

Ethnography

Copyright © 2008 SAGE Publications (Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, and Singapore)
<http://www.sagepublications.com> Vol 9(2): 175–196[DOI: 10.1177/1466138108089467]

An urban tour The sensory sociality of ethnographic place-making

■ Sarah Pink

Loughborough University, UK

ABSTRACT ■ In this article I explore the implications of theorizing ethnographic research as a place-making process. I suggest that if ethnography can be understood as place-making then the task of the reflexive ethnographer includes seeking to understand both her or his own emplacement and how she or he is involved in the constitution of ethnographic places. Taking one research event – an urban tour – as a case study, I analyse the sensoriality and sociality of ‘shared’ walking, eating, drinking, imagining, photographing, and audio- and video-recording, alongside and with research participants. I argue that it is by attuning her or himself to other people’s practices that the ethnographer might be able, through her or his embodied experience, to make and thus comprehend the places she or he seeks to analyse.

KEY WORDS ■ place-making, urban, routes, senses, walking, eating

In December 2006 I spent a Saturday of guided walking, eating, socializing, and variously photographing, audio-recording and videoing in Mold, a town in Flintshire, Wales. This tour of Mold was proposed, designed, and led by local residents who are involved in developing the town through the principles of the Cittàslow (or Slow City) movement. Taking this research event as a case study, in this article I discuss how the sensory sociality of walking, eating, imagining, drinking, photographing, and



Figure 1 The road from the church to the cenotaph. Photo © Sarah Pink 2006. Bryan Grew (the current Mayor of Mold) explained how the hill that we had walked up to the cenotaph from the church was part of a route that was walked every year as part of the town's remembrance event. The street would be crowded. When we arrived Carol Heycocks, with whom I had just walked up from the farmers' market to the church, photographed us standing by the cenotaph.

audio- and video-recording, alongside and in collaboration with research participants, can be productive of place-as-ethnographic knowledge. I suggest that by theorizing collaborative ethnographic methods as place-making practices we can generate understandings of both how people constitute urban environments through embodied and imaginative practices and how researchers become attuned to and constitute ethnographic places.

Since summer 2005 I have been researching the development of the Cittàslow movement in Britain. Cittàslow, an off-shoot of the better known Slow Food Movement, was founded in 1999 in Italy.¹ Cittàslow is a transnational movement that states its aim as to promote 'the use of technology oriented to improving the quality of the environment and of the urban fabric, and in addition the safe-guarding of the production of unique foods and wine ... [that] ... contribute to the character of the region'. It engages several contemporary themes in that 'With the overarching ideas of environmental conservation, the promotion of sustainable development, and the improvement of the urban life, Slow Cities provide incentives to food production using natural and environmentally-friendly techniques' and

'Slow Cities [themselves] seek to promote dialog and communication between local producers and consumers'.² In contrast to what the leaders of the slow movement see as the contemporary fast life, the Slow Food ideology that informs Cittàslow wishes that 'suitable doses of guaranteed sensual pleasure and slow, long-lasting enjoyment [may] preserve us from the contagion of the multitude who mistake frenzy for efficiency' (*The Slow Food Companion*, 2005: 6). As Figure 2 emphasizes, by 'slow' this does not mean, as explained by Mo, one of my research participants, 'Yokel slow' or simply doing things slowly. Rather, as the cultural studies scholar Wendy Parkins writes, '[slow living] involves the conscious negotiation of the different temporalities that make up our everyday lives, deriving from a commitment to occupy time more attentively and "mindfully"' (Parkins, 2004: 346). This 'slow' approach to environmental issues and everyday life is of course not taken up by all residents of Cittàslow towns. Rather, one of the tasks of the activists who sit on Cittàslow committees is to promote what the movement calls 'Cittàslow awareness' amongst other residents.

Cittàslow pursues its goals through an indirect activism which argues by way of example rather than direct action. The movement's principles are

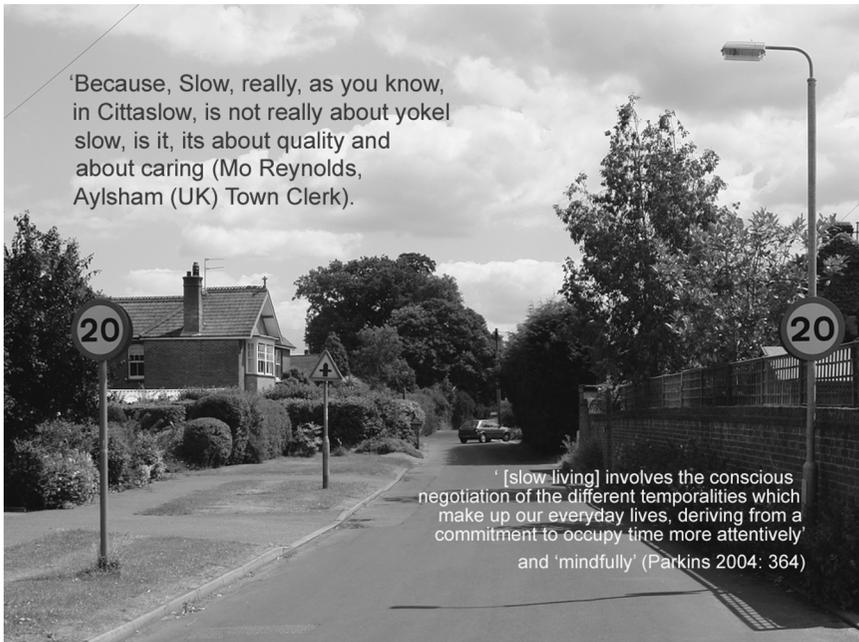


Figure 2 Both local and academic interpretations of slow living associate it with the quality of everyday life.

