious, and controversial in their arguments with other maps. Poverty maps, insurance maps and historical maps present ways into discoursing the map as a representation of reality. If such maps converse with other maps they become active (rather than a flat set of semiotic codes) and Wood suggests that the map surface itself is constructed out of hosts of propositions making a claim. Wood highlights a dialogue to be had between static, formal closedness in the language of maps and the dynamic openness that users can bring to mapping processes. Michael Holquist describes this motion

between static and dynamic in the role of language in value formation as simultaneous 'ceaseless slippage':

...what gives dialogue its central place in dialogism is precisely the kind of *relation* conversations manifest, the conditions that must be met if any exchange between speakers is to occur at all. That relation is most economically defined as one in which differences – while still remaining different – serve as the building blocks of simultaneity. (Holquist 1990: 40.)

If dialogue between participant and environment can exist simultaneously with dialogue between different participants this creates conditions for the tour event to emerge through relations between participants with their individual sites. The performative aspect of language – whereby utterances effect actions by being spoken – throws open the complexities of sustaining singular points of view.

There is no such thing as the 'first' literary work: all literature is 'intertextual'. A specific piece of writing thus has no clearly defined boundaries: it spills over constantly into the works clustered around it, generating a hundred different perspectives which dwindle to vanishing point. The work cannot be sprung shut, rendered determinate by an appeal to the author, for the 'death of the author' is a slogan that modern criticism is now confidently able to proclaim... It is language which speaks in literature, in all its swarming 'polysemic' plurality, not the author himself. If there is any place where this seething multiplicity of the text is momentarily focused, it is not the author but the reader. (Eagleton 1983: 138.)

Catherine Belsey goes on to suggest that in conventional literary criticism the process of production is suppressed so that 'the effect is an illusion of complicity between author and reader' (Belsey 1980: 127). She argues that instead the literary text is a 'play of contradictions' produced by what the reader brings to the text. As a consequence she goes on to present the case for new critical practices that 'insist on finding the plurality' (Belsey 1980: 129). The intersection of tour/tour guidance and participant could provide a place for new critical practices; rather than seeking to engage the visitor through a one-way presentation of facts, visitors are invited to engage in a play of contradictions produced by what they bring to the place. As such, the tour is active and exploratory in nature 'closely linking both kinaesthetic and tactual modalities which together define haptics' (Prytherch 2002: 2).

Marc Augé (1995, intr.) suggests that non-places (supermarkets, airports, cash points, bypasses) contract people to use them in defined ways. Information uniformly tells us what to do and what to expect, informing our solitary transit through these non-places at the expense of the socially organic place. I would

suggest that many tours of ‘landmark sites’ operate in this way. Designers of such tours tend to assume that the user is ‘adult’ as information about the building or site is selected and presented through the most unequivocal means (Hawkey 2004: 5–6). The ‘tour group’ follows their guide and accesses this source to find out what they want to know in the most direct way. This kind of tour experience defines the visitor as a consumer in the process where the guide acts as a lecturer-expert. Dialogue between visitors may happen incidentally but not as part of the planned experience and teaching uses a didactic or ‘chalk and talk’ methodology. This kind of tour design emphasises a particular kind of expertness and delivery model – whether it be a leaflet, person, audiotape or guidebook.

The tour presented as an expert could be categorised as self-contained; the visitor is required to know how to operate the system, expected to follow the rules of being in a tour group or in using the equipment and have information provided (sometimes on request). Such tours have been designed as unitary forms. And perhaps this kind of site-based educational activity has been knitted together by certain features that have become the expectation of its consumers – determined by a view of ‘what the consumer wants’.

Jane Rendell suggests that defining a problem or need to instigate design process inevitably places an architect or designer at a distance – to ‘perceive’ what they believe the user wants or needs:

Through consumption, the traditional logic of need, which requires the architect to design for perceived use, can be upset ... The occupation and consumption of architecture reinforces who we are and who we would like to be. (Rendell 1998: 232.)

