

# **Jography: Exploring the Mobilities of Road-Running**



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## Abstract

Drawing on the philosophical agendas of poststructuralism and postmodernism (Cresswell, 2001a; Cresswell and Merriman, 2011; Merriman et al, 2008), the recent fascination with all things mobile in the social sciences has challenged the 'a-mobile' nature of much prior research (Cresswell and Merriman, 2011); emphasising movement and hybridity rather than fixity and place (Cresswell, 2008). The mobilities turn has investigated a wide range of mobile practices yet road-running has been largely overlooked and hitherto eluded serious study. This project sought to go some way towards rectifying this lacuna by adopting the holistic mobility framework (Cresswell, 2006; 2008; 2010) in an investigation into the movements, meanings and experiences of 20 road-runners in urban Plymouth. Drawing on the recent advances in mobile methods, this project employed the methods of diaries, go-along interviews and mobile-video-ethnography to explore each facet of mobility in turn. A focus upon the routes of runners revealed that runners' have a preference for running on main roads in a looped-shape in three main areas within the city. These runs most commonly stemmed from individual nodes within Plymouth and were often undertaken near water. The meanings of running focussed on providing new insights into two under-discussed representations, that of running as escape and running as a chore. Finally the experiences of running took as its central concern the way runners negotiated space via three key strategies: choosing a side, stepping down and slaloming. As by way of conclusion, I offered some thoughts upon how mobilities can be actively produced by mobile subjects. The main outcome of this project has been a call to action and agenda setting. No definitive answers have been provided in this study only indicative understandings and ideas concerning how such understandings need to be and should be developed.

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# Acknowledgements

Much like the geographical understandings of place, the project is not a single bounded item. It is the hybrid creation of a range of flows in my life that happened to constellate in the form of this dissertation. Thus, there are many people who are duly owed my heart-felt gratitude.

To begin then – I would like to thank the human geographers at Plymouth University. Arriving here as an ardent physical geography, it was the outstanding teaching and inspiration by Richard Yarwood, Jon Shaw, Geoff Wilson, and Paul Simpson that has shown me the light so to speak. Opening a new door into which I can run my curiosities wild. The continued encouragement and interest in this project throughout its course has also been hugely supportive and delightfully received.

In a similar vein, this dissertation would never have been about running unless I was actually a runner, for which I must thanks my parents and all the friends and coaches that enabled me to continue my passion for the sport.

The same gratitude must be given to my participants who made the dissertation research such a pleasurable experience.

My entire thanks and appreciation must go to Jon Shaw. As my tutor and dissertation supervisor, he has continually believed in me, challenged me and encouraged me from my first days at Plymouth and for that I am unreservedly grateful. Another mention must be made to Paul Simpson here, who helped in the initial conception of the project and has been a continued source of support even with his move to Keele.

And lastly to Andrea. For your patience, concern and interest in this project and for always being mobile with me.

## Part One



# Introduction

## Movement and Mobility

A term largely ignored or merely trivialised previously by social sciences, a recent fascination with and resurgence of writings on all things mobile (Merriman, 2012) has initiated 'mobility' as a formidable and evocative term for the twenty-first century (Hannam, Sheller and Urry, 2006). Drawing on the philosophical agendas of poststructuralism and postmodernism (Cresswell, 2001a; Cresswell and Merriman, 2011; Merriman et al, 2008), this fascination has challenged the 'a-mobile' nature of much prior research (Cresswell and Merriman, 2011); emphasising movement and hybridity rather than fixity and place (Cresswell, 2008). Understanding mobility and the affect movement has upon our relationships with spaces, places, time and others is central to how humans experience the world (Cresswell, 2006a; Fincham et al, 2010a) and thus a research imperative.

While a geographical interest in movement is not new (Cresswell, 2006a; Merriman, 2012; Shaw and Docherty, forthcoming; Shaw and Hesse, 2010; Shaw and Sidaway, 2011), there is something different about the current 'mobile turn' (Cresswell, 2006a; 2008; Sheller and Urry, 2006). Perhaps the difference lies in the distinction between movement and mobility with Cresswell (2001a) proposing that mobility is to movement what place is to space – meaningful, power-laden and socially and culturally constructed. This demarcation has instigated a new "focus on the ways in which bodies and things move, the political, cultural and aesthetic implications and resonances of these movements, the meanings ascribed to these movements and the embodied experiences of mobility" (Cresswell and Merriman, 2011: p.11). This focus has been fervently adopted by mobilities researchers who have investigated a hugely diverse range of practices including cycling (Jones, 2005; forthcoming; Spinney, 2006; 2009; 2010), walking (Edensor, 2000; Middleton, 2009; Wylie, 2005), dancing (Cresswell, 2006b; McCormack, 2008), train travel (Bissell, 2009; Watts, 2008), coach travel (Jain, 2011), aeromobility (Adey, 2004; 2010b) and automobility (Sheller and Urry, 2000; Thrift, 2004) to name but a few.

## Running and Mobility

The numerous studies above all help to demonstrate that mobilities are inherently differentiated (Cresswell, 2001a), which gives an imperative to examining all modes of movement (Binnie, Edensor, Holloway, Millington and Young, 2007). Yet, running has hitherto eluded sustained or widespread study in geography and the social sciences (Bale, 2004). This relative paucity of work has left a

deficiency in understanding running. Although some fascinating works do exist they understandably tend to concentrate on particular facets of running at the expense of a more encompassing and holistic approach that could attend to the way in which bodies move and their political and socio-cultural implications. This is perhaps best demonstrated by the overriding focus on the serious and competitive runner. From the humanistic works of John Bale (1994; 2000a; 2000b; 2003; 2004; 2011; Bale and Sang, 1996) to the more recent autoethnographic accounts of running provided by Hayden Lorimer (2010; 2012) and Jacquelyn Allen-Collinson and John Hockey (Allen-Collinson, 2003; 2005; 2008; 2010; 2011; Allen-Collinson and Hockey, 2001; 2007a; 2007b; 2011; Hockey, 2004; 2006; Hockey and Allen-Collinson, 2006; 2007; forthcoming) , author have offered insight from mobile subjects who understand running as a competitive endeavour. Thus the perspectives of less committed, recreational or leisure runners remains overlooked and having received very little consideration. This critique is not meant to discredit these excellent works; indeed the authors have made some fascinating forays into potential avenues for discussion, but it does recognise the need to expand, develop and magnify running research and knowledges as will be highlighted in the literature review.

## **Holistic Mobility**

In order to research such a broad practice as road-running, this project will adopt the holistic mobility framework proposed by Cresswell (2006a; 2008; 2010). Comprising of three entangled facets – movement, meaning and experience (Figure 1) - this mesotheoretical approach to human movement begins from a Lefebvrian position (1991) of thinking about mobilities as produced (Cresswell, 2001b; 2002; 2010). Developed as a reaction to the chaotic and overly-specific nature of mobilities research hitherto (Blacksell, 2005; Cresswell, 2006a), I argue that this framework should foster deeper and more profound understandings of mobile practices such as road-running, allowing for greater relationships to be made, exploring the connections between the facets and the politics that emerge from this (Figure 2). Indeed, Shaw and Docherty (forthcoming: unpaginated) argue that the getting “from anywhere to anywhere in any circumstances is likely to be most insightful and accomplished if it is grounded in a good understanding of all three of Cresswell’s triumvirate of movement, experience and representation”.