put into practice in the form of policies, projects, activities, and events in its member towns. It outlines around 60 criteria against which towns must score at least 50 percent to be accepted for membership. Cittàslow activists often refer to this as a framework through which to imagine the possible futures of their towns and their lives in them. Internationally (in 2007) Cittàslow has over 100 member towns in 10 countries. National Cittàslow networks have been established to manage these in Italy, the UK, Germany,³ Norway, Poland, and Portugal with others in Japan and New Zealand imminent. Cittàslow UK, based in Ludlow, Shropshire, was established in 2004. Cittàslow became linked with Britain's market town's strategy⁴ and incorporated into some District Councils' strategic planning. To date, five UK towns have Cittàslow status, Ludlow (Shropshire) and Aylsham (north Norfolk) since 2004, Diss (South Norfolk) and Mold (Flintshire) in 2006, and in 2007 Perth (Scotland). Others in England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland are considering applying or have applications in the pipeline. My research includes analysing the movement's practices, discourses and texts and ethnographic research in Aylsham, Diss, Ludlow and Mold.

Ethnography as place-making

Theories of place, which have long-since been a concern of geographers, are increasingly popular across the social sciences and humanities. Such an approach is particularly useful for analysing how human practices of everyday life, performance and imagination are implicated in the production of both material and sensory realities and a phenomenological 'sense of place'. The philosopher Edward Casey's (1996) theory of place has proved pertinent to cultural anthropologists working on questions of the senses and place-making (e.g. Feld and Basso, 1996).⁵ Casey, critiquing earlier anthropological treatments of 'place' as if it was something 'carved out of space or superimposed on space' argues that it is place rather than space that is universal (but not pre-cultural) (1996: 46). In fact he argues that space and time are contained in place rather than vice versa (1996). Turning previous assumptions around in this way Casey suggests place is both central to what Maurice Merleau-Ponty has called our way of 'being in the world', in that we are always 'emplaced' and that place has what he calls a 'gathering power' (1996: 44) in that: 'Minimally, places gather things in their midst – where "things" connote various animate and inanimate entities. Places also gather experiences and histories, even languages and thoughts' (1996: 24). Acknowledging the non-fixity of place, Casey conceptualizes place as a form of constantly changing 'event', but not so contingent that it is elusive:

Places are at once elastic – for example, in regard to their outer edges and internal paths – and yet sufficiently coherent for them to be considered as the *same* (hence to be remembered, returned to, etc) as well as to be classified as places as certain *types* (e.g., home-place, workplace, visiting place). (1996: 44)

Casey's formulation is important for understanding places as experiential, gathering processes and as identifiable. However, as Tim Ingold has suggested, place might alternatively be understood as something that, rather than containing pathways, is actually constituted through 'entangled' pathways (2007: 103). Ingold's focus on pathways is particularly relevant for understanding the urban tour since it permits an analysis of how the making of routes is implicated in the making of place. Yet, as I show below, 'entangled pathways' can simultaneously be seen involving experiential, gathering processes, and constitutive of identifiable places.

Thus a focus on place invites ethnographers to conceptualize fundamental aspects of how we are situated as embodied beings (differentiated of course by gender, generation, class, race, ethnicity and more) in the world. It suggests that we should think not only about how the subjects of ethnographic research are emplaced (meaning, in David Howes's words 'the sensuous interrelationship of body-mind-environment', 2005: 7). Rather, it invokes the additional question of how researchers themselves are emplaced in ethnographic contexts. Some anthropologists have already acknowledged the presence of the researcher in their discussions of place. For example, Basso embeds in his account a reflexive narrative of how the knowledge he represents (concerning Native American senses of place) was produced (1996). Here I want to push this point further, since in a conceptualization of place-making as a universal and constant human activity (and/or outcome of human practice) the researcher is not simply the embodied ethnographer who also exists in an intersubjective relation with her or his informants. Rather, the co-presence of researcher and research subject is itself inscribed on place-as-event as it is simultaneously experienced and constituted. If ethnographers are inevitably emplaced, and being emplaced itself involves place-making practices, then we cannot disentangle ourselves from the universal that Casey (1996) argues place is. We should moreover recognize that it is at least in part through our own routes and pathways (Ingold, 2007) that we are entangled in place-making processes (rather than simply attributing these to our research participants). This invites an exploration of how ethnographers and research participants might be complicated in place-making, and suggests the ethnographic research process can be theorized as a form of place-making.

Urban walking and eating as ethnographic knowledge

Central to the practical design and phenomenology of the tour I was taken on in Mold were two everyday life practices – walking and eating. Existing discussions that theorize these as practices of place-making and as productive of ethnographic knowledge offer a starting point for understanding the methodological implications of attending to walking and eating.

While the idea of urban walking is not new to academia, existing approaches are limited in their focus on walking in *the city* rather than on walking in urban contexts. These approaches include efforts to draw parallels between walking in the city and ethnographic fieldwork. Chris Jenks and Tiago Neves have suggested that Walter Benjamin's figure of the *flâneur* provides a framework through which to critically reflect on urban ethnographic practice. Defining the *flâneur* as 'one who walks without haste, at random, abandoning himself to the impressions and sights of the moment' (Jenks and Neves, 2001: 1 [citing Maclean's (1988: 56) quotation from the French dictionary *Robert*]). They suggest that 'The *flâneur* introduces a phenomenology of the urban built around the issues of the fragmentation of experience and commodification, opening the way for a micro-sociology of the urban daily life' (2001: 1–2). They construct a set of parallels and discontinuities between the *flâneur* and the urban ethnographer through which to analyse the role of the latter. Although the suggestion that there are similarities between urban walking and ethnography is important, the limitation of this analysis is that Jenks and Neves assume that both 'in the urban space, the visual sense dominates' and, following James Clifford (1986), the 'ethnographic gaze' likewise dominates anthropology (2001: 6). Although vision is clearly an important part of urban experience, there is in fact a case for re-thinking both *flânerie* and urban ethnography as a multi-sensorial form of engagement, rather than simply in terms of vision. Indeed, the idea of walking as multi-sensory experience has been discussed increasingly across the social sciences and humanities. As geographer Paul C. Adams points out, 'To walk through a place is to become involved in that place with sight, hearing, touch, smell, ... proprioception, and even taste' (2001: 188). Recent anthropological work develops this further. Ingold has suggested further investigation of the tactile 'grounded' aspects of walking (2004: 330) and of particular interest is Lee and Ingold's discussion of urban walking with research participants in their study of 'Walking, Movement and Placemaking' in Aberdeen. They demonstrate how the multisensory 'being there', 'understanding of place as created by routes', and sociability afforded by walking with research participants (2006: 68–9) have strong resonances with doing ethnographic fieldwork itself. Such insights into how other people walk and create routes in urban contexts, and how they themselves reflect on these practices, provide