The tour that formally references a visitor’s occupation of a site is built on a static, ‘grammatical’ structure that doesn’t intentionally consider dialogue between participant and site. In this way the tour is open to criticism of intentionality, singularity and indisputability that characterises formal structures in language, thus closing down potential for dialogue and learning through the live environment.

Language – like the living concrete environment in which the consciousness of the verbal artist lives – is never unitary. It is unitary only as an abstract grammatical; system of normative forms, taken in isolation from the concrete, ideological conceptualizations that fill it, and in isolation from the uninterrupted process of historical becoming that is characteristic of all living language. (Bakhtin 1981: 288.)

In thinking about what propels or moves the visitor to engage in learning through tactical discovery we might consider Bakhtin’s description of literary

genres in an attempt to position the tour as an educational activity. He describes certain features of language that take on the 'specific flavor of a given genre' knitted together with 'specific points of view, specific approaches, forms of thinking, nuances and accents' (Bakhtin 1981: 289). If the tour embodies similar features of the literary genre then it might be described as a form for carrying meaning. That notion of 'carrying' is important here. Bakhtin argues that language is simultaneously static and dynamic, formal and semantic, closed and open and the 'ceaseless slippage' between these aspects is dialogic. If the tour is a genre for learning through discovery (others might include creative play, interactive reference, puzzle/mystery, role plays, simulations and stories) then issues concerning dialogue and who authors that dialogue become key questions.

The dynamic tour

Does the tour work on dynamisms and tensions? Or does it offer a closed interpretation? Like poetry, tour guides can be quite formulaic but if you really let people explore they become secure in making associations and connections with their own experiences. Associative language works through engaging in private, messy interrelations, opening up imaginative expression rather than presenting closed meaning.

We must be free as regards all *definitive* institutions – and geometrism records definitive intuitions – if we are to follow the daring of poets ... who invite us to the finesses of experience of intimacy, to 'escapades' of imagination. (Bachelard 1969: 215.)

Traversing, walking, cruising or rambling through, on, over, around buildings and environments presents the visitor with a different set of challenges than those explicitly presented by museums, galleries or glossy picture books. Can the 'heightened awareness' of the participant be designed into the guided tour? Or into the space itself? Is this desirable?

Don't worry if you don't hear every transmitter. This is a treasure hunt and what you see and hear in between broadcasts is as much part of the experience as hearing the transmissions themselves. (Museum of London, LINKED information sheet.)

The guided tour raises questions about the relationship between interpretative arts and visitor perception of sites and how this might inform innovative approaches to making architecture more accessible to the public. How will good experiences of visiting architectural spaces influence future engagement with

places? Do they make the participant more creative in future dialogue with buildings? How might this be manifested through the production of guided tours? Considering how visitors might appropriate the tour questions institutionalised authority through engagement with the **happenings** of the site – as opposed to presenting the end product as static, solitary, sanitised space. This kind of tour demands that the participant witnesses events rather than observing from the pages of a guidebook and, as such, requires a degree of complicity to **evolve** between the tour ‘guide’ and participant where the guide acts like a mate in locating the visitor around the site.

1.2 Using (dis)ruption creatively

From a designer’s perspective we might ask if the tour is a critique or extension of a construction of evidence – and whose evidence. Yet surely this is dependent on user expectations. Participants in a tour may bring expectations of finding out about a particular site or perhaps they are looking for something to pass an afternoon. But by joining the tour they are committing themselves to an arranged educational activity that maps a route for them to follow – and their expectations are integral to their responses.

If one grants that every signifying practice is a field of transpositions of various signifying systems (an inter-textuality), one then understands that its ‘place’ of enunciation and its denoted ‘object’ are never single, complete, and identical to themselves, but always plural, shattered, capable of being tabulated. (Kristeva 1984: 60.)