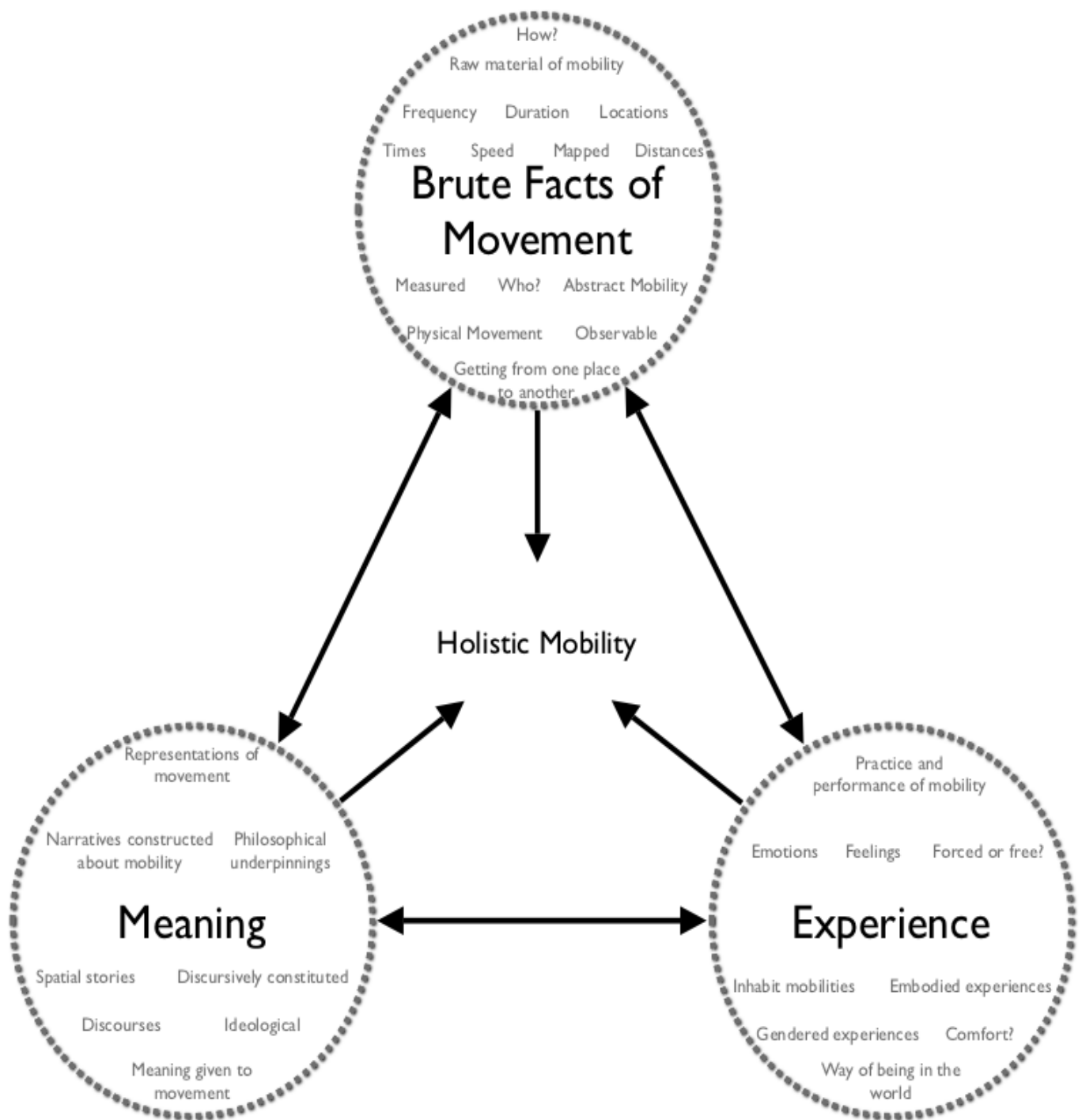


Figure 1. The three-facet model of holistic mobility. After Cresswell, 2006; 2008; 2010.

*N.B. An earlier version of this diagram appeared in Cook, 2012 in part fulfilment of a Stage 2 fieldwork course*

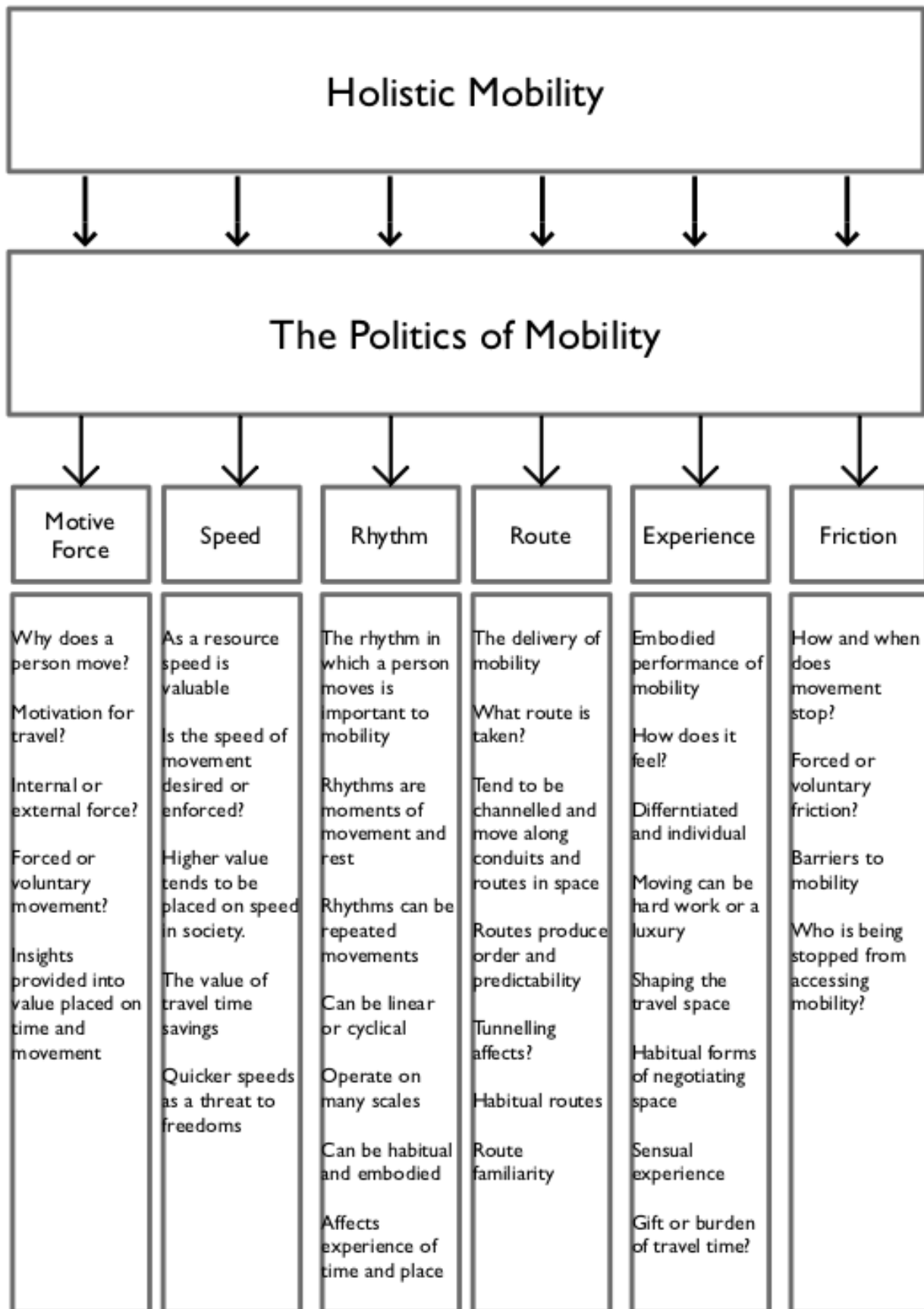


Figure 2. The politics of mobility. After Bull, 2000; Cresswell, 2010; Edensor, 2011; Jain, 2011; Jain and Lyons, 2008; Laurier, 2004; Sheller and Urry, 2006; Time-Travel Use in the Information Age Research Team, 2006; Watts, 2008.

*N.B. An earlier version of this diagram appeared in Cook, 2012 in part fulfilment of a Stage 2 fieldwork course*

## **The Project: Aims and Objectives**

Two definite gaps have been identified, which this study will attempt to (at least partially) fill. The need to undertake mobilities research in a greater holistic fashion has been outlined by Cresswell (2006a; 2008; 2010), which will be accomplished through much needed analysis of urban road-running. Road-running is a practice that involves the sharing and recycling of non-specialised spaces and thus is markedly different from the homogenous, rationalised and specialised environment of the track (Bale, 1994; 2000b; 2003). A predominately qualitative investigation based in Plymouth and involving twenty runners, the aim of this project is to improve the geographical understandings of road running utilising Cresswell's holistic mobility approach. The objectives to achieve this aim are born out of the approach itself: 1) to derive an indicative understanding of the 'brute facts' of road running; 2) to understand the meaning and representation of this running and 3) to explore the embodied experiences of this running. Finally the project will seek 4) to tie the three-facets of mobility together in order to gain an understanding of how holistic mobilities are formed and of the politics that emerge from doing so.

It is here that I must profess to be being somewhat of a road-running insider having amassed fourteen years of experience and thus consider myself technically and culturally competent in the practice. This will inevitably inform the understanding, interpretation and presentation of everything offered throughout this dissertation. Yet this is not a claim to absolute authority; every runner will have their own stories to tell – stories of different movements, different meanings and different experiences.

## Literature Review

Having already positioned this project within its academic contexts this literature review is able to adopt a highly focussed structure, attending to each facet of mobility in turn. No single discipline appears to possess a comprehensive body of work on road-running; knowledges are scattered across a range of eras, paradigms and academic disciplines and accordingly, I will adopt a thematic approach during this review, in efforts to transcend such boundaries to connect seldom connected literatures. This demarcation of holistic mobility is not a simple task due to the highly entangled nature of mobility and is undertaken purely for analytical purposes (Cresswell, 2006a; 2008; 2010).

### Movement

As Figure 1 demonstrated, the brute facts of movement is concerned with the raw material of mobility: who is moving, where are they moving, how fast are they moving, when are they moving, how often do they move, how long are they moving for? Unfortunately, as Christopher Winters noted in 1980, this sort of data is not easy to come by and even nowadays, when the road-runner has become a ubiquitous urban figure (Latham, forthcoming), there is still little information regarding the 'brute facts'. In recent years however, Sport England's Active People Survey (2012a) has been monitoring participation in sports and can provide some insights as to who is running and how often. Road-running is included in this survey under the bracket of 'Athletics', which also incorporates the mobile practices of track and field, cross-country running and ultramarathon running (Sport England, 2012a; 2012b). Therefore the brute facts presented below may be slightly overzealous as a proxy for road-running alone, yet I would argue that it is perfectly feasible for participants in these practices to use the streets and partake in road-running for training at some point or another.

Participation in athletics in England has continued to follow a strong upwards trends over recent years to reach a current high in 2011/2012 of 2,033,700, an increase of 679,900 since 2005/06 (Sport England, 2012a; 2012b; 2012c; 2012d), a trend concurrent with the participation in sport more generally (Figure 3). A report by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2012) suggests that this participation is most likely to be on a once a week basis. Whilst the declaration by The Joggers Manual, may be true and jogging can be done by "anyone – six to 106 – male or female" (Latham, forthcoming: unpaginated), the current information regarding who is doing the running is slightly more precise and exact. Speaking in absolute terms, road runners are most likely to be white males between the age of 35 and 44 who have no limiting disability, hold higher income jobs and are unorganised, in terms of no formal coaching or running club membership (Sport England, 2012c).

