

Researching audiences through Walking Fieldwork

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Abstract:

Contact Young Actors Company's (CYAC) 2010 summer production of *People in Glass Cases Shouldn't Throw Stones* was a multi-genre experimental promenade performance, taking inspiration from street theatre, clowning, installation and performance art and site-specific theatre. *Glass Cases* led its audiences around several galleries in the Manchester Museum. This set-up in a public space made it possible for research participants to access all of *Glass Cases*' open access 'stages' immediately after the performance. Twelve research participants – walking in pairs – were able to re-walk the places of the performance immediately after the performance ended. They took photographs and recorded their conversations about their experiences. Walking and talking in pairs (and recording the talk) is a research technique called Walking Fieldwork developed by the sociologist Andrew Irving. The method facilitates the exploration of space through walking narratives and was found to highlight the inter-personal and relational aspects of research participants' experiences.

Keywords: audience and reception research, Walking Fieldwork, audience experiences, walking, theatre

Introduction

The audience research project on *People in Glass Cases Shouldn't Throw Stones* (hereafter *Glass Cases*) was a one of eight case studies in a bigger research project which looked into the roles and experiences of the users¹ of Contact (Theatre) Manchester. The case studies investigated the outcomes of young people's work as well as the processes they utilised during their engagement with Contact. This research used ethnographic methods (such as participant observation, photography, video and interviews) to observe the rehearsal



Figure 1: Research participant in front of Sarcophagus. Permission for publication granted by the research participants.

process of *Glass Houses* and to gain an understanding of the participation of young people in process and production. In addition, phenomenological and participative approaches were utilised to study the roles and experiences of Contact's users. The audience research on *Glass Cases* only came to the table when the essential decisions of the production had already been made. This meant that the study of *Glass Cases'* audiences had to work with what was already in place, which constituted a challenge as well as an opportunity for the present enquiry.

In light of the above, this paper sets out to investigate Walking Fieldwork as an audience research tool. Walking Fieldwork at *Glass Cases* enabled research participants to

physically access the sites of the *Glass Cases* performance. One anticipation was that the methodology would produce evidence of audience engagement of cognition and also insights into bodily experience, feelings and emotions (Allain and Harvie 2014: 149). For this reason special attention is paid in this paper to the kinds of experiences this technique, in and of itself, produced.

People in Glass Cases Shouldn't Throw Stones

People in Glass Cases Shouldn't Throw Stones, by Contact Young Actors Company (CYAC), was a site-specific promenade piece performed on four levels of the Manchester Museum. The performance was a succession of small scenes and performance installations, which explored the idea of power and power relations within a museum.² Audiences, as well as being shown around the museum, witnessed the power struggles taking place in front of them, around them and in their midst, and sometimes had to take sides.

The performance of *Glass Cases* had twelve scenes and took place in eleven locations on all four levels of the Manchester Museum. Audiences were led from site to site by two clowns dressed as guards. *Glass Cases* engaged audiences with – in the words of the Guards/Clowns – a ‘system’. However, the performance never defined the ‘system’ or what it represented. Therefore, the ‘system’ became a metaphor for the systems audiences know and live by and their position of power or powerlessness opposite such systems. The ‘system’ was personified through the people audiences met consecutively during the performance: Guards/Clowns, a tramp (bag lady), uniformed guards, dancers, puppets/automatons, a king and his entourage, chess figures and a curator. The notion of the ‘system’ was upheld and perpetuated throughout the production through the people who worked to support it (Guards/Clowns), those who were excluded from it (Bag Lady), those who could be manipulated like figures on a chess board (Chess), those who insisted on having fun (Fish Tank; Poster Boy), those who had fallen on hard times (Feather), those who got in the way of the ‘system’ (Curator) and those who follow or might resist (audiences).

Glass Cases playfully engaged with conventions of representational and alternative performance formats. It combined several performing art styles, such as street theatre, clowning, installation and performance art, promenade performance, site-specific theatre, experimental theatre and conventional performance with audience participation. The overarching promenade and site-specific theatre formats were interspersed with scenes reminiscent of street theatre and performance art, while scenes of predominantly interactive nature and clowning were coupled with scenes of mainly conventional character-based performance.