something of a key to understanding their ways of being in the world (to paraphrase Merleau-Ponty). In this article I develop this focus on urban walking as a research method in two ways. First, I extend it from the existing focus on the city in urban studies generally and also in urban anthropology, to the town. Second, I combine a walking methodology with a digital multimedia approach to ethnographic practice.

Similar themes to those noted above for walking are stressed in existing literature concerned with food and the senses, stressing how food can be implicated in the making of place (Law, 2005) the sensory sociality of eating (Walmsley, 2005), and the connection between food and memory (Seremetakis, 1994; Sutton, 2001). The cultural anthropologist Nadia Seremetakis has defined commensality '*as the exchange of sensory memories and emotions, and of substances and objects incarnating remembrance and feeling*'. This means going beyond the idea of commensality as simply 'the social organization of food and drink consumption and the rules that enforce social institutions at the level of consumption' (1994: 37, original italics). Indeed it suggests that ethnographers' participation through eating with others can facilitate new levels of awareness. It also implies that ethnographers might engage with eating as a way of knowing (about) other people's worlds and treat the experience reflexively. This approach is reinforced by other discussions of anthropological research, for instance Paul Stoller's account of how he interpreted the bad taste of a sauce as articulating the dissatisfaction of the cook with her circumstances (Stoller, 1989). David Sutton describes how his Greek island research participants showed him to learn to be like them by eating, he writes: '*In telling me to use the transitory and repetitive act of eating as a medium for the more enduring act of remembering, they were, in fact, telling me to act like a Kalymnian*' (2001: 2, original italics). Indeed as Emily Walmsley stresses, though her analysis of how identity is constituted through sensory experience in Ecuador, 'Sensory knowledge is developed through the sociality of food practices, which are produced through the sharing of tastes, smells and embodied culinary techniques' (2005: 55). This of course holds not only for those who participate in our research, but also, as Stoller's work showed, for how ethnographic knowledge is produced through food practices. Ethnographers frequently eat with the people who participate in our research, whether in routine, festive or more serendipitous ways (see also for instance, Law, 2005; Okely, 1994), and reflexive attention to these experiences invites new understandings of other people's ways of being and knowing. Indeed, eating with others can be interpreted as a way of participating in their place-making practices, since the preparation and consumption of food might, like walking, be constitutive of place. This is demonstrated by Lisa Law's ethnography of Filipino domestic workers' temporal appropriations of public areas in Hong Kong. Here, Law suggests

that the consumption of Filipino food in public spaces at weekends helps Filipino women 'to create a familiar place, where memories of life in the Philippines and migration to Hong Kong might be explored from another perspective' (2005: 237).

In the context of researching a Cittàslow member town, these points about walking, food preparation and eating take on particular significance. Walking the town involved a particular form of engagement with the physical environment and the attentiveness to the sensual qualities of locally sourced foods (as opposed to those associated with mass production and global transportation) that is embedded in the project of the Cittàslow movement. Walking and cooking have been long since regarded as forms of contestation. For instance, Michel de Certeau (1984) has highlighted the political significance of these practices when he counts them among the tactics of resistance of the weaker against the strategies of the powerful. De Certeau's framework is limiting in that it is more useful to see such practices as diverse, subjective and embedded in hierarchies of power that are contingent rather than simply binary or structural. However, it offers a starting point for understanding how walking, cooking and eating practices might be analysed as forms of slow urban contestation. In the case of Cittàslow contestation involves both living slowly in the present and the production of plans for a 'slow' future, which Cittàslow leaders understand as seeking to combine the best of the old with the best of the new. In doing so they are concerned with the making of collective histories and imaginations. Although I am more concerned with the latter here, both might be empathetically invoked when ethnographers engage sensorially and socially through practices such as walking and eating.

Mold was identified as a town in process/progress by several of my research participants who stressed the need to 'do something' with Mold. Those involved in developing and implementing Cittàslow there are actively seeking to define how the town's history or 'heritage' is remembered and how aspects of the town are both maintained and changed materially, sensorially, economically and through experienced events. Their understandings of Mold as a Cittàslow town involved them in imagining possible alternatives and futures for their town *and* in actively seeking to produce change in the town. This is not to say that to imagine a future is necessarily followed by a set of actions that will make it come about, or that the future that is realized is an imprint of the imagined future that preceded it. A closer estimation is Arjun Appadurai's suggestion that 'the imagination, especially when collective, can become the fuel for action' (1996: 7). This, along with Vincent Crapanzano's stress on the 'irreality of the imaginary' – which he proposes exists 'in dialectical tension with the "real of reality"' (2004: 15) – suggests that while the imagined can inspire, because it is by its very nature not real it cannot be reached. However the idea of a collective imagination is