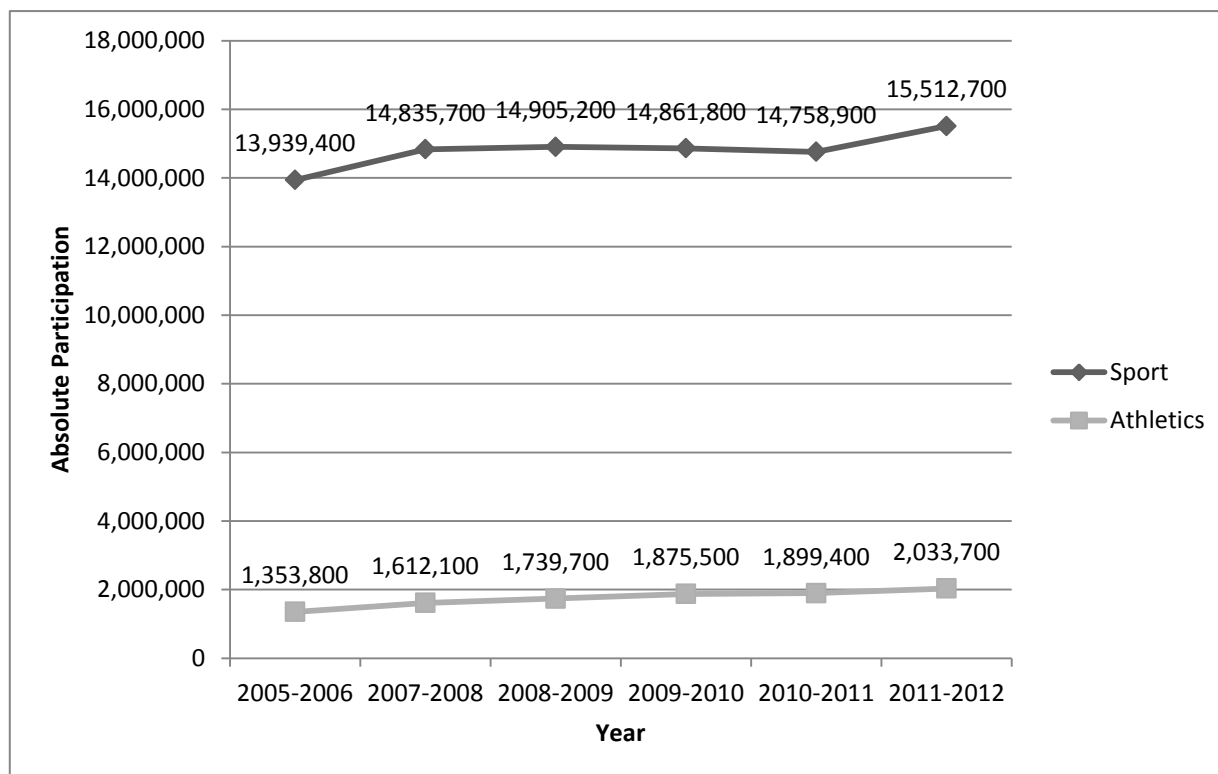


Figure 3. Participation in sport and athletics. Sport England, 2012c

Interestingly these trends change slightly when discussed in relative terms with the most likely runners being non-white male students aged between 26 and 29 who have no limiting disability and are unorganised (Sport England, 2012c) - trends seen in Figure 4 and supported by a number of other reports (cf. Sport England, 2000; The Scottish Government, 2009)

Knowledge regarding the where and when of running is extremely scant and anecdotal at best. Whilst The Joggers Manual proclaims that running can be done “anywhere” (Latham, forthcoming: unpaginated), other sources suggest that road-runners more regularly recycle city’s parks, walkways, trails and streets in order to do their practice (Hockey, 2006; Latham, forthcoming; Whelan, 2012; Winters, 1980). Allen-Collinson and Hockey (2001) demonstrate that running is usually temporally organised, resulting in shorter midweek runs and longer weekend runs, linked to labour and daylight patterns, whilst Tulle (2007) and Smith (2002) suggest that this organisation assumes cyclical weekly, seasonally and yearly rhythms (Figure 5).

This amounts to what is currently known about the brute facts of road-running and what is evident is the deficiency of comprehensive data regarding the speeds, distances, routes, times, frequencies and durations of such movements. Little is also understood about how these national averages enmesh with the individual movements and anecdotes to provide an indication of the brute facts of movement of road-running at a city-scale – something this study will attempt to redress.

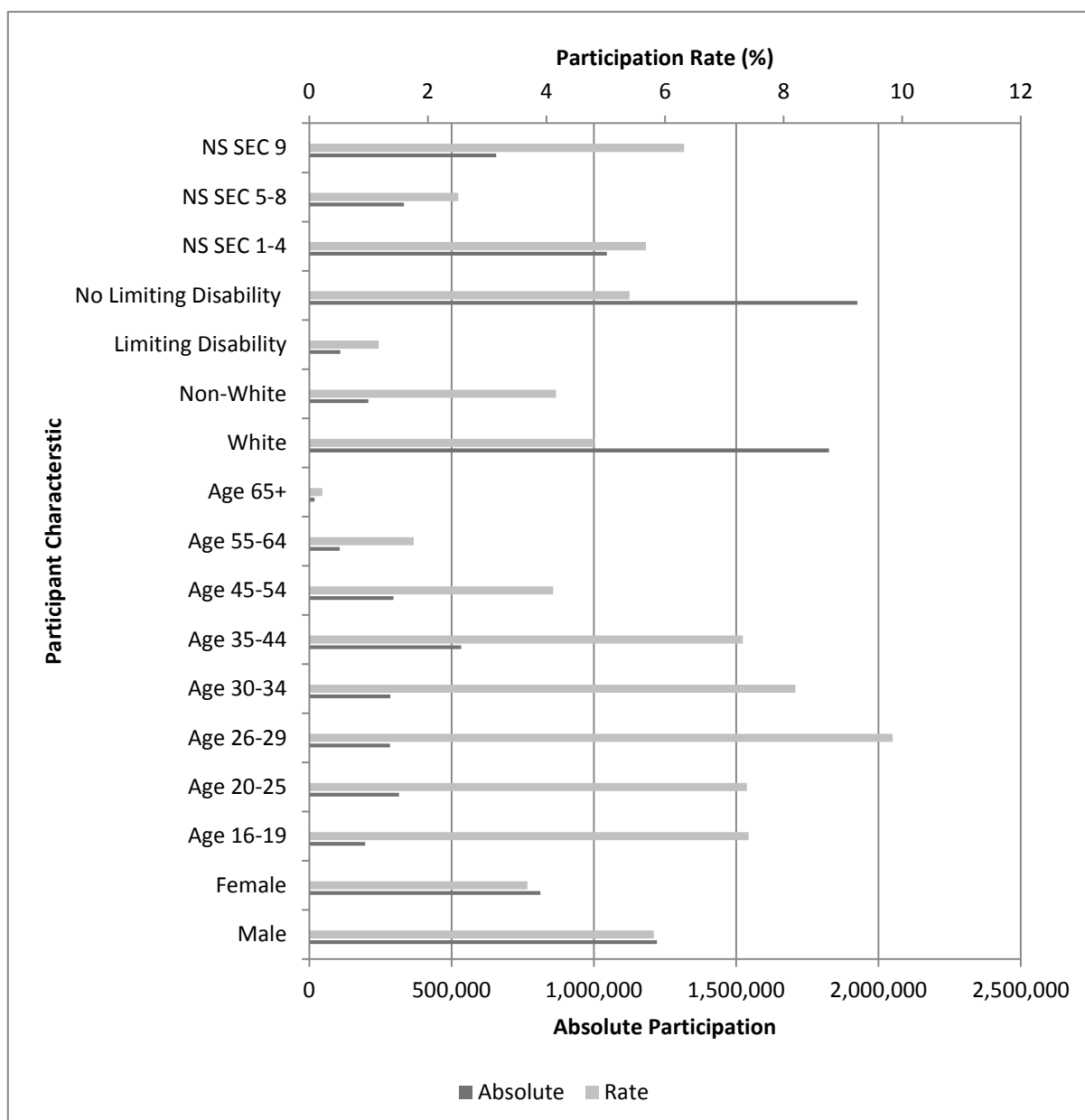


Figure 4. Absolute participation and participation rate in athletics at least 1 x 30 minutes a week by socio-cultural characteristics. Sport England, 2012c

*N.B. NS-SEC is the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification. It is derived by combining information on occupation and employment status. NS-SEC: 1. Higher managerial and professional occupations; 2. Lower managerial and professional occupations; 3. Intermediate occupations; 4. Small employers and own account workers; 5. Lower supervisory and technical occupations; 6. Semi-routine occupations; 7. Routine occupations; 8. Never worked and long-term unemployed; 9. Full time students and Occupations not stated or inadequately described.*