In the first scene of the performance – ‘Welcome’ – two Guards/Clowns greeted and briefed audiences in the foyer of the Manchester Museum. They offered to show audiences the museum and asked them to help find an important ‘key’ which had gone missing.³ The performance started in the foyer on the ground floor of the museum, went up to the first then the second floor, and ended in the mammal gallery back on the first floor. While *Glass Cases* used two dramaturgical frames reminiscent of a story line or a narrative – the idea of

a 'system' and the 'search for a key' – audiences intent on making meaning from their journey between the foyer and the mammal gallery – those searching for an overall structure or narrative – had to produce it on an individual basis. They were required to 'connect the dots' by themselves, using the 'system' and the 'search for the key' as what Gareth White terms their 'horizon of participation' (2013: 55). In this way audiences became co-authors of or co-collaborators in the performance. Interestingly, the audiences' journey did not only include planned and prepared scenes but left 'blanks', 'gaps' or room for small events which just 'happened' along the way. These gaps are important as they disrupted the flow of the performance, linked scenes or remained a free space for audiences to reflect and think ahead. Bennett eloquently reflects on such 'voids' within performances:

Blanks allow the reader to bring a story to life, to assign meaning, and by making his decision, he implicitly acknowledges the inexhaustibility of the text: at the same time it is this very inexhaustibility that forces him to make his decision. (Bennett 1997: 44)

Glass Cases produced 'blanks' through its site-specific and promenade character; for example when audiences walked from one performance site to the next and in the interactions surrounding getting to or from a scene. *Glass Cases* frequently confronted audience members with ambiguous situations. They needed to decide, for example, if they wanted to take on the responsibility for smuggling a letter past the guards, or if a child being instructed by a Guard/Clown to imitate him was a significant part of the performance or just a 'happening'.

Walking Fieldwork

Walking Fieldwork is a qualitative, ethnographic research method which has been inspired by other methods utilising walking and talking such as 'walking with' (Cass 2003; Morris 2004), 'participation-while-interviewing' (Baerenholdt 2004), 'time-space diaries' (Kenyon 2006) and 'go-along' interviews (Kusenbach 2003). It is one of the methods which was inspired by the mobilities turn (Sheller and Urry 2004; Cresswell 2006; Urry 2007; Büscher and Urry 2009). Underlying this search for mobile methods is the realisation that 'moves' make rich social and material realities (Büscher and Urry 2009: 99) and that movement, blocked movement and potential movement need to be studied via methods and methodologies which are sensitive to the idea and practice of movement. Walking Fieldwork is a qualitative research method and a performative technique developed by the sociologist Andrew Irving (2003; 2004; 2007). It is a method which combines walking with the recording of voice and image. As a qualitative method it is essentially concerned with 'depth' in participants' responses to performance and also with questions of embodied, affective engagement with 'place', 'performance' and 'memory'. In the spirit of qualitative research it has a small sample size.

In the case of the *Glass Cases* performance, Walking Fieldwork was chosen as a way to investigate audiences' experiences and meaning making processes through an essentially participant-led enquiry. One of the key ideas here was the 'encounter' of moving bodies with three dimensional and multi-sensory environments. It engaged with questions of how research participants reflected on and re-lived experiences, and how they interpreted 'place' and 'performance'. Walking Fieldwork was also chosen as a means to strengthen the power of research participants within research. As Waterton and Watson argue, 'questions belong to the 'questioner' not the 'answerer', and answers are as much an artefact of the question as they are of the answerer's thoughts' (2015: no page). For this reason research participants in this case study were given a greater degree of control of and ownership over the research process. This was manifest in, first, the choice of participants' routes through the museum. Although it was arguably easier to follow the route of the performance in sequence, there was nothing to stop participants from choosing alternative routes.⁴ Second, participants were able to choose freely which aspect of their experiences they would engage with, as well as where and how detailed they would do this. In this sense it can be argued that research participants 'owned', at least to some degree, the research activity.

In his early work Irving used Walking Fieldwork in the sense of a 'Go-along' or 'walking interview'. During this phase he defined this practice as:

an ethnographic tactic whereby I accompanied people moving between places and witnessed those moments when their bodies – or the surrounding world – became 'present' [...]. [It] attempts to reveal the temporality and specificity of walking practices by accompanying people on their journeys and asking them to narrate their experiences. (2004, np)

In his later work Irving developed and democratised his ethnographic 'tactic' further and handed over the part of the interviewer to another research participant. Now, two participants were involved in walking, talking and questioning each other as partners in an informal conversation. It is the later practice of Walking Fieldwork which was adapted for audience research in *Glass Cases*.