We should perhaps ask if the guided tour is needed at all. The tour, as a site-based educational event, can be located in a range of formal and informal learning activities – from formal statutory education in schools and colleges to informal learning in museums, galleries and specialist centres. The tour represents a medium for educational activity – users expect to learn something from taking part in a tour. The tour guide as ‘author’ can be seen to operate at a procedural level, determining routes and defining objects for contemplation. Kristeva clearly argues against this closing down of critical potential; resisting ‘enclosure of the sacred and become instead protestors against its posturing’ (Kristeva 1984: 61). Yet the tour as an overtly educational activity does embody the potential for exposing and exploring those tensions between teacher and learner as boundaries between expert and participant in the learning event become blurred. If the role of expert

is redefined towards the learner, does the teacher become a facilitator? And if so, to what extent is that intervention overt or implicit in learning activities? What form might the tour take as participants' contributions patinate – where seams as sites of disruption (seamfulness) produce the tour?

...we can never read from within anything but instead pursue reading through the ruptures between the texts so that we are forever reading each text through another one. (Rogoff 2000: 77.)

...to know how to read a disputed text is a strategy of ambivalences and contradictions and not a celebration of universal access to information. (Rogoff 2000: 111.)

The guided tour of *The Place* during the London Open House annual event in 2004 very much sought to secure the visitor as a witness rather than an onlooker in what could be called a 'high culture' space. The tour guide was a young dancer, a user of the space and he communicated an emotional attachment that was engaging for the tour group. He often referred to 'our founder' in an intimate and proud way that made the script he was working to a slightly pedestrian prop. The tour inadvertently included some unplanned elements – such as coming across a photo shoot and looking through an as yet unglazed 'window' to possibilities of a studio beyond: 'When we're in the stretch zone, we like to look out and think about what might go on there if or when it's finished.' In this way, visitors were being asked to witness life as a dancer might in that space, working on dynamics and tensions rather than a closed, didactic interpretation.

It's less about factual recounting rather than emotional account.

All too often, mapping tends to be dismissed as a commanding, hegemonic instrument. Yet to persist in this position is to risk producing a notion of mapping that is restricted, placed wholly in the service of domination. What remains obscured are the nuanced representational edges of cartography, the diversity of cartographic practices, and the varied potentials of different mapping processes, including such tactics as transformative 'partial' mappings, which resist a univocal and totalizing vision. (Bruno 2002: 207.)

Dance performances scripted into the tour offered visitors an opportunity to engage with explorations of a spatial syntax – that, had visitors 'happened upon' them or glimpsed them through half-closed doors, might have invited more questions from the participants.

Engineering a dynamics between motion and emotion as learning activity opens up possibilities for exploring the experience of spatial transfer through

site-based educational activities; dialogic learning spaces that create opportunities for risk-taking, engagement with difficulty and toleration of higher levels of uncertainty.

The sense of touch, then, makes the discovery and exploration of space possible in every way: recognising other presences in space can make disparate objects into 'collections'. This sense not only implements desire but fosters curiosity, taking us from place to place in pursuit of pleasures that touch the sphere of imagination and reflection. (Bruno 2002: 252.)

New tactics for orienteering

Studies on semiotics and product semantics in the field of design have explored how visual languages determine meaning in products (Julier 2000; Krippendorff 1995).

Designers will ascertain what emotional values they want the consumer to attach to the product. They then develop forms which instigate the associations to, hopefully, inculcate those feelings. (Julier 2000: 94.)

Applied to the built environment one might make a similar analysis as a designer or planner of urban spaces. This kind of analysis focuses on a view of the designer as central in determining interpretations of the product – not the user, dweller or occupier.

Helen Jarvis and Andrew Platt (2002) consider costly mistakes made on the back of misreading user intentions in the design of live-work units in the South of Market (SOMA) district of San Francisco, US. The area had been 'labelled' as a neglected dockside with decaying properties and marginal users. New media developments initiated employment opportunities for those seeking experimental, 'urban' careers and the built environment planners responded with newly built live-work units. Planning arrangements were changed to allow for a move from industrial to residential occupancy in SOMA. Consequent research revealed that in fact most of the live work unit dwellers don't work at home. Instead they commute to a place of work adding to increased hypermobility, stress, congestion and property famine. If people 'make do' it is at great personal, social and environmental cost.

