



University of the
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Health: The Design, Planning and Politics of How and Where We Live

- **Paper / Proposal Title:**

Healthy walking in city environments: the role of architectural features.

- **Format:**

Presentation

- **Author(s) Name:**

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- **Abstract (300 words):**

Environmental exposure is increasingly recognised as a predictor of human health and psychological wellbeing. In fact, the benefits of nature exposure on psychological wellbeing have received extensive attention from scholars. However, not much attention has been given to the consequences of exposure to city environments. This is despite the increasing urbanization trends worldwide. This paper addresses this gap and explores the influence of the built environment on the affective walking experience. It examines the ways in which walking in urban environments can support affect, looking specifically at the role of architectural styles and characteristics on the affective walking experience.

The methodology included an experimental study with residents of Bristol (UK) (n=385) that compared affective outcomes of walking in five settings in Bristol city centre, and 14 photo and video-elicited interviews based on a real walk.

Quantitative results showed that simulated walks in pedestrianised areas without green elements were associated with affective benefits, as opposed to a commercial area with traffic. In particular, historic architectural styles seemed to trigger positive wellbeing. Building on these findings, the qualitative phase showed that post-modern and/or static architectures and non-human scale elements can have a negative impact on affect. On the other hand, several enablers emerged, and these included historic elements and architectures, identity-elements, urban variety, and presence of green infrastructure.

These findings highlight that in order to make cities more healthy it is important to maintaining a human scale and to promote features that reflect the identity of place.

• **Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

Anna Bornioli is a researcher at the University of the West of England, Bristol. She has degrees in Economics (BSc) and Cultural Economics (MA). Her PhD thesis focused on the influence of city centre environments on the affective walking experience. Her main research interests include healthy cities, walking, wellbeing, cultural heritage.

Dr Graham Parkhurst has degrees in Psychology (BA), Physical Anthropology (MSc) and Transport Geography (DPhil). He is Professor of Sustainable Mobility and Director of the Centre for Transport & Society. His research focusses on the development and evaluation of sustainable mobility and transportation from a holistic, multidisciplinary perspective (graham.parkhurst@uwe.ac.uk).

Phillip L Morgan is a Senior Lecturer in Cognitive and Human Factors Psychology in the Department of Health and Applied Sciences at the University of the West of England - Bristol and is a member of the Psychological Sciences Research Group, the Centre for Health and Clinical Research, the Centre for Research in Biosciences and an affiliate of the Center for Transport and Society and Bristol Robotics Laboratory. His main areas of research expertise are on the effects of visual and auditory interruptions and distractions on cognitive task performance, human factors in relation to driving (including automated driving), emotion and cognition, human error in workplace settings, working memory, human machine interface design, planning and problem solving, and cyber security.