This technique uses the narration of thoughts and experiences and photographic images to access audiences' experiences and in Irving's words their 'inner life worlds'. This way of researching interiority attempts to tackle the issue of access to memory in social and also in artistic research involving people who are engaging in multiple ways with art: i.e. visitors, audiences and participants. Irving formulated Walking Fieldworks' main thrust thus:

given the centrality of memory and imagination to all social life, [the question is how] to access memory and the imaginary when there is no independent access to consciousness. (2007, 185)

Walking Fieldwork attempts to offer some basic evidence about how interior states emerge during (re-played) action and in site-specific surroundings. Walking Fieldwork connects 'place', 'performance' and 'memory', as memory is realised as a re-telling, re-playing and re-living of experience. Variable and multi-layered stimuli are a rich and fertile ground for participants not only to re-call memories which have solidified as thoughts but also to enable access to embodied memories in-situ through a process of re-immersion into specific spatial circumstances. The re-immersion, in turn, could be seen as a rich embodied stimulus in comparison to books, maps, photography and video. Through its uses of walking, active watching and narration Walking Fieldwork could be argued to combine two strands of ethnographic research methods: interviewing and observation of 'naturally' occurring social settings, conduct and events (Kusenbach 2003: 458).

Becker (1958) argues that participant observation is accepted as a particularly authentic and reliable ethnographic method, as it provides access to 'naturally' unfolding events and delivers 'volunteered' member interpretations. Observational approaches in ethnographic research have their limitations, as people in 'natural environments' do not usually comment upon 'what is going on' at any given time. Observational methods are also unable to provide access to people's concurrent experiences and interpretations. Sit-down interviews, on the other hand, are an excellent ethnographic research tool as they are able to go beyond what is visible and therefore observable. They can provide unique access to research participants' subjective interpretations of others, as well as their social interaction and future plans (Holstein and Gubrium 1995; Seidman 1998). However, sit-down interviews are weak in re-constructing participants' lived experience in terms of, first, narrativity and, second, the limits of the interview situation itself. First, sit-down interviews tend to overlook aspects of participants' lived experience which do not figure dominantly in their awareness. This refers especially to topics which do not easily lend themselves to narrative recollection such as 'pre-reflective knowledge, practices of the body and details of everyday environmental experience' (Kusenbach 2003: 462). An awareness of this problem has led researchers to use a variety of stimuli to ease access to the less easily accessible, non-verbalised areas of their research participants' consciousness, such as letters, books, maps, music (Allett 2010), photographs (Banks 2001; Harper 2002; Beilin 2005), video (LeCompte and Schensul 1999; Henry and Fetters 2012) and also arts-based methods (Bagnoli 2009).

One of the strengths of Walking Fieldwork is how it views the organisation of memory as being a spatial experience in situ, rather than one that is ordered chronologically. This technique is informed by both participants' walking and is, therefore, a form of embodied cognition. Walking Fieldwork can be viewed as a process of networking of memory, presence and experience through an embodied physical activity.

However, Walking Fieldwork also has its weaknesses. As a research technique for the interrogation of human activity it is less well suited to environments which require exhausting physical activity or silence (such as conventional theatre performances, concerts and ballets). In unison with all other verbal-expression based research methods, one of its

drawbacks is that it is dependent on research participants who share with the researcher the same language as well as a high degree of communicative competency.

A complex experience–storage–retrieval mechanism is at work in all audience research approaches. The crucial feature that can be influenced by the researcher is how the retrieval of memory can be supported. Compared with interview, questionnaire and observationally-based approaches, Walking Fieldwork uses the respondent's physical and sensual immersion in specific spatial arrangements as its support mechanism for the retrieval of memory. It can be assumed, that Walking Fieldwork produces research material that is rich in depths.

Walking Fieldwork at *Glass Cases*

Walking Fieldwork at *Glass Cases* involved twelve research participants, partnered in six pairs over four shows.

Invitations to take part as a research participant in *Glass Cases* were circulated among networks at Contact and the University of Manchester. Most participants were, therefore, mostly part of or associated with either organisation. However, a member of the Library Theatre, an actress from Manchester and a teacher from Cheshire were also recruited. Research participants were selected by invitation and were identified before the performance. Familiarity of research participants with each other was one criterion according to which participants were coupled. For example, one Contact staff member invited a close relative. They formed one research pair. In other cases the coupling of research participants had to be arranged according to their availability. In a second step, the researcher contacted all prospective participants and informed them about the details of their involvement.

Research participants were made aware that the research was a qualitative study based on the analysis of conversations and images. The researcher brought it to the participants' attention that 'a detailed conversation' including thoughts and feelings was a highly desirable outcome. The outcome should reflect research participants' experiences connected to specific sites, people and situations. Research participants were encouraged to engage in the conversation as a 'critical friend' and to probe each others' contributions when they felt that this would make a difference to their own understanding or that of the researcher.

The researcher and research participants then met again on-site at the foyer of the Manchester Museum approximately half an hour before the start of the performance. Here the research participants were reminded of their task and encouraged to get acquainted with their research partner before the performance started. At this point, participants had familiarised themselves with the voice recorders and cameras. After their induction the research participants joined the other audience members of *Glass Cases* at the stairs in the foyer of the Manchester Museum.