itself tricky, especially if an ethnographer seeks to share it. It is impossible to directly access the imaginations of others, to know precisely if and how an imagined 'irreal' future is shared by a 'collective', or to know if one has shared it oneself. A collectivity might collaborate to produce written documents, material objects and sensory environments. Nevertheless, the sameness rests not in their imaginations, but in the material realities that inspire them to action and in the outcomes of this action. Paul Connerton has suggested that to understand collective memories a focus on 'recollection and bodies' is required (1989: 4). A similar approach can be used to understand the idea of collective imagination. This means directing the focus to how the 'irreal' (Crapanzano, 2004) of the future (i.e. the imagined) is communicated both through verbal projections and through embodied practices. The research event I discuss below precisely involved my research participants using both verbal description and written text *and* the embodied, sensorial and material experience of the immediate present as a way of communicating about both what 'slowness' feels like and about an imagined future. To understand these ways of imagining I return to Ingold's (2007) metaphor of entangled pathways. To gain a sense of the complexity that a 'collective imagination' might involve, I suggest thinking of entangled individual imaginations, inspired by the same verbal discourses, written texts, phenomenological contexts and material reality.

In the next section, I discuss selected parts of the narrative of the urban tour of Mold, and the multiple media technologies that were part of my research practice. In doing so I build on these existing discussions of walking and eating as ways of ethnographic knowing, and as such ways of knowing about Cittàslow as a form of 'slow' urban contestation.

A tour of Mold

I met Andrea Mearns, the driving force behind Cittàslow in Mold, at the annual Big Slow Breakfast held in Aylsham (another British Cittàslow town) in October 2006, just as Mold gained Cittàslow membership. I arranged to make contact by e-mail later in the year and in December in response to my request to visit Mold and meet the people involved in its Cittàslow process Andrea arranged the tour. It seemed an ideal introduction to Mold, which was at the time in the early stages of its Cittàslow process. It was yet to develop 'new' Cittàslow projects but had a series of regular events and projects on-going which contributed to Cittàslow status. Before my visit Andrea e-mailed me the schedule for my day. I would have nine meetings with one or two people at a time, spaced at intervals of 30 minutes to two hours between 10.00 and 3.30 pm on a Saturday, selected because it was a farmers' market day. Each meeting was identified as a 'collect/drop off'

point and would introduce me to persons, ideas, documents, buildings and a range of sensory experiences. Below I discuss selected segments of the tour to explore its sociality, sensoriality and the imaginings it invited.

After parking just outside the town centre, using the map Andrea had sent, I walked briskly, somewhat hurriedly and in eager anticipation of my first meeting. I passed the farmers' market that I would visit later and walked on to the Town Hall where I found Fred Boneham, Mold's Town Clerk, in his first floor office. Fred led me over to the temporary café run in a room opposite.

The lady at the table poured us instant coffee that she said was made from 'half milk', from a flask and we wove our way through the conversation-filled soundscape to an empty table, which like the others had a biscuit selection. As we moved between the tables I noted the serendipitous sociality of the café context as Fred briefly greeted others – something that was repeated as others passed our table later. As we walked I already



Figure 3 Fred in the Town Hall Café.

started to feel in place as the ‘half milk’ coffee from a flask immediately invoked a sense of familiarity and Britishness, reminding me of my childhood in the 1970s when this was a normal part of picnics and days out. My hurried route to the first meeting had ended as I began to follow my guides, appreciate their rhythms and become more attentive to the sensoriality of my environment. Contrasting ‘wayfaring and transport’, Ingold describes how ‘the path of the wayfarer wends hither and thither, and may even pause here and there before moving on’. He suggests that ‘While on the trail the wayfarer is always somewhere, yet every “somewhere” is on the way to somewhere else’ (Ingold, 2007: 83). Transport, in contrast ‘is tied to specific locations. Every move serves the purpose of relocating persons and their effects, and is oriented to a specific destination’ (Ingold, 2007: 84). Surrounded by new tastes and smells, and the buzz of conversation of the mainly older people taking their coffee and tea in the temporary café, I had now become something of a wayfarer. I audio-recorded our conversation about Cittàslow in Mold, and Fred’s role in developing it, to the background of the café soundscape. The transcript of our conversation helped set the scene for my understanding of the sociality through which the very tour of the town was produced: Fred and I discussed how developing the Cittàslow proposal had created connections between individuals and groups of town residents. The idea of creating relationships between residents also formed part of the imagined future of Mold’s Cittàslow project. As Fred put it: ‘We’ve now got to take this further forward and that is a case then of pulling things together, pulling people together again’. However, although these talks are crucial in my research, in understanding the town and its locations that created its Cittàslow identity I was actually using all my senses. With Fred at the coffee morning I tasted the half-milk coffee, compared the warmth of the hall and the sunlight pouring through its windows with the December chill outdoors, and noticed how the floral table-cloths created a café space in a multi-use room. The coffee helped me to feel situated in this café context. Its biographical familiarity cut across the clear generational and occupational differences between middle-aged researcher and retired residents and enabled me to feel ‘in place’. Figure 3 visualizes some aspects of this experience, although the feel of the sunlight through the window, the sound of conversation and clinking crockery, and the taste of the coffee remain embodied sensations that I can only describe here. The research also involves written text, which itself plays a key role in the definition of the town as Cittàslow. Fred entrusted me with a draft copy of the town’s self-evaluation document, which maps out the town in tabular form according to Cittàslow criteria (as well as being part of the material culture of Cittàslow). The text, moreover, I would learn as the day went on, also represented some of the socialities that Fred alluded to when he described how the application process had made connections between

people and groups in the town. The sociality between the town councillors and Cittàslow committee members who guided me that day through my tour of Mold was itself fundamental to the production of Mold's Cittàslow self-evaluation document and the tour itself.