...the notion of a networked colony of new economy firms and workers wrongly conveys the impression that material renewal and lived experience are unidirectional.

In practice, a complex matrix of social worlds underpins these contested cultural and territorial transformations. (Jarvis, Platt 2002: 45.)

Doreen B. Massey’s research into live-work spaces in the high-tech industries in Cambridge resonates with this conclusion. She found that the workplace was highly specialised to keep mostly male employees focused and productive. So that although table tennis, cafes and gyms may have given the illusion of playtime in fact this environment was highly structured to ‘productivity of the intellect’ (Massey 2000: 32).

Relations between learners could be described as tactical in nature if that they are unplanned, irrational and unanticipated in the learning event – they are both multiple and simultaneous. The tour could provide a means for ‘carrying’ those relations – providing an interpretative forum for a multiplicity of inferences and responses that resist a totalising vision of a site. As an architect or designer this may be conceived as an intentional act of resistance against pre-planned living spaces where ‘every activity has its compartment, mapping and defining social relations very precisely in space’ (Rendell 1998: 241).

The guided tour does embody the potential for dialogue if that dialogue is designed to be constructive rather than a passive transmission of information; exploratory perception rather than contemplation of the object. The crux in this is the (dis)ruptive space as emotions surface in response to an idea – and what might illicit such responses. In designing tours we may adopt practices that try to evolve these creative processes through making dynamic triggers central to the learning event:

Lecture	Static triggers	Dynamic triggers
(Commonplace, the norm)	(Rarer and more sophisticated)	Original
Factual acquisition	Uncovering planted clues (user engagement but still basically ‘uncovering’ fixed facts)	Making associative connections (the user engages creatively with the triggers, making associations and connections; hijacking the tour and making it theirs)

(Not designing places but discovering what they are...)

In nudging participants towards meeting places of intellect and emotion, we might describe these (dis)junctures as nodes on a tour. As nodes inform the direction of the journey so the event is formed through dialogue with and between these extra-significant points – both at and away from the site.

There's something about stimulating feelings about places through emotions that comes with making associations over time through different places. (Interviewee, London Open House, 2003.)

Travelling through Eastern Europe last summer I found that on visiting several sites of interest and museums concerned with migration and occupation I started to make personal connections between disparate objects seen in different locations.

Had these sites been organised into a tour itinerary with a mapped route, transport and so on, much individual choice and opportunities for going off-track would have to be deliberately sought – thus making random associations unlikely. Perhaps thinking about tours as process rather than as product or package allows us to explore the potential of a new tactics for orienteering. Finding our way might therefore be described as **threading** (single elements interwoven with others to connect disparate points/elements in a narrative and might be described as continuous or persistent features) and significant nodes as **seams** (the seam as a space of junction, of both connection and disjoin – producing a furrow in a surface).

So the question 'is it a tour?' asked in relation to Cardiff's work, places emphasis on defining what counts as content for a tour experience and what doesn't and inevitably 'organised' walking of a site doesn't easily fall into neat categories. An expectation to learn through walking a site may resonate with all kinds of experience in different spaces and times. The same difficulties occur when attempting to classify by type of communication – a person guide might be an actor playing a role, a fact-based audio tour may be a narrative or a virtual tour may also be happening in real time. Both content and means for delivery often exist in dialectic tension and as such are key aspects of learning and teaching pedagogies that produce different kinds of practice. Learning environments immersed in the everyday bring into proximity opportunities for situating or positioning the learner in making associations in response to the site. How overt or 'illegal' the teaching is may have some bearing on how we consider the nature of the tour and its capacity for active learning.

To make something meaningful is to situate it in spacetime, or better, to put it in motion along certain paths that trace out particular networks of association. 'Teaching' is in part an effort to impose contextualising frames in this sense. 'Teaching' and 'learning' are then labels for struggles and negotiations over how activity is to be scaled, that is, over the kinds of spatial and temporal orders educational events presuppose (and are aligned or coordinated with) and those they entail or attempt to create. (Nespor 2004: 312.)