Research participants were free to either walk the performance in their pairs, independently, or with other partners. The performance lasted approximately seventy

minutes. At least one research couple took part in each of the six performances (in three days) of *Glass Cases*. Some performances, however, saw two couples take part. The majority of the participants in Walking Fieldwork were women, between twenty and sixty years of age. However, one man in the age group of twenty to thirty took part as well. Most participant couples were of a similar age group. Only one couple had an age difference of more than twenty years.

Walking Fieldwork at *Glass Cases* meant that research participants walked through the Manchester Museum following the route of the performance. For the reader to get a better impression of the rich sensual and spatial stimulation participants were exposed to while walking around the museum their route is provided here (Figure 1).

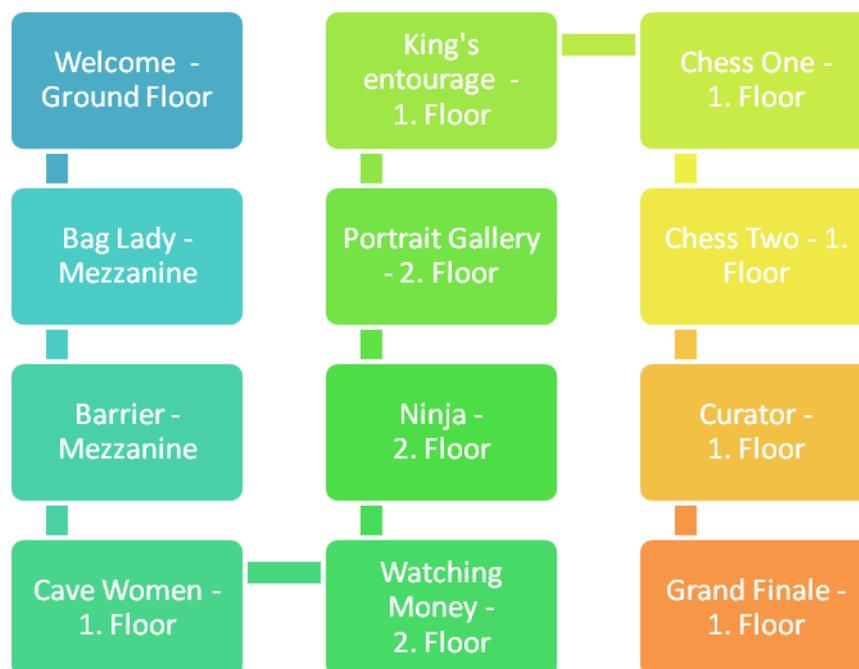


Figure 2: The route of *Glass Cases* through the Manchester Museum

It is important to note that research participants' Walking Fieldwork journeys through these sites afforded them the opportunity to immerse themselves into the areas of the museum for a second time. While making their way through the Manchester Museum research participants engaged in an informal conversation while walking, talking and taking pictures of performance sites, for example of the Mezzanine, Elephant, Coin Gallery, Fish Tank, Sarcophagus, Desk and Mammal Gallery. While the research participants were on their tour around the museum the researcher was available in the foyer for any situations arising.

After the end of the performance the research participants had to return to the Mammal Gallery. This is a long way and offers many different attractive and inviting displays – mummies and an elephant skeleton, among others – along its path. Therefore, most pairs start Walking Fieldwork approximately twenty minutes after the end of the performance. Some research pairs started later than that. Once the pairs of research participants had

made their way back to the foyer, they were handed a camera and a voice recorder to capture their conversations and to take images. Thereafter, the research participants started their Walking Fieldwork in the foyer. The research participants recorded their conversations through the entire journey – from the foyer to the foyer – and also took pictures of places of significance for their respective experiences, for example of the staircase from the foyer to the mezzanine, the barrier or coin gallery. It took pairs of research participants between twenty and forty minutes to re-walk the sites of *Glass Cases*. Participants' walks were cut short in two cases as the museum was closing for the day and they had to leave the premises.

After the end of their Walking Fieldwork tour the recorded conversations and the images were handed back to the researcher. The transcriptions and images, taken together, were analysed at a later stage by the researcher.

The following sections explore how research participants' experiences can be characterised as a mixture of thoughts and emotions. On the one hand, worries, insecurities, confusion, fear of distraction and a search for meaning were preoccupying some research participants. On the other hand, however, those thoughts and emotions were accompanied by an appreciation of humour, by feelings of engagement and by acts of reflection.

Research participants' responses to *Glass Cases* can be divided into four areas: firstly, formal expectations towards the performance, its presentation and the relationship of audience members to the theatrical event; secondly, the interaction between audience members and performers; thirdly the expectations towards the performers and, fourthly, audience members' personal comfort. These four areas are now discussed in greater detail.