In the café this particular sociality was marked for the first time. At the appointed time my next guides, Geoff (a Mold town councillor) and Viv Collett (who works in community development in other towns) arrived and joined us for a drink. Fred had brought his wife's camera and began the process of photographing me with and then passing the camera to, my next guide(s). As the day continued the camera and I were passed along as we proceeded through both Andrea's schedule for the day and along a route populated by Cittàslow people, projects, material culture and sensations.

I audio-recorded my conversation with Geoff and Viv as they finished their drinks. As we talked a theme that was to persist in my conversations with others emerged as Geoff told me that Mold is a 'special town' but 'we can see that we've got to do something with Mold to, to make sure it doesn't fade away to nothing'. Cittàslow seemed to provide a framework within which to 'do something'. My next meeting point represented something that, with its local produce principles and its aim to create links between producers and consumers, is at the top of the agendas of the Slow Food and Cittàslow movements. Retracing my previous steps from the car park, but now attuned quite differently in rhythm and conversation with my guides, I walked up to the busy farmer's market, in the old church, now the church hall. In contrast to farmers' markets I had experienced in other Cittàslow towns this is an indoor market, comparatively warm and enclosed. Once inside I was guided through the market, not by a systematic tour of the stalls and products, but meandering through a series of introductions to people, including traders, one of the market managers and someone responsible for regional markets. Produce was nevertheless important, as I learnt that in contrast to council-run markets that do not have the same criteria, only producers can trade at farmer's markets. One of the motives behind farmers' markets is to create connections between producers and consumers; it is a planned context for the unfolding of new socialities and new sensory experiences. Other academic analysts of Cittàslow have made similar points about farmers' markets – cultural studies scholars Wendy Parkins and Geoffrey Craig describe how they 'enjoy the ... *sensory* nature and the *sociality* of this space' (2006: 69, original italics). Indeed, the socialities farmers' markets entail involve *experiencing* and in some way *verbalizing and discussing* tastes. Samples are offered to customers and production processes and locations are made explicit. Thus these points of contact are made through 'shared' knowledge of taste, texture and talk.

At the farmers' market, Viv, Geoff and I were met by Carol and John Heycocks (Carol is a Mold town councillor) who were to take me to the

church. We left with Fred's wife's camera, having photographed me with not only Viv and Geoff but with key persons connected to the market. I also took my own photos, hoping they would help me recall the embodied experience of being there. By now it was getting chillier. Our walk up to the church was significant, because the distance between the church hall and the church was perceived by some as too lengthy and rather than braving the walk to the hall after church services (and the return walk up the hill) a good number of the congregation drifted away. The walk gave me a basis from which to imagine how others might be emplaced in the world, since, as Lee and Ingold argue:

Through shared walking, we can see and feel what is really a learning process of being together, in adjusting one's body and one's speech to the rhythms of others, and of sharing (or at least coming to see) a point of view. (2006: 83)

Although I shared their steps and conversation I was less in tune with the experiences of my more appropriately dressed companions, having worn a light jacket on a day that required a coat. Nevertheless, the point about losing part of the congregation due to this walk felt reinforced through my own experience. After photographing outside, now in the church, and temporarily safe from worsening weather, I was introduced to the church warden who told me its history. We toured the church on foot, learning about it from the perspective of how it is best experienced we discussed the windows, the best times of the day to see the light that is cast through them, and where to sit during different services to benefit best from the light.

At the church we were met by Bryan Grew the current Mayor of Mold. Bryan was to take me to the cenotaph and to meet Ray Dodd with whom I would have lunch. It was now raining gently. Walking up to the cenotaph we followed another local route (Figure 1). There is a remembrance service and event every year which involves a walk along the same, although then crowded, road to the cenotaph. The material symbols remained, now plastic poppies replacing the real flowers used historically. We walked further up the hill, imagining the past where there was once a bowling green and where a children's playground remains. We appreciated the view out to the hills, the modern buildings of the theatre and district council offices, and a local cement factory which Bryan told me is a significant local employer. Visual experience became increasingly important and I felt compelled to continue our search for a suitable view to photograph through the trees (Figure 4), despite feeling increasingly cold and wet.

The photograph achieved, we walked back down to meet Ray (also a Mold town and Flintshire county councillor) at Bryn Awel restaurant, owned by Greg Shankar who was involved in Mold's Food Festival that year. Over a glass of wine and to the background of music, Ray and Bryan



Figure 4 A view from the hill.

discussed how Cittàslow provided them with a framework through which to achieve some of the things they imagined for Mold. In this new atmosphere I felt warm again and indeed the conviviality of lunching in the restaurant began to work against our precisely timed schedule. This new rhythm and appreciation of local tastes came to an abrupt end during the main course. Realizing we were running late our leisurely talk and consumption could not endure. Our commensality took on a new rhythm as we hurried the rest of lunch and dashed off sharing a faster pace, to our appointment with Sheila Powell at the club house.

The club house, a building that renovated for use by local residents of the large (ex-) council estate on which it is situated, is a place in Mold where something definitely is ‘being done’ (I have since re-visited it to experience this in action). Sheila is a Mold town councillor as well as running the club house. When we arrived Sheila proposed to show me around the club house, and for this tour I took out my video camera.

