

Enactive Walking

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Further readings

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Enactive walking

Foot by foot, step by step, one gradually attunes oneself to an urban landscape. The writer Rebecca Solnit author of *Wanderlust: A history of walking* (2001) explains that being on foot enables us to be in the world, navigating, changing perspective and getting through places. Although it is often an overlooked or taken-for-granted action of the able-bodied that conforms to the morphological topography of a city, walking is an actively embodied interaction with place. Philosopher Edward Casey reminds us that 'in walking we move into a near-sphere of our own choosing, if not of our making. In this sphere, we encounter places as much as we enliven them' (Casey, 1998, p. 229). Lived body and lived place link up with each other in the experience of walking, allowing us to 'build up a coherent world out of the fragmentary appearances of a city that, taken in isolated groupings, would be merely kaleidoscopic', as Edmund Husserl observes (Husserl, 1981, pp. 248–249). Thus, when we are trying to capture the city, walking can be an excellent tool, an embodied way of knowing in which the action 'is both means and end, travel and destination' (Solnit, 2001, p. 6).

Unlike *flânerie*, *enactive walking* enables the active perception of an urban place. The 19th-century character of the *flâneur*, explored in depth by the philosopher Walter Benjamin in *The arcades project* (1999), maintains a clear distance from the city: he is an observer of the urban environment much more than he is a participant in it. The *flâneur* is interested in and intrigued by the phantasmagoria of the city, and the city remains at the level of retinal experience. Enactive walking is instead a consciously embodied interaction with the city, influencing and redefining the environment around it. With today's proliferation of mobile phones, walking apps, social media and constant developments in augmented reality, the experience of enactive walking can even redefine the environment in ways that were unimaginable in previous centuries.