Expectations of the performances

The first area – performance, presentation and event – is the biggest with a number of complex responses. It reveals that audiences are likely to bring sets of expectations or frames to performances, which are mostly derived from established theatre. Some of those frames have become so engrained that they are largely taken for granted and are largely invisible.

Audiences, for example, take it as a given that they will be able to see and hear. When this is not the case they notice and remark on it. One research participant expected that there would be enough space for everybody – similar to a guaranteed seat in a theatre performance – and therefore took her time. On her way to the Mezzanine she found that the staircase was blocked by a crowd. The people in front of her separated her from the second scene (*Bag Lady*). She found herself further away from the performance than she had wanted to be, and could see but not hear the *Bag Lady* speak. During her Walking Fieldwork journey, while walking up the stairs towards the Mezzanine, she recalled her feeling of 'being stuck' in an undesirable position on this staircase, in a loud environment which rendered her unable to receive the clues she wanted to collect in order to understand the performance:

I could not hear. Great, now I will miss the plot. (R&L – initials after quotations indicate which Walking Fieldwork pair the comment is from)

While walking from the set of first to the second Chess piece, another research participant re-experienced feelings of bemusement, irritation and helplessness when she passed the same corridor for the first time during the performance:

These were the two bits [two parts of Chess] where I thought, OK, I am totally lost here. ... I couldn't hear much of it. (J&P)

She felt lost as she did not receive cues she was able to recognise. That she was unable to hear made it worse for her as theatre performances transmit a majority of cues through language. Without those spoken prompts she felt increasingly lost.

In addition, the majority of research participants mentioned that they felt distracted when museum displays were used as a background. The distraction was experienced as negative because audiences felt that their concentration should be exclusively with the performance. They expected that the exhibits of the museum would contribute to the performance in one way or another. The relation between exhibits and the performance was for many research participants not an obvious one. Some audience members felt continuously tempted by exhibits when moving from one performance site to another. One research participant remarked when she re-entered the coin room during Walking Fieldwork:

I got distracted by the coins in here, you know, by the actual exhibits. I suppose the real money. (J&P)

Another research participant reflected on the duality of her feelings, when she found that museum exhibits were used as backdrop for the performance:

Part of you wants to look around and look what is going on in the galleries. But, you feel you have to concentrate on what is happening. It's quite surreal to having all these ... something is different every time you move. You look at something totally different and totally unrelated to what they are talking about. (L&B)

Most audience members also assumed that performances have a meaning and that it is one of their tasks to pick up the clues along the way in order to uncover a central message, narrative or morale. Audience members expected *Glass Cases* to be clear, to make sense and to operate with some form of comprehensible logic. When this was not materialising as expected, some research participants noticed unrest and frustration and were, therefore,

more likely to comment upon it. Standing in the Mammal gallery at the end of their Walking Fieldwork tour, this pair of research participants reflected on the lack of a recognisable story, narrative or structure:

P1: I don't know if there was meant to be a moral to the story?

P2: I think so. Well, at the end it seemed to be. This kind of:

P1&2: 'Go and find yourself'-thing.

P1: But I don't think it was hammered home particularly strongly throughout the rest of the piece. (R&L)

Interaction between audience members and performers

In the second area – interactions between audience members and performers – audience members expressed their wish to stay in control and to control their level of involvement. Audiences want to know which rules govern the interaction between themselves and the performers. In *Glass Cases*, research participants experienced feelings of discomfort when they perceived the rules of the engagement were opaque, changing or tacit.

P1: I realised that they [performers of 'Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes'] probably wanted more audience participation. Because she said: clap to activate me. And we all just clapped once. And she started singing 'Head, shoulders, knees and toes' and doing the movements, and she did that for a while and then she stopped, and then she indicated that we should clap. So everybody just clapped, like an audience, and then somebody just twigged, a child, the children twigged and clapped once and she started doing it again, and then they clapped again and she had to start again, and everybody started doing this, letting her go for a couple of seconds and then clapping once again. And I was kind of like, ah, I get this. They wanted people to actually ...

P2: Interact.

P1: Interact. And I did feel that there could have been a lot more interaction. (E&K)

Expectations towards the performers

The third area of responses to *Glass Cases* – expectations towards performers – again touched on audiences' need to know what kind of relationship they entered into during the performance. It emerged from the responses that audience members felt comfortable when performers displayed a high degree of performance standards, comfortable in control of the situation and able to 'carry the audience' (E&K):

P2: But, do you think that this should be part of the audience's experience to actually like thinking about the performer's experience? Don't you think that they should carry the audience experience? [...]

P1: Because...

P2: That's what I feel. I feel that we shouldn't be concerned for their [the performers'] experience. We should let them [carry us].