The video tour (Pink, 2004, 2007) offers ethnographers a focused, mediated and documented means of collaboratively exploring material contexts and imagined futures *and* of reflexively analysing the multi-sensorial knowledge produced through the research encounter. We kept our jackets on in Sheila’s office, chilly as the heating was switched off since the building wasn’t being used. Here Sheila explained how she established the now award-winning food co-op, and a weekly café (now supported by a

group of volunteers), on the estate about 18 months previously. We then focused on how each room was used, its material culture such as the donated equipment and the cupboards that would be replaced in the future. Then we entered the big hall, which echoed as Sheila described it as ‘the main room of the place’. It was set out for netball but also used for football, birthday and Halloween parties and such like, and a food co-op. As Sheila went on to describe the activity that enlivened these then quiet rooms I began to imagine them in action, and do so again each time I view the video. The video tour of the club house gave me a sense of both its materiality and the meanings the different rooms and equipment might have, but also invited me to imagine possible other scenarios. In the hall Sheila described where the food co-op and the café tables were set up. I later imagined how this room had been the site of a key event, about which Sheila told me the residents of the estate were ‘very proud of the fact that the people came from the Cittàslow committee in Ludlow [i.e. the people who gave Mold Cittàslow accreditation], here [to the Club House Café] for a three-course meal a week before it was decided that we could have Cittàslow’. Sheila then led me outside to the grassland at the back of the club house. As we navigated the muddy terrain she pointed out there was ‘plenty of room for allotments’ and told me that ‘eventually we will be able to grow most of our own [local produce]’ to use in the café. As we explored the material environment on video I understood how invested in the building and its land were memories of its more dilapidated past, pride in its present achievements *and* imaginings of a possible future. The latter would involve local residents in local food-related projects in ways that would simultaneously build their social lives, confidence and participation and follow the Cittàslow ideology.

My next guide, Robin Guest, also a Mold town councillor and Flintshire county councillor, had arrived when we were in the hall. He photographed Sheila and I outside the club house and we walked through the estate and another housing area to the leisure area with tennis courts and a field where, referring to a set of drawn plans, we imagined another contested future, gazing at an area where a proposed skateboard park that has been debated in the town for 20 years would be situated. As we then walked through the formal park Robin stooped down to pick up beer can left on the ground. Not all people who live in Cittàslow towns ascribe to the ‘slow’ approach outlined at the beginning of the article (indeed the urban tour itself both represented and created its Cittàslow project as a form of urban contestation – it was only one of many possible ways to *be* in the town). Our walk had circled the housing estate and I was surprised to find myself now very close to the town centre. Within a few minutes we arrived at another café, ‘Brew’, opposite the town hall where my tour had begun. There we met Chris Bithell, another Mold town councillor and Flintshire county

councillor. I took written notes as we talked. Robin had a latte and I had a cappuccino served with a Belgian-style biscuit. This local take on familiar contemporary global coffee trends, contrasted sharply with the British half-milk coffee I had begun my day with across the road in the town hall five hours earlier. Yet both cafes, local in their own ways, are part of Mold's slow identity. I felt warmed through and revived after the cold outside. After coffee Robin delivered me at Vaughan Davies clothing shop where I audio-interviewed Martin Jones, manager of the shop, about the work of the Mold Business forum. Martin then showed me part of my way to the car park. Once alone I hurried through the cold and now darkening streets to my car. I left Mold at about 4.00 pm, now living a different rhythm, with its own tastes and once again more akin to what Ingold has called 'transport' (2007: 84). Ironically, lost and hungry on my way home, I stopped at a global supermarket store to read my map and buy a cold pannini to eat sitting in my car in the car park.

After the 'event'

A visitor to or resident in Mold is not *obliged* by the architecture, planning or produce on sale, to experience Mold 'slowly' by attuning her or himself socially, materially and sensorially to the town through the prism of the Cittàslow ideology and criteria. Rather, as an ethnographer it was my task, under the guidance of the Cittàslow activists who accompanied me, to become attuned to the town in such a way that would enable to me to participate through experiencing and constituting it as a place that conformed to the expectations and worked towards the future of the Cittàslow movement. It is, as such, I shall suggest below that ethnographic places begin to be made.

However, ethnographic places are not simply made in the moments that they are lived. Rather, they are crafted over longer periods of interaction and intellectual activity. I returned home with a video camera, stills camera and audio-recorder full with images and sounds, a head and body full of memories, some of which I wrote down as field notes and others which still come to mind when I review the materials, and a set of documents.⁶ Different aspects of this multi-sensorial and multi-modal experience are represented with different intensity in different media. The transcriptions stress people's reflexive articulations about what they have done and imagine doing. In photographs I find reminders and representations of the materiality, sensoriality and sociality of the tour. When I view Sheila's video tour I am invited to join her in imagining the vegetable gardens and the hall as it both was in the past, and will in the future be, filled for different activities. With Andrea's schedule I situate these moments at which memories,

reflections, imaginations and potentials were articulated. My own notes are intended to remind me about variations in the rhythms, tastes and temperatures of the day, about what people said and my own thoughts. A few weeks after the tour Fred e-mailed me the set of photos that had been taken of me. Most of these materials are stored as digital archive. The making of the ethnographic place happens somewhere at the intersection between the ethnographer's direct experience and its reconstitution as *ethnography*. There is some system to my interpretation, in that I depend on themes and questions to give meaning to my descriptions of the town. However, in recreating Mold as an ethnographic slow place, much of what is meaningful for me comes initially from the memories of my emplaced experience (sometimes invoked through revisiting these materials) rather than from a systematic and thematic review of the materials.⁷ The materials and memories that pertain to my tour in themselves are insufficient to completely understand Mold as Cittàslow or what Cittàslow means in Mold. Nevertheless, participating in this tour that created the town through the prism of Cittàslow allowed me to collaborate with my guides in their task of creating Mold as slow place and in a slow way, for my benefit.

At the beginning of this article I suggested that by theorizing collaborative ethnographic methods as place-making practices we can generate understandings of both how people constitute urban environments through embodied and imaginative practices and how researchers constitute ethnographic places. In the concluding sections I elaborate this idea by focusing on two issues. First, I examine how slowness was embedded in the tour and how my emplaced participation in the tour enabled me to become more attuned to the slowness I was seeking to understand. Second, generalizing from this case study I discuss how ethnography might be theorized as an emplaced and place-making process.