Structuring process

Traditional concepts of design creativity are rooted in the notion that we should define a problem and then engage in means to solving it. Process has become an issue of rational procedure and control entirely focused upon outcome. Creativity is delegated to a realm of 'lateral thinking given a slot early in that process'. Means and ends are divorced. But process and outcome are two sides of the same coin. The shaping of that process, a developing awareness of contextual issues, the shaping of the project content, and the shaping of the presentational outcome are inter-related. These dimensions develop and progress in tandem. (Sprake, Allinson 2003: 2.)

Mapping Boundaries (Sprake, Allinson 2003) highlights that associative or experiential methodology is creative in producing ideas that enfold the user in process. Difference or disruption to the perceived order starts to bring ideas to the surface and in hindsight these might be called critical moments or nodal points in the process. In this project, those participants who were more comfortable with linear design process felt most at risk when a straight line to the 'next bit' wasn't there.

When we were given this project, I automatically tried to organise mentally how I could direct thoughts. With me thinking closely within the starting points, but also having ideas randomly spiralling out. Some fixed, some constantly shifting around. I tried to push the idea of 'outcome' to the curb and focus on immediate reactions to situations and I loved the idea that everything I was encompassing was EVER changing. But the problem with this was that I now couldn't mentally see a structure anymore, although this was the most TRUTHFUL relationship to 'Deptford'. (Sprake, Allinson 2003: 19.)

Peter Jenny (1991) also hints at the multitude of ways in which we respond to our environments in design processes:

The elementary concept may be an idea which, like a collage, consists of a multitude of particles. If we compare the elementary concept to a soup it would be minestrone,

and if we compare it to a ship it would be Noah's ark. Most people hear, feel, see, taste, smell, speak, walk, excrete, change, renew, understand, and think. Even if only a fraction of the possible is also probable, there still remains a huge reservoir. Limitation calls for the establishment of criteria to enable us to use the network of relationships.... (Jenny 1991: 18.)

'Establishing criteria' for design is too big a debate for this paper but does have direct relevance to process-led outcomes. Jenny's notion of elementary concept likened to a collage of a multitude of particles resonates with language being likened to the city maze made up of old and new streets (Wittgenstein 1953: 82). There seems to be an emerging tension in constructing meaning between the apparent fixity of built sites and their teeming plurality. Augé says that the plurality of places makes huge demands on our 'powers of observation and description' resulting in a feeling of disorientation that 'causes a break or discontinuity between the spectator-traveller and the space of the landscape he is contemplating or rushing through' (Augé 1995: 84).

Positioning the subject through identifying familiar relations and through dislocation draws on both geological and textile metaphors of threads and seams in constructing meaning through a multiplicity of sensory or haptic utterances. Sites enunciated by historical, social, cultural and environmental contestations have the potential to engage the subject through making such (dis)associative constructions.

Andrew Ballantyne (2004) suggests that relatedness to place needs very little support from actual evidence or unequivocal proof. Stonehenge, for example, presents a 'white wall' on which to project our own desires as its 'original purpose and significance are unknown' (Ballantyne 2004: 22). Peter Ackroyd (2000: 696) argues that the neglect in development of South East London over the last century has allowed for its 'effortless reinvention' and N. J. Habraken (1998: 6) suggests that the restoration of cities is like freezing a collage of intervention. Richard Wentworth (2000: 59) describes the 'plaster' on a fence in the Caledonian Road as more 'comforting' than the gaping hole and David Blamey (2002: 180-190) transgresses boundaries of public and private both within the room itself and outside, everyday routines and 'unnoticed' objects prompt different or new perspectives.

Occasional Sights is a 'London guidebook of missed opportunities and things that aren't always there' (Best 2001: introduction). In her 'alternative' guidebook,

Anna Best highlights 'landmark' sights on the front cover with page references and on turning to these presents an 'other' commentary. For example, the Millennium Bridge is presented with video stills of people sneaking over the bridge when it was closed for being too wobbly.