P1: And there were a moment when that was happening. And there were moment when that wasn't quite so happening. (E&K)

While standing at the vestibule of the Mammal gallery the same research participants reflected back on an interaction with one performer and the disquiet she felt about him, which was reflected in the way she 'let go', feel comfortable and secure:

I felt insecure with the actor (curator) [...] I felt a little bit insecure. Especially, when he asked me, he pointed out something to me. He asked me a question. You know like, he asked me ... like, but then, you know, [I was thinking] ooh, am I saying the right thing? Also, I don't know if he was conscious of time or if it was his character. [...] So basically, he kept saying hurry up, hurry up, we haven't got much time. And I don't know if in reality he was told to move this on quickly because we were running out of time or if this was his character. But that added to my feeling of like not secure, not relaxed basically. (E&K)

Audience members' personal comfort

The fourth area - expectations of safety and personal comfort - describe features which help audience members to feel well during a performance. The need for personal safety is paramount here. This includes physical features like the temperature of a room, the need for personal space and a comfortable distance between audiences and performers. The right kind of distance between performers and audiences is dependent on the space and the situation in which a performance takes place. One research participant remarked that she tried to motivate other audience members to move closer to the performers. She felt very aware that audiences and museum visitors use the same space and that the latter needed passages to navigate performance sites at all times. The research participant, therefore, moved closer to the performers and also attempted to motivate other audience members to huddle much closer together to leave a passageway for museum visitors. Also, research participants commented on the 'smell' in two rooms, as well as on the temperature in the coin room:

I remember how the smell of the food made me feel hungry. (S&L)

Another research participant noticed another olfactory stimulation:

I could smell some chemicals [...] I could smell some very strange chemical smell. (M&N)

Several research participants noticed that the temperature in the coin room was higher than in the other parts of the museum: 'The room was very hot and people were distracted' (R&L) and 'The room was very hot' (J&P). The absence of natural light combined with the relatively long scene surely contributed to research participants expressing a wish to sit down rather than having to stand up: 'standing was difficult. I wanted to sit down' (J&P).

Many research participants expressed some form of worry connected with their level of participation in *Glass Cases*. Some worried that they could be in the way of other audience members or performers, suggesting that they had responsibilities towards museum visitors, actors and other audience members, that they might be 'made to' participate in a physical way, that they were worried about interacting in the right way, that they were unsure 'what was going on', and that partaking means taking responsibility for the performance.

Several participants were confused by the performance as a whole or by parts of it. Particularly troublesome was the scene which involved the 'Ninja' character, an interactive 'call and response' scene. Two performers stood on a long bench in a narrow passage way, a performer who sang 'Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes' in Spanish and the associated movements. The 'Ninja' character shouted fighting calls and made battle moves. Both song and actions were activated and stopped by a single clap from audience members, who enjoyed starting and stopping the characters, and also played with the performers by varying the frequency of their claps. This scene, however, provoked disquiet from almost all respondents, including:

That room (Ninja), that, that confused me [...]. It was about something else. I didn't know where they'd come from and [...] but then in here I felt a bit like, what is going on, I don't get it. And it doesn't fit and it was getting weirder and weirder. (L&B)

During this scene audience members stood in very close proximity to the performers and had to huddle together to fit most of the group into the small space. Some audience members, of the thirty-strong group, did not fit into this small passageway and could only listen to this part of the performance. The close proximity and the exclusion of a part of the group added to the irritation of some.

Unease also crystallised around the end of the performance⁵; the plot (or lack thereof); the perceived lack of explanation/ guidance; the risk of getting into trouble for participating in the 'wrong' way; insecurities over how audience members were expected to

relate to the performance; the fear of saying the wrong thing and the lack of clarity in regard to the role of audiences in site-specific performances in a museum in general.

Signposting/Interactions/Expectations/Acknowledgment

Personal expectations and the possession of 'cultural capital' influenced audience members' experiences of *Glass Cases*. Some participants were familiar with some of the performance formats used during *Glass Cases*. For example, some expressed preference for, or dislike of, text-based theatre; some had previous experiences of Theatre-in-Education and some voiced a preference for performance art or fine art exhibitions in conventional or unconventional settings. Few participants in the study, however, had experienced all of the above in a single site-specific, promenade performance. The way in which *Glass Cases* was constructed made it necessary for audience members to become co-creators of the theatrical performance. They had to combine different fields of the arts (sculpture, performance art, happening, street art, promenade performance) in unique ways, connect performed 'vignettes' with unforeseeable occurrences on their way from one performance place to another, and decide on their level of participation.