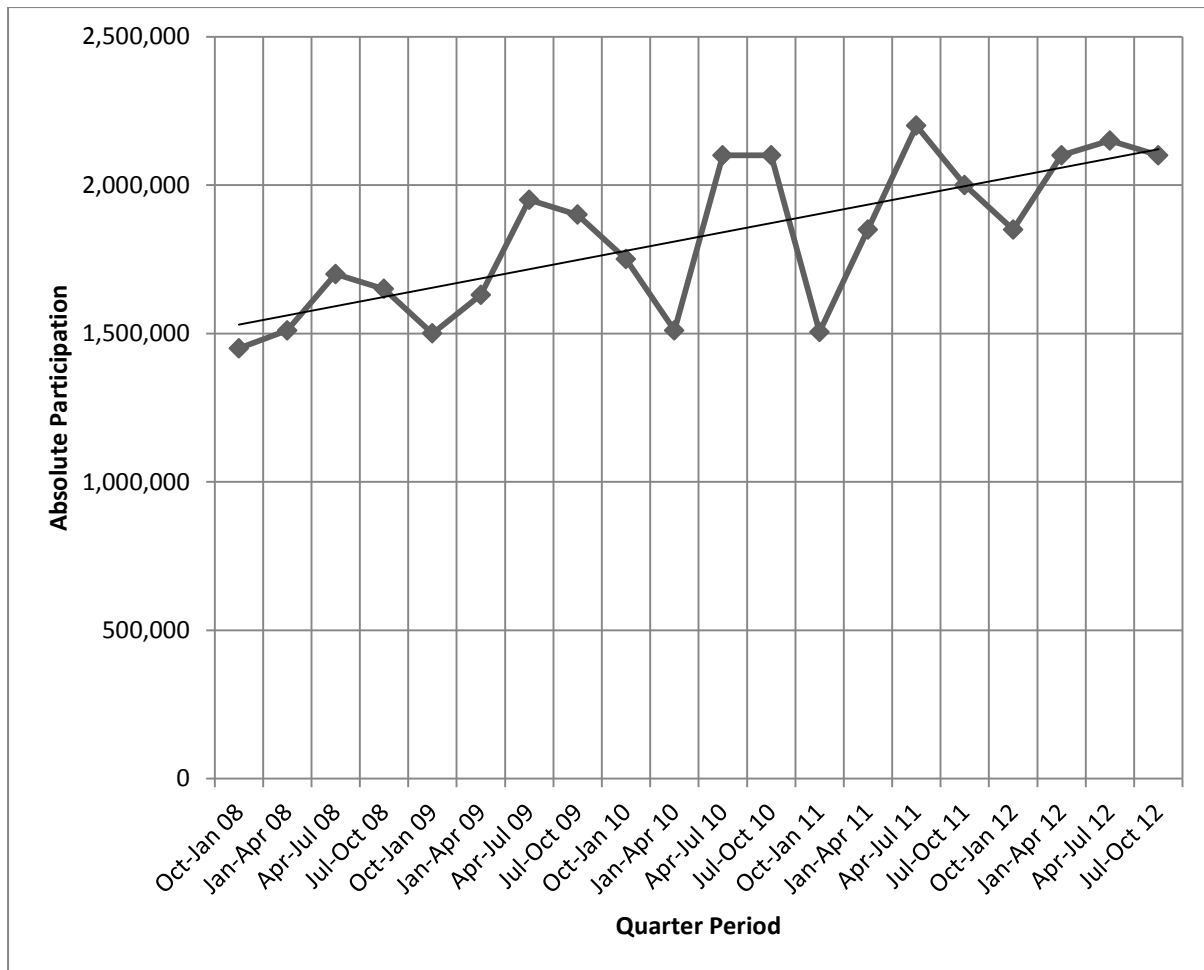


Figure 5. Quarterly absolute participation in athletics 2008 – 2012. Sport England, 2012c

## Meaning

Although the movements above have been discussed as abstract mobility; we know they are in fact imbued with masses of meaning; meanings that are not visible in the external form (Bale, 2008, 2012). Over the last few decades, research concerning the representations of road-running have been quite forthcoming (Yairn, 1992) with several attempt to conceptualise the plethora of meanings that exist (cf. Bale, 2003; 2004). I would argue the conceptualisation of best fit is that proposed by Tanio (2012), who suggests a triumvirate of meanings: competition, health and experience-oriented representations.

Whelan (2012) suggests that today, running is largely represented and understood as health and as competition. The sportised form of running is largely concerned with how fast bodies can reach their destinations, seeking quicker times and the enhancement of performance (Shipway and Jones,

2008; Vettenniemi, 2012a; Whelan, 2012). The urge runners have to improve (Winters, 1980) can be a very scientific endeavour (cf. Péronnet and Thibault, 1989) with a Taylorisation involving statistics, records and speeds (Bale, 2004); indeed Bale (2004; 2011) suggests that the sweat, slog and physical labour some runners commit to reducing times should not be underestimated and can function to recast running as work (Hockey and Allen-Collinson, forthcoming). Rather than evolving from this representation, running as exercise stemmed from the need to live a healthier and fitter lifestyle in the 1960s (Latham, forthcoming; Vettenniemi, 2012a; Winters, 1980). A discourse that has particular resonance with older runners as Dionigi et al (forthcoming) and Tulle (2007) examine, fitness running developed as a counter to the ill-effects of increasingly sedentary lifestyles (Latham, forthcoming). This remains a significant impetus today as runners and governments seek to tackle obesity levels and promote healthy living and physical well-being (Shipway and Holloway, 2010).

Discussions about the experience-oriented representations, those outside of the health-competition binary, are less well versed however and represent the knowledges where most progression could be made as this whistle-stop tour demonstrates. Running had been fashioned as resistance by several authors who argue road-running transgresses the norms of modern achievement sport and contests the dominance of motorised mobility by claiming back the streets (Bale, 2003; 2004; 2011; Winters, 1980). Lorimer (2012) has shown that such taking of space can recast road-running as an exploratory tool and a vehicle through which to gain place knowledge (see also Sheehan, 2006; Shipway and Jones, 2008; Tanio, 2012). Being in place ultimately entails not being somewhere else, which some commentators claim can form the foundation for representing road-running as a form of escape; offering a reprieve from the complexities and confusions of everyday life (Allen-Collinson and Hockey, 2001; Bale, 2004; Seagrave, 2000; Shipway and Jones, 2008). If runners' habitually escape through their practice, this refashions it once more a quasi-spiritual endeavour (Bale, 2004; Bloom, 2006; Guilfoil, undated; Kathik, 2008; Lee, 2005).

Not all representations are so glowing however and there are tales aplenty which position running as a form of punishment – often derived from experiences of the compulsory school run (Bale, 2008). Such involuntary mobility can leave a legacy of deep-seated resentment that lasts well beyond school years, with some unable to grasp why others may run voluntarily - Jean Baudrillard (1989) likens it to freely-entered servitude. Yet the difficulty and hardship often associated with running also posits it as a feat and many runners perform running due to its representation as a challenge (Shipway and Jones, 2008; Townsend, 2012; Vettenniemi, 2012a, Whelan, 2012). Finally and in contrast to some representations (Guttmann, 2001; Sillitoe, 2007[1959]), recent research has demonstrated running's sociability and how it may be framed as means of forging and maintaining social relationships (Allen-Collinson, 2008; Dionigi et al, forthcoming; Guilfoil, undated; Hockey and Allen-Collinson, forthcoming; Shipway and Jones, 2008; Tulle, 2007).

A wealth of meanings that can be associated with road-running have been offered here, yet the literature has dealt with them asymmetrically and is bound to have overlooked many more due to the heterogeneity of running as a practice. Similarly, further attention needs to be paid to how runners construct their representations, the interaction between meanings (Buckingham, 2005) and how they interact with the physical movements of runners.

## **Experience**

Although geography and the recent mobilities turn have been engaged in dialogues regarding the body, embodiment and the experience of movement, running has rarely been on the agenda with relatively little attention to the actual experiences of 'doing' road-runners (Allen-Collinson and Hockey, 2007a). Nevertheless a small body of work does exist but which is inherently inadequate to attend to the highly fractured nature of running experiences (Bale, 1994; Tanio, 2012).

Lorimer's (2012) wonderful phenomenological account of running can serve as a powerful reminder that we live out our lives in our bodies. The body is at the core of a runner's experience; a fact runners are intensely aware of and knowledgeable about (Allen-Collinson, 2008; Bridel and Rail, 2007; Hockey and Allen-Collinson, 2007; forthcoming; Tanio, 2012; Whelan, 2012). The experiences of the running body are mostly lived through the senses (Allen-Collinson, 2011; Maivorsdotrer and Quennerstedt, 2012; Winters, 1980). Senses help to mediate between self, society and body and are extremely pertinent to the highly accomplished sensualists that runners are - touching, smelling, feeling, hearing and seeing their runs (Allen-Collinson and Hockey, 2011; Hockey, 2006; Hockey and Allen-Collinson, 2007; Lorimer, 2012). The senses are essential to accomplishing a run by gauging ability, judging proximity, calculating safety, recognising terrain and assessing pace toleration - particularly when co-running (Hockey, 2006; Hockey and Allen-Collinson, 2007; forthcoming). Running bodies are rarely naked and in fact embody road-running as an assemblage. Research has revealed the clothing materialities associated with running and how they can provide great functionality, help to identify runners, attract unwanted attention or connect to memories and constellations of mobility (Allen-Collinson, 2010; 2011; Allen-Collinson and Hockey, 2007b; Shipway and Jones, 2008). Nevertheless, more work is needed to understand how such materialities impact upon experience of the run, how body and technology come together to accomplish a run and to incorporate a wider range of materialities such as running trainers, water bottles, watches and MP3 players.

Throughout the literature on the running body, is a recurring theme of the body in conflict, which most commonly manifests itself in tales on conflicts between the mind and physical body. As Shipway and Jones (2008) demonstrate often there is a clear conflict between the mind's will to continue and

the body's will to stop, a phenomena intensified by fatigue, often resulting in a discombobulating and tangible sense of disconnection between the mind and the body (Hockey and Allen-Collinson, forthcoming; Lorimer, 2012; Whelan, 2012). The antithesis to the above scenario is the frustratingly elusive yet magnificent 'runner's high'. Described by authors as the point when all the effort becomes effortless, you are seduced by your own rhythmicity and lingering sense of well-being, providing a heightened sensitivity to the present moment (Karthik, 2008; Lorimer 2010; 2012; Tanio, 2012; Whelan, 2012). The runner's high also alludes to another key experience of road-running – that is consumes the mind as well as the body (Whelan, 2012), which helps the runner to experience full gamut of emotions (Lorimer, 2012). Running can evoke exhilaration, pain, freedom, anxiety, pride, excitement and euphoria (Bale, 2004; Farquhar et al, 2011; Shipway and Jones, 2008; Whelan, 2012).