When the city becomes a mere façade, when Oxford Street ceases to exist, when violence can be casually inflicted by one metropolitan group upon another, then realism – a respect for detail, objects, independent and various lives – becomes the most pressing of all necessities. (Raban 1974: 120.)

The *Mudlarking in Deptford* project described in Part II of this paper provides a context for exploring tensions between seemingly different theoretical paradigms – educational and critical – within a specific location. The project is currently being developed in collaboration with NESTA Futurelab and is very much about incubating associative theories in critical practice.

The project aims to set up a community of participants engaged in experiencing the tour as process by using wearable technologies to facilitate shared responses whilst walking the site. As such it is underpinned by the following principles:

- **User- producer** – is active in determining the (re)design of buildings and their environs;
- **Process is outcome** – the notion that shaping process as well as outcome in designing demands a constant striving to balance prescriptive project planning against the dangers of purposeless wandering;
- **Local/live context** – the Creekside area of Deptford is undergoing regeneration and this has brought to the surface some contested agendas and territorial transformations.

The big aim of the project is to see what about the site itself is discovered through participants producing their own tour of the area.

Part II: Incubating practice

2.1 Mudlarking in Deptford

Where the banks of the Seine are open and approachable, there are stretches of the Thames which actively deter visitors.

(Ackroyd 2000: 553.)

These colourful wasteland communities, that spring up spontaneously wherever land is abandoned, are one of the few remaining truly natural types of habitat in the country. The contrast of natural and industrial heritage can be strikingly attractive and interesting. But the opportunities it offers for recreation are often ignored. (London Wildlife Trust.)

Mudlarking in Deptford explores how associative histories, stories and visions of Deptford Creek can be woven into a guided tour of the area – one in which the participant actually produces the tour. The site itself provides a rich, immersive stimulus for pervasive technologies to seamlessly engage visitors in creatively responding to a real and live local environment.

The originality of this project is in using located triggers to stimulate multi-sensory associations between site and story and developing these fragmented responses into a walking tour of an everyday area. Mudlarking therefore opens up the potential for exploring accidental or incidental creative connections in the design of urban walking trails. This ‘accidental’ process supports people in reconceptualising a local, everyday urban site – making associative connections through iterative communications with each other as they walk the site, gathering and collaging pieces of audio and visual material, contributing to the production of a ‘rhizotrail’ of the area – thus moving the personal into a collaborative engagement with the site.

Mud. Marking the margins of a tidal river that at once seems unsanitised and uncontrolled. (In stark juxtaposition to the controlled, ordered flow of the upstream river that runs within its sleek concrete banks.) The mud beaches of Deptford Creek can seem hidden, blocked out from view, to the casual wanderer in this part of South East London. The thread running through this learning event is the interpretation of relics (aural and visual, large and small scale) to unlock memories and visions concerning everyday life in and around the Creek thus building an architecture² of:

² The term ‘architecture’ is referenced to Bruno 2002: 251.

- souvenirs, remembrances from users of the Creek;
- traces and remnants of past and present Creekside industries;
- visions of real and fantasy future development;
- the Creek's natural habitats and environmental protection;
- found objects from the Creek mud bed.

Participants determine the direction of the walk through responding to located nodes. The nature of a node might be described as a knotty formation, a point of a stem from which one or more leaves arise, a small mass of differentiated tissue, a complication or an entanglement. Nodes on a rhizotrail have the capacity to link conceptually and physically so that participants are exposed to half-truths, fragments of stories, parts of realities seeded by others and can sprout their own responses to form new nodes. Narratives determined by the initial seeder group of co-designers are threaded through each of the main starter nodes.

These gathered responses are strung together to create an ever evolving and more involving walking tour whose parameters (locality) can feasibly expand or contract dependent on the imagination of the participant and the learning outcomes of the project. Inputs from participants are uploaded live using mobile technologies via a wireless network and are therefore available to others on the tour at that time and thereafter.

