



What is 'Walking Interconnections'?

'Walking Interconnections' is the name of a collaborative research project being led by Sue Porter from the University of Bristol. As the name suggests, the project's focus is on the ways in which walking, as an activity, can prompt the sharing of experiences between people. We are particularly interested in exploring how different people experience walking – and what those experiences can teach us: about walking and movement, about relationships to place and the environment, about how we get about and what we do and think and see and hear and feel as we walk through space. Though we cannot literally walk in someone else's shoes, by walking with and beside them, we might get more of a sense of their perspective on things, and maybe gain some insights or knowledge that could be useful when thinking about how we can all live more sustainably.

Why Walking?

Walking, for most people, is an everyday activity. Most of us just do it, without giving much thought to it. When people do think more consciously about walking, they most often make reference to the health and environmental benefits of walking: walking is good for us and is good for our planet.

Invisible in such general presentations of walking are the many different types of walking that people engage in – from the long walk in the countryside to the local walk to the corner shop – as well as the many different types of walkers: children, the elderly, wheelchair users, people with guide dogs, mothers pushing prams... Each of us experiences and moves through the environments around us in different ways and for different reasons. We think we have much to learn from knowing more about how people walk. And we think that the best way to do this is to arrange some walks between people.

How you can help

We would like to invite you to take someone else on a walk of your choice and, with your walking partner, share your experiences of walking this particular walk. We will provide you with ideas and ways to record your experiences (for example, a camera). Your partner will then take you on a walk of his/her choice, sharing his/her experiences with you. In walking together, you will be exchanging both

walks and experiences. Perhaps by walking with someone else, you will have a sense of what it might be like to walk as someone else. At the very least, you will have made a new connection!

Walking Pairs

The interconnections we are keen to explore in this project are those between disabled people, and sustainability practitioners. Whilst we recognise that some disabled people *are* sustainability practitioners our research is prompted by an awareness that public communication around sustainability issues and practices tends to marginalise disabled people. We hope that 'Walking Interconnections' might provide a method for facilitating useful exchange of experiences between and within these communities, learning from and with each other.

Commitment

The research project is structured around a number of full and part days, and participants will need to be able to attend them all:

- 1 introductory workshop, 10.30am – 4pm
- 1 planning meeting (approx. 1 hour)
- 2 walks (may be on the same day)
- 1 afternoon Art workshop 1.30pm – 4pm (in the early autumn)
- 1 Making Sense Day 10.30am – 4pm (mid autumn)

Travel expenses will be met and all participants will receive a participation voucher.

What next?

If you would like to hear more about our research project and what would be involved if you were to collaborate with us, we will be holding our Introductory Workshop for potential participants on Saturday 1st June. We hope the workshop will be enjoyable for all who come along, irrespective of whether you choose to continue to collaborate with us as a walker. We will tell you more about our research aims, talk about how artists have used walking in innovative ways to connect people together and to engage with everyday environments, share with you some creative ways to record your walking experiences; and, provide lots of refreshments, including lunch.

Do you have any questions?

For further information about the project or the workshop, or to confirm attendance at the workshop, please contact:

Sue Porter via email at sue.porter@bristol.ac.uk, or write to her at

School for Policy Studies,
8, Priory Road,
Bristol, BS8 1TZ.

If you are interested in this project but unable to volunteer as a participant, we would still love to hear about your walking experiences. We have a website <http://walkinginterconnections.com> and invite you to leave your comments on our Guest Posts page.