Though the body is at the heart of the running experience, it does not exist in a vacuum as Henning Eichberg (1990) clarifies by arguing that running is and has always been an interaction between the body and environment, a statement supported by Winters (1980). Perhaps one of the most intense interactions between the body and environment is that between the runner and topography as he/she moves through and over different slopes and surfaces, becoming students of terra firma and its implications for the body (Allen-Collinson and Hockey, 2011; Hockey and Allen-Collinson, 2006; Lorimer, 2012). Grass offers a more gentle and elastic surface to cushion joints but can sap energy, something of no concern when running on the stiffness of the road; a surface which enables speed but with implications for joints and tendons (Allen-Collinson and Hockey, 2001; Bale, 2003; 2004)

The runner may come into contact with many different surfaces, but the majority of UK road-runners perform their mobility in the predominately concreted public-spaces of urban areas. Runners are accustomed to running in such space replete with assault-course of traffic, dogs, pedestrians and other runners, yet there are no natural conventions for how to regulate such encounters or codes of conduct for sharing the same spaces, which can be a source of conflict (Hockey and Allen-Collinson, 2007; forthcoming). Negotiating such encounters can have significant impact on the rhythm of running. Many authors agree that the idea of rhythm seems intrinsically important to running (Lorimer, 2010) yet none have investigated the phenomena much further than identifying different spatial scales of rhythm; from bodily to city-wide (Lee, 2005; Sanders, Bustle and Oliver, 2001; Whelan, 2012). Similar topics that have received frustratingly little more than passing or indirect comment, are the highly intriguing topics of travel-time and stillness on-the-run. With both themes obtaining significant attention in the social sciences (Bissell and Fuller, 2011; Jain and Lyon, 2008), I would argue this should perhaps be the next frontier of running research.

## **What now?**

Returning to Bale's (2004) observation that, hitherto running - its movements, its meanings and its experiences, has eluded sustained study - it could be argued in light of what has been presented above, that this claim is somewhat queer. Yet it must be noted that while much ground has been covered within this literature review, it is the sum efforts of research spanning 30 plus years from many academic disciplines on or related to one of the most globally ubiquitous mobile forms. Covered in a two thousand words - this does not seem too comprehensive. Evidently there is growing interest in running and possibly even some form of momentum with new studies increasing in frequency and rigour. Nonetheless there is still huge potential to expand, progress and develop running knowledges that report to each facet of mobility and their interlinkages. Existing analyses are ubiquitously autoethnographic and therefore inevitably partial due to biography of the author – of which the 'serious' runner prevails. A priority must be communicating a variety of perspectives to incorporate novice runners and all in between. Literature has also tended to focus on the individual, yet the inclusion of diverse views encourages the want to understand how different individuals' mobilities intermingle on the scale of the city and the politics that emerge from this - a significant lacuna in research. I would propose that utilising Cresswell's approach outlined in the introduction is the most robust and compelling way of attempting to fill this gap.

## Part Two

## Study Area

The relative disregard of boundaries and fixity in favour of emphasis upon movement and flow since the onset of the mobilities turn (Sheller and Urry, 2006; Cresswell, 2008; Cresswell and Merriman, 2011) could easily be appropriated to argue for the negation of place and the end of space. Yet such an uncomplicated reasoning is inescapably over-simplistic; the occupation with hybridity and dynamism does not refute the need for place and yes, the world may be moving – but mobile subjects are moving through *somewhere*. Therefore, space and place are still vitally important in geography and mobilities fields (Cresswell, 2010; Merriman, 2012). Likewise, as John Bale (2004) claims, to running and to the runner – place matters and in this study running mobility was explored within in the urban area of Plymouth.

### Plymouth

The City of Plymouth, located in south west Devon, England was an extremely suitable study area for investigating the movements of runners. Unlike large urban conurbations where the demarcations between different urban areas may be fuzzy and routes could take place over many urban jurisdictions (e.g. West Midlands), Plymouth is somewhat of an urban island. As seen in Figure 6, Plymouth is flanked by Dartmoor to the north, the River Tamar to the west, the Plymouth Sound to the south and the South Hams to the east – judging whether a route has taken place in the city or not was relatively simple. Slight in size and population (Office for National Statistics, 2013); Plymouth offered an extremely suitable scale upon which to base an undergraduate dissertation.

A total of nine running and athletics clubs are established in the city whilst at least 38 informal running groups meet each week across Plymouth. These clubs and groups are often based out of athletics track at Brickfields Sport Centre in the west of the city, or the various schools, parks and trails that populate Plymouth, notably Central Park in central Plymouth and Saltram Countryside Park towards the east of the city (Figure 7).



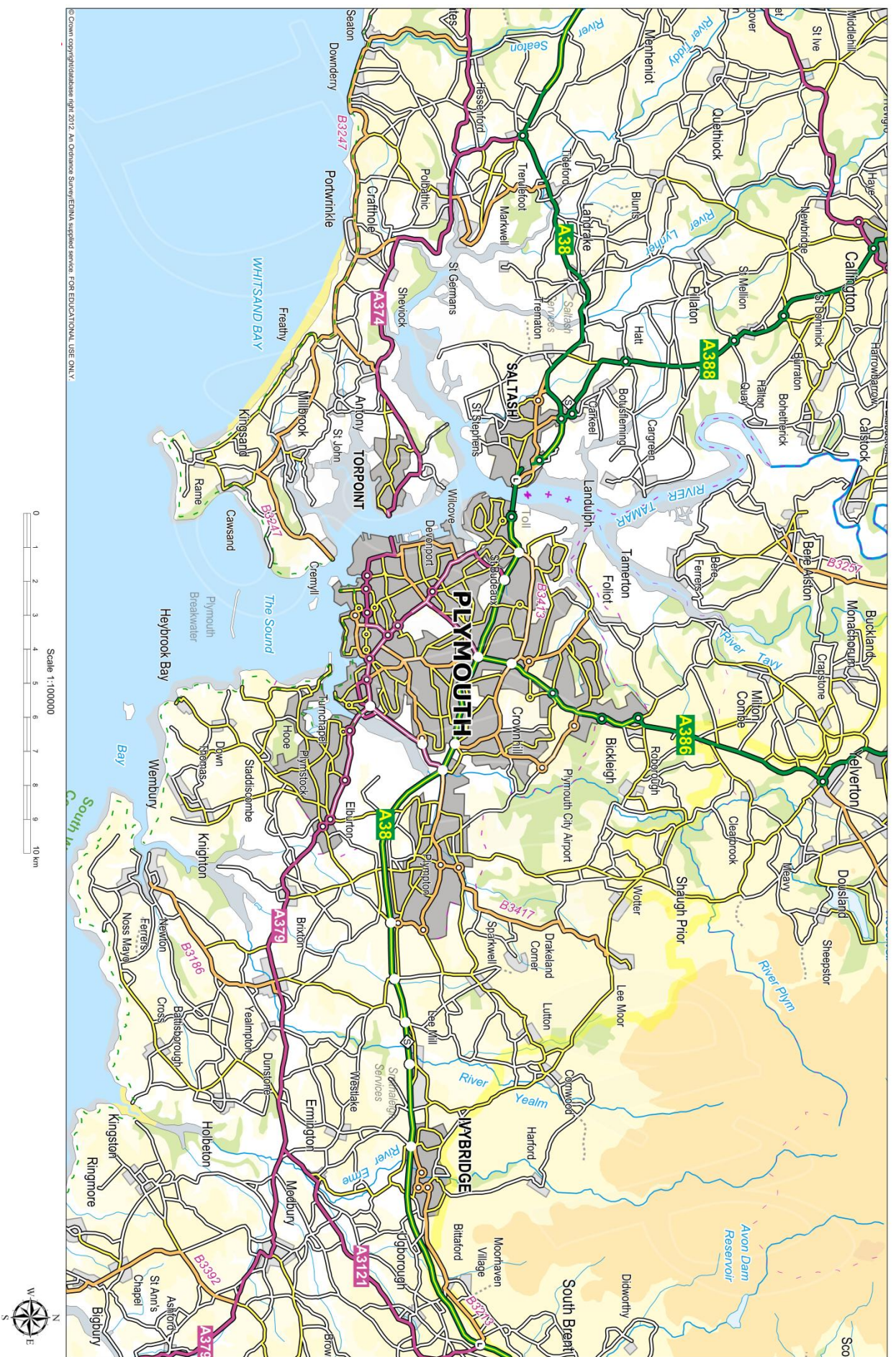


Figure 6. Location map of Plymouth and the surrounding areas in South Devon and East Cornwall