This study shows that audience members most often criticised the performance when their expectations were not fulfilled. It is the aim of connection-making to relate the 'unknown' to the known and thereby make the 'unknown' accessible. When faced with 'unknown' elements of the *Glass Cases*, audience members called upon experiences of more conventional performances and alternative paradigms as well as general arts audience-ship.

Audiences' memories of *Glass Cases* often related to extraordinary and complex moments of the performance, which thereby became memorable. For example, one pair of research participants, said

P1: I thought that was the most brilliant ending that they could have done.

And I wanted to start singing when they got to the end of the lyrics. I thought we just should have broken into song.

P2: I wanted to sing along with everything. (J&P)

Audience members' experiences of *Glass Cases* were at times similar and, at other times, different from experiences of representational performances. Almost all affirmative experiences were congruent with experiences from more conventional theatre performances. Moments of *Glass Cases* which audience members enjoyed were often similar in structural terms to the representational paradigm. These moments might have affirmed audiences' knowledge of and experiences from more traditional forms of theatre per se, in addition to intrinsic elements or experiences contained within those moments. Some research participants, for example, 'liked the costumes' especially in the chess scene (E&K, S&L); several enjoyed the dance of the Cave Women (E&K, L&B, M&N); and some were enjoying the gorgeous space (Mammal Gallery) as much as the performance itself (J&P, S&L). In contrast, experiences which had closer links with emerging/alternative paradigms

were often perceived as challenging and unsettling. Strikingly, all research participants felt unsettled and confused at some point during the performance:

P1: And it was still unexpected what was going on still [after the barrier].

Do you still want us to look around the exhibits or do you want us to dialogue with the exhibits or ...but then I kind of realised that this has nothing really to do with

P2: what is going on in the gallery?

P1: on this site. (S&L)

Conclusion

Walking Fieldwork provides the researcher with considerable opportunities. This study shares Evans and Jones' finding that it is easier for participants to verbalize thoughts and experiences when they are immersed in situ in specific three-dimensional environments (2011: 850). Participants were more likely to notice the heat in the coin room and the chemical smell in the corridor as they experienced them for a second time during their walk. In this way, walking provided participants with access to parts of lived experience which otherwise might have gone unnoticed.

Walking Fieldwork provides greater equality to research participants as they are more independent of the directions and also the questions of the researcher. Research participants are in a more powerful position and enjoy more control through the freedom to choose or change the route and the sites to engage in than in sedentary interviews. It was noticed that instructions to research participants need to be clear enough to ensure the data is relevant and also open enough to allow participants to present their experiences as they want them to be seen. Walking Fieldwork can establish rapport between research participants and establish positive social connections. Walking and talking with somebody allows for the production of social connections through the sharing of space, experience and the time together. In this study the degree of familiarity between research participants increased the length, depth and richness of their involvement in the research. The talk about experiences in the Manchester Museum provided a platform for memories which reached back more than twenty years and which included habits of a lifetime.

Walking, in and of itself, provides a useful additional lens to lived experience when compared with stationary interview methods. Walking elicits different kind of information. Research participant are stimulated more by the three-dimensionality and multi-sensory nature of places than through talk in fixed environments, and responded in unforeseeable ways. Evans and Jones have argued that, in terms of the understanding of space, walking interviews are superior to sedentary interviews (2011: 849). As participant observation walking with others is a research method which relies upon and creates the capacity for additional insights in comparison to interviews in fixed environments (Butler and Derrett 2014: 1).

Walking Fieldwork provided room for serendipitous and unanticipated responses, and also for contradictions. Given the general sense of insecurity with the performance it was surprising that a participant wanted to 'break out in song' in response to the grandeur of the Mammal Gallery in the Grand Finale.

Walking Fieldwork also has – as with any other research method – clear limitations. Walking Fieldwork makes demands on the corporeal capabilities of participants; they need to be able to walk and negotiate considerable distances in reasonable amounts of time. Research participants need to have a positive connection, and be willing to develop rapport. The level of connection between participants is difficult to produce in a limited amount of time. The researcher might, therefore, be forced to draw on pre-existing networks and invite participants who already know each other.

Research participants need access, to be able to move freely, and to be able to converse while on the move. This is clearly not appropriate for places which demand silence, such as churches or libraries, or places which restrict access such as airports, train stations or banks. It is rare that Walking Fieldwork can take place in theatrical/performance settings. If this is the case, access to the performance site is restricted to after a performance has taken place. Access before or during a performance would disturb either the preparation or the run of the performance. The place must be navigable, and be safe to access for the researcher and the participant. The successful conduct of Walking Fieldwork directly depends on noise levels and to a lesser degree on the ambient temperature of the site. Either can make the conduct of walking and talking very hard or nearly impossible. The amount of time it takes time to organise, conduct and analyse Walking Fieldwork is a limitation of the method, as it is a very time-intensive process.