Ethnography slow

My aim is not to understand the 'slow' towns I am researching per se but to understand them through the prism of their membership of the Cittàslow movement. Above I have noted how Cittàslow principles framed the tour in that it could be seen as an illustration of the verbal text of the draft Cittàslow evaluation document that Fred had given me. However, understanding the town as a slow place means engagement with not only how the principles of the movement are formulated in written texts and then evidenced in the physical environment and events calendar of the town. It also involves seeking to understand the town as a slow place phenomenologically, and subsequently seeking to reconstitute it as a slow ethnographic place.

At the beginning of this article I explained that ‘slow’ in Cittàslow means (following Parkins, 2004) an attentiveness and mindfulness that stresses the quality of experience. Attending to slowness as an ethnographer meant becoming ‘attuned’ (Ingold, 2000) to certain ways of being in the town. This I suggest came about in part through my shared walking and eating with my guides. As we ate the same foods, shared the same rhythms (as well as sitting on similar seats) and pathways I savoured the tour as a slow ‘wayfarer’ (Ingold, 2007). In this sense my guides did not simply *represent* the town to me. Rather, a more appropriate term is ‘mediation’ as used by Christopher Witmore,⁸ whereby ‘mediation is a process that allows us to attain richer and fuller translations of bodily experience and materiality that are located, multi-textured, reflexive, sensory and polysemious’ (2004: 60). Most striking was perhaps not the process by which, through consuming my half-milk coffee, falling into step with my guides and trying to imagine the futures they mediated, I became attuned to their world. Rather, it was that once walking hurriedly to my car I felt more deeply how my way of both being in and knowing the town shifted as I was disengaged from my hosts and (without my mediators) returned in ‘transport’ (Ingold, 2007) mode to my car.

The forms of attentiveness a slow approach implies invite one of many ways through which the town might be experienced, and as such understood as place. If the tour is interpreted as an intentionally slow experience it can also be understood as a self-conscious appropriation of the town through slow principles. As Lee and Ingold demonstrate, the routes one takes, and our social and sensorial experience of these are also place-making practices by which ‘the meaning of the place is constituted by their [the walker’s] bodily presence’ (Lee and Ingold, 2006: 77). The idea of the slow urban tour as a form of place-making indeed invites a consideration of the activist project of Cittàslow. Cittàslow invites one of *many* mutually contesting (but perhaps not totally incompatible) ways of making place in and imagining a future for the town.

Making ethnographic places

My discussion of the urban tour above is intended as a case study of an embodied and reflexive engagement with the discourses, materiality, sociality and sensoriality of a particular way of being in a town. Above I suggested how such an engagement allowed me to understand how slowness can be both constituted through and constitute place. The tour emerged from a specifically local set of social relationships, imaginations and practices. It was something I was invited to participate in rather than something I invented as a research exercise. It is thus not a directly transferable method

that can be used in other urban contexts. Its wider relevance therefore lies not in its being a practical model of how to do ethnography, but in what it demonstrates about how ethnographic places are made and imagined and how we might interpret them theoretically and reflexively.

The tour, along with the materiality and sensory sociality of the research encounter and the invitation to share the imaginings of the committee thus enabled me to experience Mold as a slow place; it was by walking and eating with others, sharing their gazes, rhythms, sounds, smells and more and by attuning my imagination to their own imaginings for the future material, social and sensory environment of the town that I arrived at an ethnographic place with a remembered past, a direct present and an imagined future. Returning to the idea of place-making as a gathering process (Casey, 1996) and the notion of place as constituted through 'entangled' pathways (Ingold, 2007: 103), the tour can be understood as an ethnographic pathway which, through its entanglements with the pathways of others, gathered memories, imaginings and the immediate present through multiple modes and media.

Following Casey's (1996) argument that place is central to our way of being in the world and that we are thus always 'emplaced', the task of the reflexive ethnographer would be to consider how she or he is emplaced, and her or his role in the constitution of that place. The discussion above has involved such an exercise. By attending to the sensoriality and materiality of other people's ways of being in the world, we cannot directly access their 'collective' memories, experiences or imaginations. However we can, by following their routes and attuning our bodies, rhythms, tastes, ways of seeing and more to theirs, begin to make places that are similar to theirs, and thus feel that we are similarly emplaced. Since 'place is a fundamental form of embodied experience – the site of a powerful fusion of self, space, and time' (Feld and Basso, 1996: 9, following Casey), in doing so we are better enabled to understand how others remember and imagine through their own immediate embodied experiences.

Acknowledgements

The idea to write this article was initially inspired by the creativity of the Mold residents who introduced me to their town. However, its writing came about in response to Andrew Irving's ASA (2007) conference panel abstract. Thanks to Tim Edensor for his comments on an earlier draft, as well as to the three anonymous reviewers of this article for their exceptionally insightful and inspiring comments.

Notes

- 1 Although Slow Food and Cittàslow are separate organizations it would be impossible to understand Cittàslow as a movement without also considering the ideologies and practices of the Slow Food movement. This is particularly the case for the UK where Cittàslow towns are required to have active Slow Food groups before their membership applications are approved.
- 2 [<http://www.cittaslow.net/pagine.asp?idn=996>], accessed 12 January 2007.
- 3 See Mayer and Knox (2006) for an analysis of two of the German Cittàslow towns.
- 4 [http://www.cittaslow.org.uk/Cittaslow_UK_background.doc], accessed May 2006.
- 5 Cultural anthropologists Stephen Feld, Keith Basso and other contributors to their volume *Senses of Place* have attended to Casey's idea that 'place is a fundamental form of embodied experience – the site of a powerful fusion of self, space, and time' (Feld and Basso, 1996: 9) in their analyses of ethnographic case studies of how people encounter places, perceive them and invest them with significance.
- 6 Existing ethnographic uses of walking methods make various uses of visual and digital media. Jo Lee shared walks in Aberdeen with his informants and included in his and Ingold's writing about this are extracts from Lee's own written accounts of his experiences, as well as quotations from research participants (Lee and Ingold, 2006), Andrew Irving invited participants in his research to walk around an urban neighbourhood 'while narrating thoughts about life and significant events into a tape-recorder while a second person interjects, asks questions and takes photographs' (2007: 197), and Gabrielle Bendiner-Viani photographed as her research participants took her on tours of a Brooklyn neighbourhood (Bendiner-Viani, 2005). Other research has combined (audio)visual media, for instance, Ana Martinez Perez (1997) video-recorded her participants photographing the Gran Via street in Madrid, and then interviewed them about the photographs.
- 7 Although data analysis methods sometimes offered in sociology textbooks would imply otherwise, I imagine this is the starting point for many social researchers.
- 8 To discuss how archaeologists might communicate about past experiences of place.