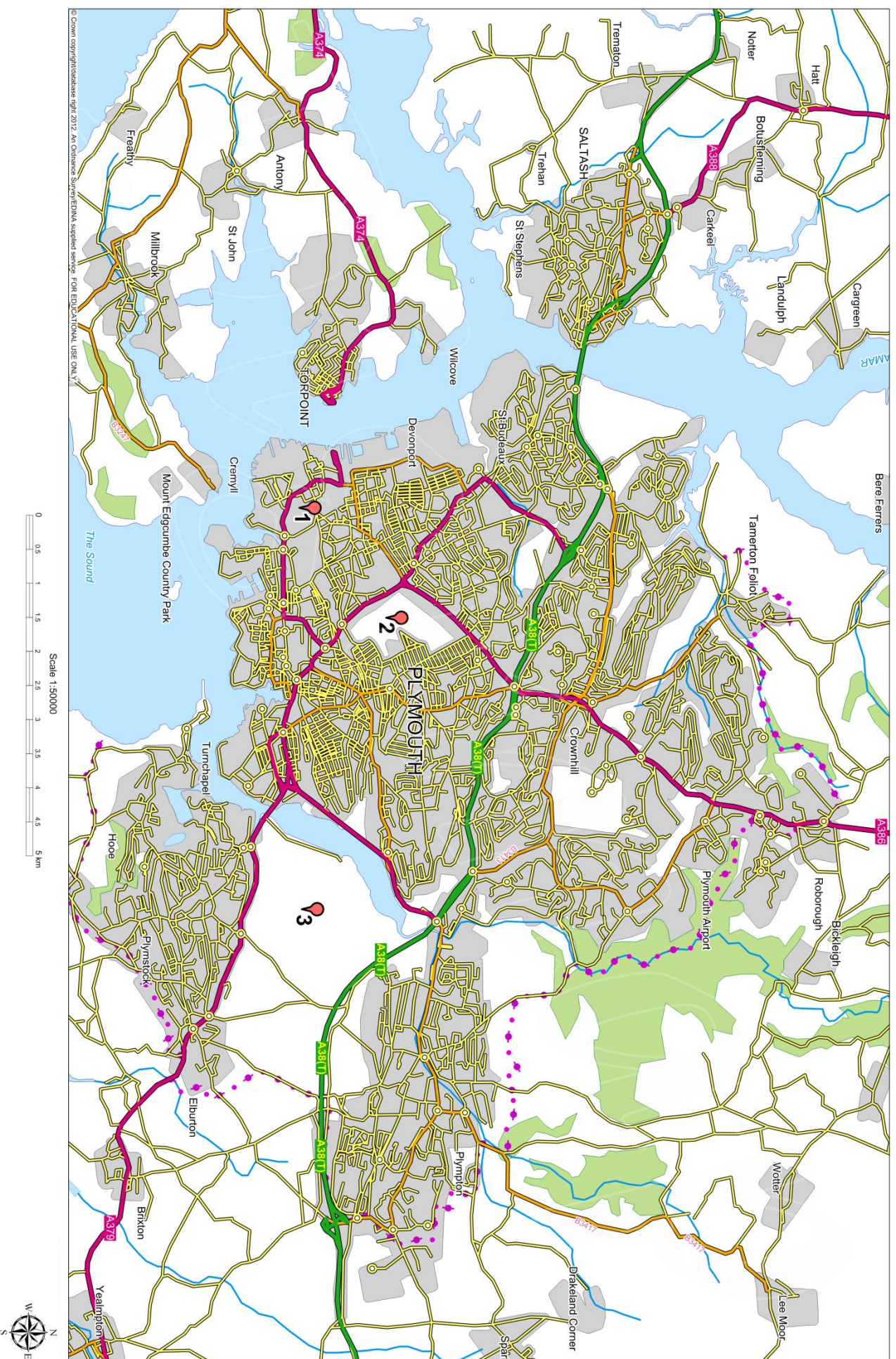


Figure 7. Close-scale map of the urban area of Plymouth. N.B. Point 1 refers to Brickfields Sports Centre; Point 2 to Central Park and Point 3 to Saltram

# Methodology

The camera's eye  
Does not lie  
But it cannot show  
The life within  
The life of a runner  
Of your or mine

Extract from *The Runner* - W.H. Auden

## **'Mobile Methods'**

Auden's observation about the inability of sight alone to reveal and communicate the embodied experiences, emotions and feelings of life and life on-the-move is a conundrum that has similarly troubled geographers. The recent and sustained interest in movement and mobile practices (Cresswell, 2011) has asked new questions of and challenged existing research methodologies about how researchers can engage with mobile subjects when they are actually on the move (Simpson, forthcoming). Traditional research methods have dealt poorly with the fleeting, the ephemeral, the chaotic, the complex, the sensory, the emotional and the kinaesthetic (Büscher *et al*, 2010a). The need to pay closer attention to life-on-the move (Harada and Waitt, forthcoming) has advocated that methods may correspondingly need to be on-the-move (Sheller and Urry, 2006) and has ushered and enabled new forms of inquiry, explanation and engagement (Büscher and Urry, 2009).

## **Research Design**

The aim of understanding running through Cresswell's holistic approach arguably requires the mixing of different methods capable of obtaining the necessary data for each facet of mobility. The combination of predominately qualitative methods should have maximised my engagement with the research (Longhurst, 2010), whilst simultaneously circulating others' voices more extensively (Cloeke *et al*, 2004). Such focus upon other runners' voices denotes that this project has been truly collaborative; a range of runners working together to gain understandings about running revealed through the triangulation of truly-mobile, pseudo-mobile and static-based methods.

A total of 20 runners were recruited through various running groups and networks across Plymouth. Nonetheless, I do recognise the limitations of this recruitment strategy as only 5% of runners are affiliated to a running club (Sport England, 2012c), which may skew findings. Other tactics were adopted however, but proved quite fruitless. In that respect, an inherent problem exists in identifying and recruiting running participants. Unless runners are in some way 'listed' (club membership, gym membership, running shop customer list etc.), it is very difficult to identify them. As such, I judge the participant recruitment strategy adopted to have been the most appropriate and indeed, did provide a good range of running perspectives.

### **Researching the Brute Facts**

To gain an indication of the physical movements of road-runners, I collected online training diaries from 12 participants over a one month period from 1 June 2012 to 31 June 2012. Runners were asked to complete a diary entry for each run they made throughout June that took place in Plymouth. Using the highly popular MapMyRun online software (Belshaw, 2011), participants were able to electronically map their routes and record details of the dates, times, durations, speeds, weather, effort and feelings as well as providing a description of the running experience. Such online user / community mapping is a relatively new research tool (but see Bearman and Appleton, 2012) and once such diary entries had been created, I was able to gain access to the data through the virtual 'group' that all participants joined on the website. This information was then analysed using simple statistics to gain an indication of the brute facts of movement and the routes accumulated to produce a 'running map' of Plymouth.

### **Researching the Meanings**

The meanings participants attributed and associated with road-running were interpreted and derived from the interviews mentioned below. During these interviews, it is what they talked about when they talked about running that revealed the insights into what representations they hold. The words they used, the experiences they recounted, the narratives they constructed and the spatial stories they told accrued to form the foundation of the meanings of running.

## Researching the Experience

The methods for researching the embodiment of movement were the most involved, reflecting the complexities bound up in such experiences and I employed two separate but reciprocal methods to entangle such complexity.

Between 04 June 2012 and 08 June 2012, six different participants allowed me to join them on one of their runs to undertake a go-along interview. This method prioritised me being there and engaged in motion, seeking to understand the phenomenon (DeLyser and Sui, forthcoming), a method that has come to fruition over the last few years (Cresswell, 2012; Evans and Jones, 2011; Watts and Urry, 2008). Going the 'extra mile' (Vettenniemi, 2012b) has been argued to generate richer data as participants are prompted by meanings, connections and memories to the surrounding environment and passing events as well as building deep rapport with the researcher (Anderson, 2004; Büscher *et al*, 2010a; Evans and Jones, 2011; Fincham *et al*, 2010a; Jones *et al*, 2008). To optimise the chance for collaborative knowledge creation the go-along interviews were conducted as follows: participants were asked to suggest a convenient time and location for a joint run to take place; the route would be totally of their choosing and the only stipulations would be that it must last between 30 and 90 minutes and would be completed at 'conversational' pace – an undefined speed that simply means both runners can hold a conversation without becoming breathless. These conversations were recorded by a Dictaphone attached to my arm and the resulting audio transcribed and coded for emerging themes. The dialogue was very loosely-structured (DeLyser and Sui, forthcoming) as to allow for the adaptation of topics to changing situations and questions to evolve from the spontaneous exchanges or encounters on the run. Finally, participants had the opportunity to provide additional reflections or to amend comments postscript once the transcript was emailed to them.

Between 23 May 2012 and 05 June 2012, eight participants undertook mobile-video-ethnography elicitation interviews (D'Andrea *et al*, 2011; Merchant, 2011). Despite Auden's suggestion, the technological advances and the increasing availability and affordability of digital video technologies (Downing Jr., 2008; Pink, 2001; Rosenstein, 2002) has resulted in significant upsurge in the use of video methodologies in the study of everyday practices (Cresswell, 2012; Garrett, 2011; Simpson, 2011). This pseudo-mobile method has been heavily utilised in cycling research (Brown and Spinney, 2010; Spinney, 2009; 2011; Simpson, forthcoming) and claims are made about its ability to capture the moment (Büscher *et al*, 2010a); to reveal the humdrum and banal aspects of mobile practices; to retain the context and detail of practices and allow for the scrutiny of practices (Simpson, forthcoming). Such an approach allows for participants to relive experiences (Brown and Spinney, 2010) and allows researchers to talk through the practices, interactions and experiences on the minute scale (Fincham *et al*, 2010a; Simpson, forthcoming). The mobile-video-ethnography interviews

were conducted along similar lines of Spinney (2011) and Simpson (forthcoming). Runners were asked to undertake unaccompanied routes recorded via a head camera (see Brown *et al*, 2008). This unedited footage was then navigated through by both researcher and participant and a specific interview schedule was drawn up for each participant. The interviews involved the re-watching of the video whilst working through the interview schedule, which were then transcribed and coded, drawing out key themes and emerging discussions. Finally, participants had the opportunity to provide additional reflections or to amend comments postscript once the transcript was emailed to them.

## Part Three



## Facts of Movement

Collecting online running diaries promised to reveal many different aspects and much data regarding runners' abstract mobility and to shed light upon relatively unknown dimensions concerning the brute facts of road-runners' movements in Plymouth. This promise was duly honoured to an unanticipated degree. In fact more noteworthy data was obtained than could possibly be shown in the space of this chapter. As such, I wish to concentrate discussions purely on one dimension of movement in order to do it justice. In this sense, whilst the study is analysing running holistically by attending to each facet of mobility, it cannot be holistic in regard to attending to all aspects of each facet. The dimension under scrutiny will be the question of *where* – a significant void in knowledge and arguably a highly appropriate element for a study interested in how runners' movement coalesce on the scale of the city. This said the contents of this discussion should most certainly be seen purely as indicative. Resulting from only 12 dairies, such a small sample could hardly been viewed as a definitive statement, merely signalling to and implying that certain patterns may exist. Together the twelve diaries recorded 65 runs during June 2012, as seen in Figure 8, that were utilised illuminate the brute facts of *where*.