There has, so far, been a lack of direct comparisons between interviews in both walking and sedentary modes. Evans and Jones's study made an effort to clarify the differences between those two approaches (2011). Walking interviews are, as with all physical activities, tiring as they combine the act of walking with mental activities. This double effort represents a strain on research participants' resources. The outcomes of the method are unpredictable as they depend on a number of factors which cannot be controlled by the researcher. The small sample size is a drawback. Evans and Jones argue that walking and talking methods are less productive for biographical narration as they tend to be more 'spatially focussed, engaging to a greater extent with features in the area' (2011: 856). However, this does not mean that the method is unable to produce personal narratives of richness and depth. It might, perhaps, only be more effective at investigating the relationship between people and spatial context. Pre-determined routes lessen research participant's empowerment (see also: Evans and Jones 2011: 850).

Walking Fieldwork at *Glass Cases* is much too small a sample to claim validity beyond its limited reach. Bigger and more representative studies need to critically investigate this method and compare it with the outcomes of more sedentary approaches.

It is one of the most important outcomes of this research that most of the participants' responses were concerned with the logistics of the performance, with

expectations, interactions, structures. They also dealt with questions of how clear, comfortable or engaged with *Glass Cases* they were at given points – not about actual meanings made relating to memories, personal experiences or histories of being included, or excluded, or objectified. The references to the ‘system’ prompted participants to remember/think/feel/change their perception about characters, issues and aspects of society. This suggests that Walking Fieldwork prompted participants to reflect on structures, more so than on the content, meaning or emotional impact of the performance. Therefore, Walking Fieldwork seems at its most productive when investigating participants’ relationships with space and not necessarily when exploring personal experiences.

Biographical Note:

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Notes:

¹ The term 'user' denotes young people who took up roles of audience members, workshop participants, performers, workshop assistants, workshop leaders, writers, directors, musicians, marketers and Contact ambassadors.

² *Glass Cases* was CYAC's second show of the year 2010, the summer performance. CYAC usually produces three performances per year: a spring, a summer and a Christmas performance. *Glass Cases* took place over a three-day period, totalling six performances. Performances started at either one o'clock or three o'clock in the afternoon on the Thursday, Friday and Saturday of the last weekend in August 2010. The last weekend of August 2010 was also the last holiday weekend before the beginning of the 2010/11 school year. Therefore, the Manchester Museum was full of families.

The Museum, actually, offered a great variety of activities specially targeted at families with children of school age and younger which ran parallel with *Glass Cases*. The performance of *Glass Cases* was not announced in the Manchester Museum brochure or its advertisements. Audiences and visitors either got to know about the performance through Contact, or they discovered it while they entered the museum. *Glass Cases* was devised under the direction of a creative team led by Tom Hogan, the Artistic Director of Aqueous Humour, a clowning and street theatre company. CYAC's young actors were between fifteen and twenty years of age. The production had a total preparation period of eight weeks; the first four were facilitated by a lead artist and supported by a former CYAC member. This former CYAC member became the assistant director of this production. After the initial rehearsal period the young people worked for three weeks to create the performance facilitated by the director Tom Hogan. He rehearsed with the young actors for two weeks at Contact's Space 03 rehearsal room and worked in the final weeks on-site at the Manchester Museum.

³ The motive of the 'search for the key' was built up during the first three scenes. However, in the following scenes it was dropped until its re-emergence in the penultimate scene. Here it took central stage as the person found to possess the key was dragged away and tried, in the last scene, by a grand jury in the Mammal Gallery.

⁴ That all participants re-visit all of *Glass Cases*'s sites during their Walking Fieldwork turned out to be impossible to realise. Several research participants could not, for a variety of reasons, see all performance sites during their Walking Fieldwork tour. Organisational reasons, most importantly the lack of time, were the main inhibiting factor. There were only ca. 40 -50 min available between the end of the performance and the closing time of the museum. This left enough time for a whistle-stop tour through twelve performance sites on four floors. This time frame, which could not be extended, left some participants with an adequate amount of time for what they had to say. The Walking Fieldwork journeys of those, however, whose engagement was more intense, was cut short.

⁵ The last scene took place on and around the central staircases of the three-storey Mammal Gallery. In this scene a Grand Jury, supported by a number of 'soldiers', judged the character who was found in possession of the 'missing key'. The grand finale in the surroundings of the magnificent Mammal Gallery resembled a 'show trial' in the procedure, deliberately 'staged', in which judgement of the individual seemed predetermined. The end of the last scene especially seemed to irritate some audience members. The individual was 'taken away' through the audience and the members of the jury melted quietly into the background. The final movements of the play denied audience members 'closure' as it could be expected in more conventional, representational performances.