Buildings were derelict and still. Parks were empty. It was as if at every corner I was expecting the Deptford community to jump out and surprise me, but no. You couldn't actually see the people but the buildings let you know they were there.

(Sprake, Allinson 2003: 18.)

The positioned nodes can pose questions, concepts, issues and imaginings that can only truly be understood whilst in location. The user then can respond to these questions, can take part in interactive games, dances and stories that explore the subject matter, access other responses and post their own. Extended learning episodes can be managed through the use of email; participants can bookmark relevant 'relics' for later reflection.

What the tour does...

- Allows the user to be constructive in creating dialogue about an everyday site;
- Stimulates curiosity;
- Increases access to hidden spaces and time through using mobile technologies in location;
- Builds a shared learning event;
- Experiments with different ways of finding our way about in guided walks.

The user will experience...

- Active participation in stories, events and narratives threaded in and around the site;
- Personal interpretations of an everyday site (including self-determined route and time spent there);
- Built-in opportunities for developing the tour content for other participants.

2.2 Antennae of the tour ... the receptive senses, means of exploration

Emerging pervasive technologies potentially have the means to build the tour as architextural design; creating a platform for engaging participants in the dynamics of spatial transfer. Eric Klopfer, Kurt Squire and Henry Jenkins (2002) identify five properties of mobile devices (PDAs in this case) that produce unique educational affordances:

- **Portability** – the small size and weight of mobile devices means they can be taken to different sites or moved around within a site.
- **Social interactivity** – data exchange and collaboration with other learners can happen face-to-face. Nyiri (2002), with reference to Dewey's emphasis on the need to facilitate face-to-face interactions, posits a new philosophy of mobile learning that points to mobile technologies as facilitators for the innate anthropological need to communicate.
- **Context sensitivity** – mobile devices can both gather and respond to real or simulated data unique to the current location, environment and time.
- **Connectivity** – a shared network can be created by connecting mobile devices to data collection devices, other devices or to a common network.
- **Individuality** – scaffolding for difficult activities can be customised for individual learners. (Klopfer, Squire, Jenkins 2002: 95–98.)

Key issues of context, mobility, learning over time, informality and ownership are both important considerations in both developing a process-led tour and the toolkit. Portable technologies have the capacity to be both personal and shared devices unlike street kiosks or interactive screen displays that are static, delivering information in a single location.

These new [technological] capabilities inspire new practices which can lead to valuable outcomes, but, to date, application of theory to the use of these technologies for educational purposes is lacking. Being mobile adds a new dimension to the activities that can be supported, both because of the personal and portable nature of the devices themselves, and because of the kinds of interactions they can support with other learners and the environment. (Lonsdale, Naismith, Vavoula, Sharples 2004: 5.)

Mudlarking is researching the use of PDAs as a means to locate participants, provide node data and the means to contribute to their on-going development and to share these responses with other participants on the tour. Issues concerning the technology getting in the way of what is actually happening at the site on that day at that time, how to manage live updates and consideration of what makes for an annoying intrusive experience are part of the current developmental phase of the project. Using digital technologies as more than a delivery mechanism (the 'classic' tour) – giving participant control over content and narrative means that the tour must reform and rethink itself as learning activity and not just as a digital replica. Experimentation with referencing points and challenging ways in which information is received and perceived is a key concern of the project.

If time and space are constant variables on the guided tour, then positioning of the participant is a determining factor in tour design (not the guide) – and so complicity is not an illusion (as Belsey suggests – between author and reader) as pervasive locative technologies have the potential to make complicity a reality in learning through touring everyday urban sites.

[Effective learning] involves constructing an understanding, relating new experiences to existing knowledge. Central to this is **conversation**, with teachers, with other learners, with ourselves as we question our concepts, and with the world as we carry out experiments and explorations and interpret the results. And we become empowered as learners when we are in control of the process, actively pursuing knowledge rather than passively consuming it.

(Sharples 2003: 504–520; my emphasis – J. S.)

Or ... taking the textbook out of the guided tour.

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