### The Routes

A satellite image of Plymouth is shown in Figure 9 with all 65 recorded routes overlaid, presenting where runners ran and in with what popularity – the greater the opacity and brightness of a line, the more times it was recorded and mapped. What possibly is most immediately noticeable is the spatial distribution of such routes. It is possible to identify three 'zones' of running: to the south and east spanning from Devonport to Plymstock and Plympton; to the north and northeast around Derriford, Roborough, Estover and Plymbridge; and to the west bridging Keyham, Camels Head, Kings Tamerton, Ernesettle and Honicknowle. Similarly areas of running deserts or scarcity can be seen over much of central Plymouth and most of Plympton with the A38 proving a rarely-penetrable barrier. The reasons for such a distribution will be explored later on.

What is also very apparent is that despite the freedom of movement and of route that running can afford a mobile subject, runners' movement are still highly channelled – they *are* lines on a map. More specifically, they are lines that tend to follow the road pattern, which perhaps is best seen in the city centre (Figure 10). This figure also demonstrates that runners prefer to recycle the major and main roads of a city to undertake their practice with a total of 441 occurrences being observed

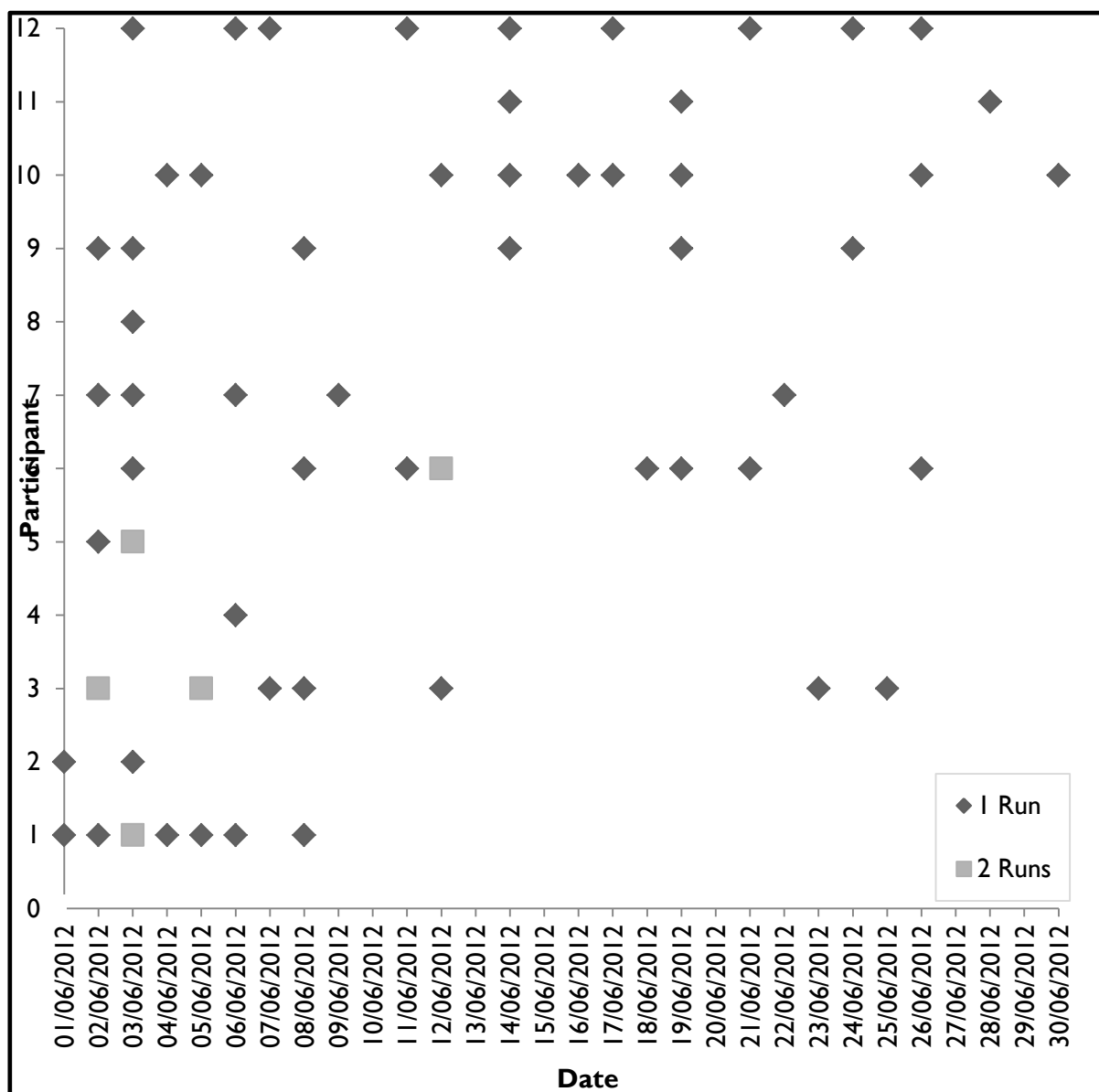


Figure 8. Logged runs by participants throughout June 2012

*N.B. Please see Appendix 1 for participant profiles*

in the 65 runs. The reasons for such preferences were unfortunately not covered in the remit of the diaries but would make for fascinating future studies. Compared to only 218 occurrences of running on minor roads, it was observed that runners tend to use these smaller roads in order to access major roads, to link major roads or add small loops off a major road. Runners made relatively little use of pedestrianised routes in the city, perhaps to avoid a greater intensity of encounters with other-space users that can result in a gauntlet-like experience as accounted by Hockey and Allen-Collinson (2007; forthcoming). The anecdotal evidence given by Hockey (2006), Latham (forthcoming) and Winters (1980) that as well as taking the streets, runners also recycle the parks, trails and off-road areas of places seems to have some truth – 65% of all runs documented contained



some off-road elements. Interestingly, even in these spaces, which offer more freedom than the street in terms of route flexibility, runners still tended to channel their mobility – utilising the paths of parks and sticking to the tracks of trails (Figure 11).



Figure 9. An overview of all routes ran





Figure 10. Running routes following road patterns



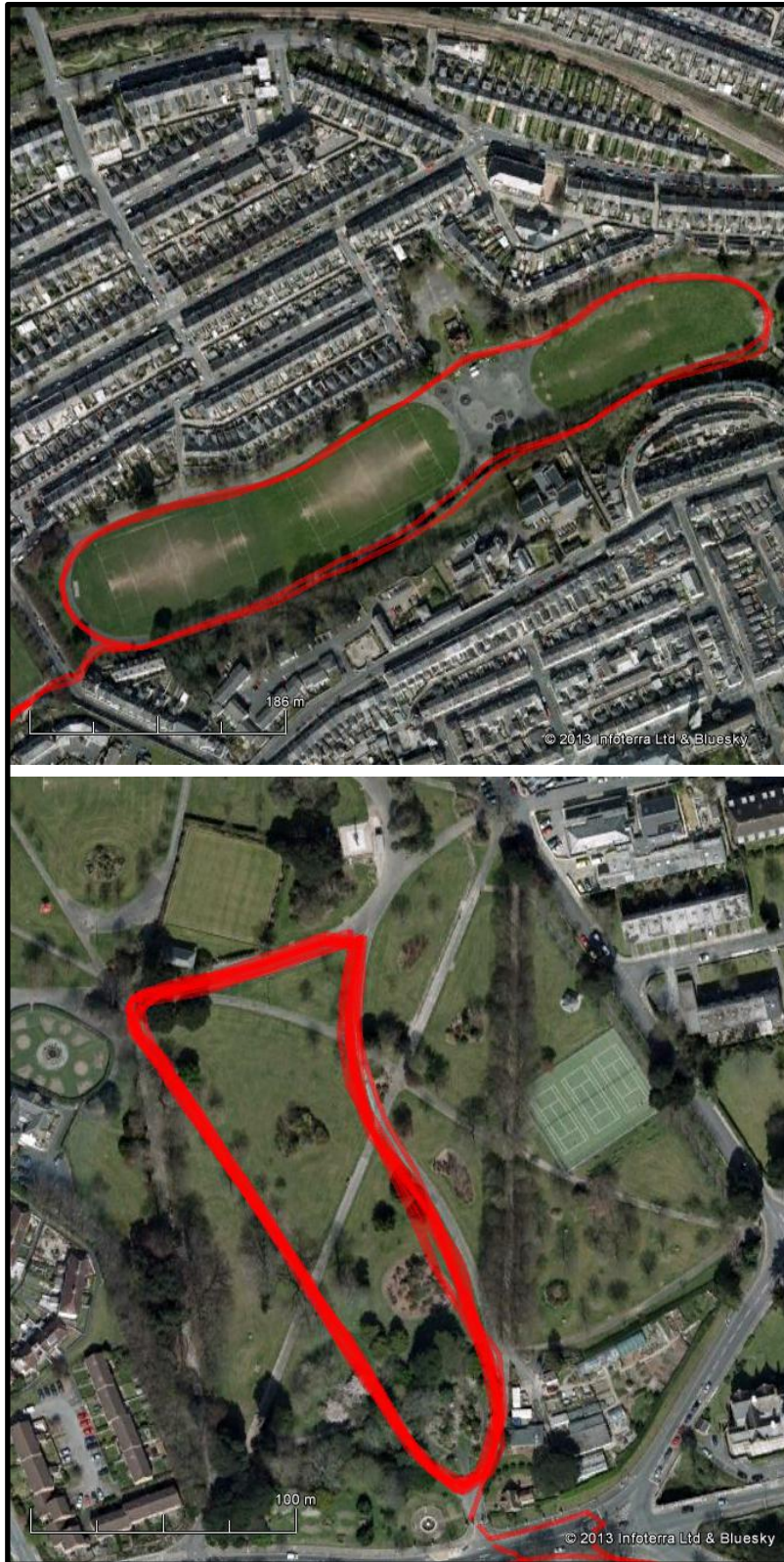


Figure 11. Off-road channelled mobility

Yet, in many respects, a line on a map is a generalisation and simplification of the actual route taken, something explored by Hockey and Allen-Collinson (forthcoming) that suggests that actually flexibility is possible even within channelled routes. The route map may reveal the general direction taken but it cannot reveal micro-scale movements: which side of the pavement the runner was on, whether a slaloming movement was performed or whether a straight run was achieved. Such freedom of movement was witnessed during the study and although limited, some participants paid little regard for passage, routes and channels and instead opting to forge their own lines of movement. Shown in Figure 12, twice Participant 6 forged their own routes, once by turning away from the road and running over a gravelled area and another by transforming an area of wasteland into a space for running.