References

- Adams, P.C. (2001) 'Peripatetic Imagery and Peripatetic Sense of Place', in P.C. Adams, S.D. Hoelscher and K.E. Till (eds) *Textures of Place*, pp. 186–206. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

- Appadurai, A. (1996) *Modernity at Large*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Basso, K. (1996) 'Wisdom Sits in Places: Notes on a Western Apache Landscape', in S. Feld and K. Basso (eds) *Senses of Place*, pp. 53–90. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.
- Bendiner-Viani, G. (2005) 'Walking, Emotion, and Dwelling: Guided Tours in Prospect Heights, Brooklyn', *Space and Culture* 8(4): 459–71.
- Casey, E. (1996) 'How to Get From Space to Place in a Fairly Short Space of Time', in S. Feld and K. Basso (eds) *Senses of Place* (School of American Research Advanced Seminar Series), pp. 13–52. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.
- Clifford, J. (1986) 'Introduction: Partial Truths', in J. Clifford and G. Marcus (eds) *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Connerton, P. (1989) *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Crapanzano, V. (2004) *Imaginative Horizons*. London: University of Chicago Press.
- de Certeau, M. (1984) *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Feld, S. and K. Basso (1996) *Senses of Place* (School of American Research Advanced Seminar Series). Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.
- Howes, D. (2005) 'Introduction', in D. Howes (ed.) *Empire of the Senses: The Sensory Culture Reader*, pp. 1–17. Oxford: Berg.
- Ingold, T. (2000) *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. London: Routledge.
- Ingold, T. (2004) 'Culture on the Ground: The World Perceived through the Feet', *Journal of Material Culture* 9(3): 315–40.
- Ingold, T. (2007) *Lines: A Brief History*. London: Routledge.
- Irving, A. (2007) 'Ethnography, Art, and Death', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 13: 185–208.
- Jenks, C. and T. Neves (2001) 'A Walk on the Wild Side: Urban Ethnography Meets the Flâneur', *Cultural Values* 4(1): 1–17.
- Law, L. (2005) 'Home Cooking: Filipino Women and Geographies of the Senses in Hong Kong', in D. Howes (ed.) *Empire of the Senses: The Sensory Culture Reader*, pp. 224–41. Oxford: Berg.
- Lee, J. and T. Ingold (2006) 'Fieldwork on Foot: Perceiving, Routing, Socializing', in S. Coleman and P. Collins (eds) *Locating the Field. Space, Place and Context in Anthropology*, pp. 67–86. Oxford: Berg.
- Malatesta, S., M. Mesmain, S. Wriener and W. Wang (2005) Slow Food Companion, available online at: [http://www.slowfood.com/about_us/eng/companion.lasso], accessed 8 May 2005.
- Martinez Perez, A. (1997) *Cronotopo*. Spain: Taller de Antropologia Visual.

- Mayer, H. and P.L. Knox (2006) 'Slow Cities: Sustainable Places in a Fast World', *Journal of Urban Affairs* 28(4): 321–34.
- Okely, J. (1994) 'Vicarious and Sensory Knowledge of Chronology and Change: Ageing in Rural France', in K. Hastrup and P. Hervik (eds) *Social Experience and Anthropological Knowledge*, pp. 45–64. London: Routledge.
- Parkins, W. (2004) 'Out of Time: Fast Subjects and Slow Living', *Time and Society* 13(2–3): 363–82.
- Parkins, W. and G. Craig (2006) *Slow Living*. Oxford: Berg.
- Pink, S. (2004) *Home Truths*. Oxford: Berg.
- Pink, S. (2007) 'Walking with Video', *Visual Studies* 22(3): 240–52.
- Seremetakis, N. (1994) *The Senses Still: Perception and Memory as Material Culture in Modernity*. London: University of Chicago Press.
- Stoller, P. (1989) *The Taste of Ethnographic Things: The Senses in Ethnography*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Stoller, P. (1997) *Sensuous Scholarship*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Sutton, D. (2001) *Remembrance of Repasts: An Anthropology of Food and Memory*. Oxford: Berg.
- Walmsley, E. (2005) 'Race, Place and Taste: Making Identities Through Sensory Experience', *Etnofoor* 18(1): 43–60.
- Witmore, C.L. (2004) 'Four Archaeological Engagements with Place: Mediating Bodily Experience through Peripatetic Video', *Visual Anthropology Review* 20(2): 57–72.

■ **SARAH PINK** is in the Department of Social Sciences at Loughborough University, UK. Her books include *Doing Visual Ethnography* (2007 [2001]) and *The Future of Visual Anthropology* (2006) and she is currently writing a book about the senses in ethnographic research. Her most recent research has focused on the Cittàslow (Slow City) movement in the UK. *Address:* Department of Social Sciences, Loughborough University, Loughborough LE11 3TU, UK. [email: s.pink@lboro.ac.uk] ■