Figure 12. Freedom of route

Perhaps an inescapable facet of running in Plymouth, the role of water – namely the Plymouth Sound and River Plym – plays a highly important component in the routes of runners. Just under half of all runs (37/65) occurred alongside the water and it is not possible to gauge how many more had sight of the water. The most commonly ran route during the research period was the Plymouth Half Marathon course, which not only started and finished at the Plymouth Sound, it also channelled runners along both sides of the River Plym. Yet such movement patterns are not limited to flagship events – it is very visible in the movements of individual runners. A case in point in Participant 10, who rarely strayed from the coast or rivers of Plymouth (Figure 13).



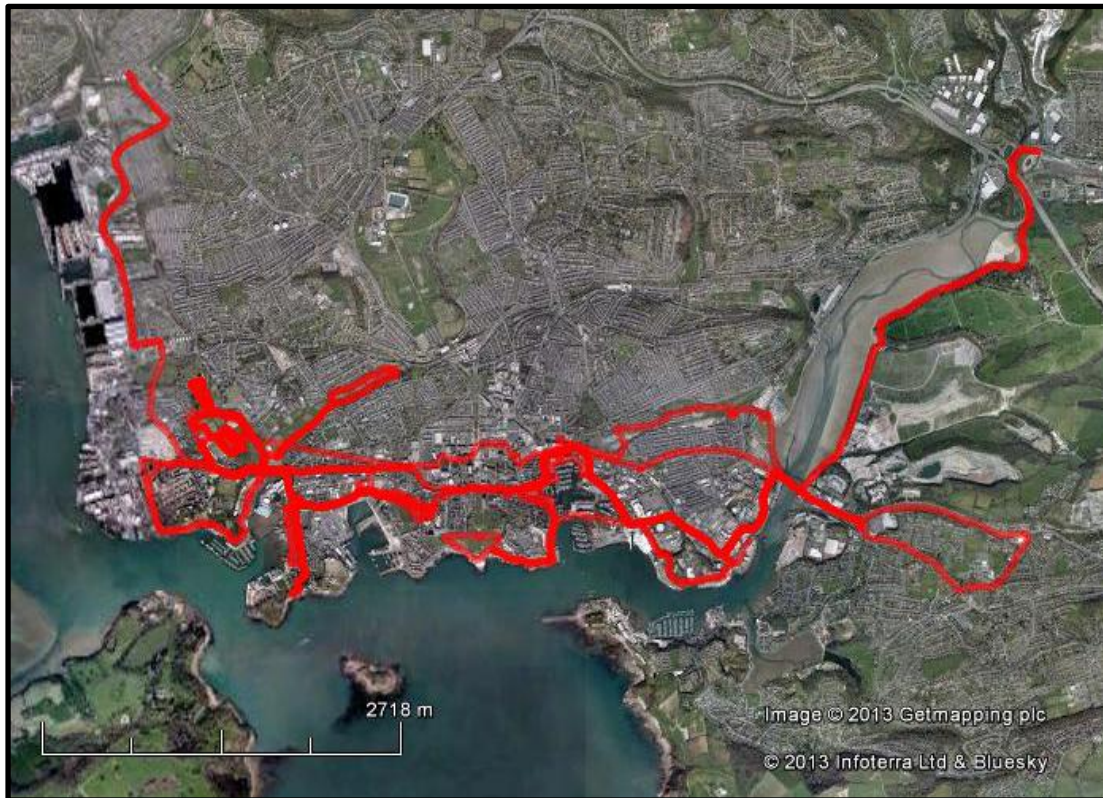


Figure 13. Participant 10's movements

## Nodes

Observing all the movements made by an individual over the research period, also reveals reasons as to perhaps why they run where they do. Analysis was undertaken to try to distinguish routes favoured by different genders, occupations, days of the week, distances and speeds – yet this shed very few insights as most analyses mirrored the geographic distribution shown in Figure 8. In fact the only noticeable differences related to distance. Runs over ten miles seemed to be more inclined to be undertaken in the east of the city, through Saltram and towards Plymbridge, but the skew of the Plymouth Half Marathon is likely to be considerable in this respect with seven participants competing in that race during the research period. Yet by observing individuals' patterns, it becomes obvious to me that routes are chosen not for their favourability alone but often their convenience and utility. Certain nodes and nuclei can be identified, from which individuals' movements tend to emanate out from and return to. These nodes could be runners' homes or more public spaces. Figures 14 – 16 attempt to highlight such running foci. Particular note must be made of Figure 16, which shows the runs logged by those participants who belong to the running club Plymouth Musketeers from their base at King's Tamerton College. It can be seen that such organised mobility can have significant impact on the geography of running, forming the majority of the western cluster identified in Figure

9. To return to the question of why some areas experience running scarcity, I would argue that it is probable that they don't, it is just the case that no participants within this study had any nodes in them areas.

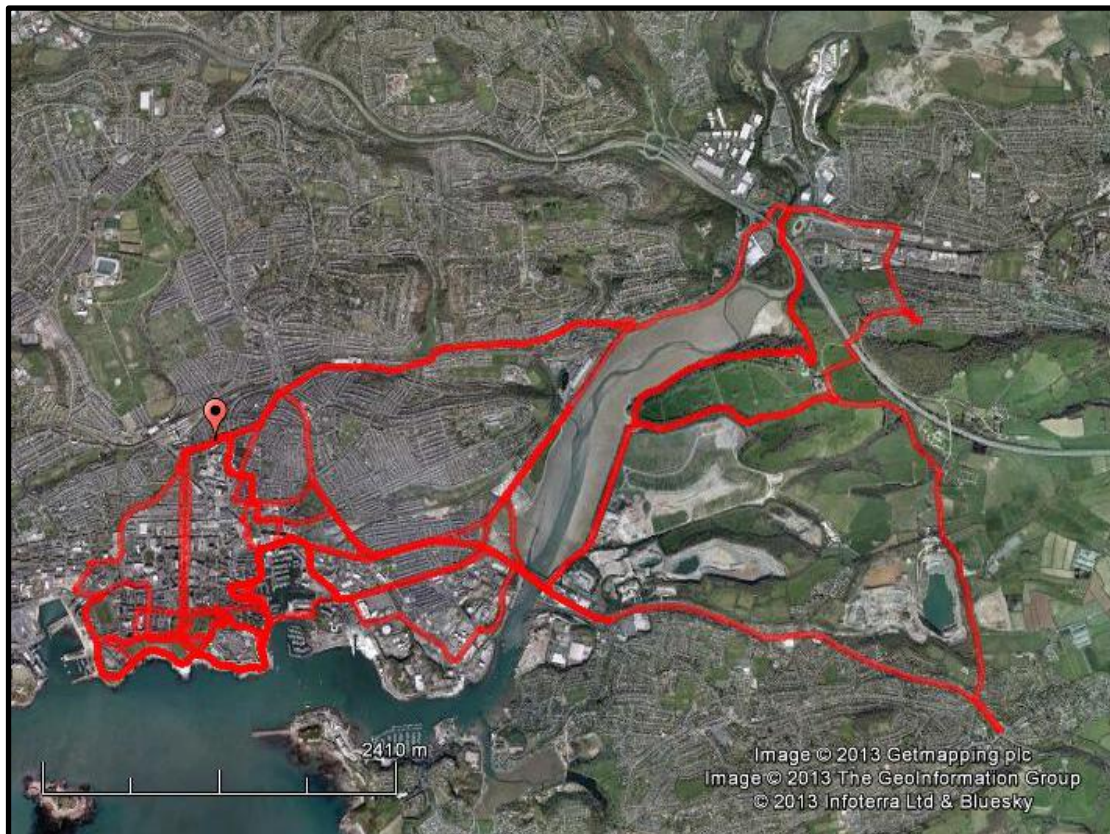


Figure 14. The author's running node (Participant 1)





Figure 15. Participant 11's running node



Figure 16. Plymouth Musketeers' running node

## Shape

One final point I wish to discuss regarding the routes runners take is that of shape. The basic signifier of mobility is getting from A to B; a displacement act; moving between two locations (Cresswell, 2006). Indeed, such runs are evident within the study where runners' undertook movement to get to a different location from which they started (Figure 17). This is one of four predominate forms a run can take and is known as a *line*. Yet this running shape only accounts for seven of the 65 runs recorded. The majority of the routes ran were arguably examples of pointless mobility – where the start and finish, the A and the B are the same place. The mobile subject would reach the final destination whether movement was made or not. This pointless movement is one aspect that perhaps sets running apart from other mobilities – being mobile just to be mobile and for the utility attainable from being mobile rather than moving to get somewhere. Such pointless mobility comes in the form of three basic shapes (Figure 18), of which the most popular is the *loop*, followed equally by the *lollipop* and the *out and back* (cf. Jones, forthcoming; Tanio, 2012).

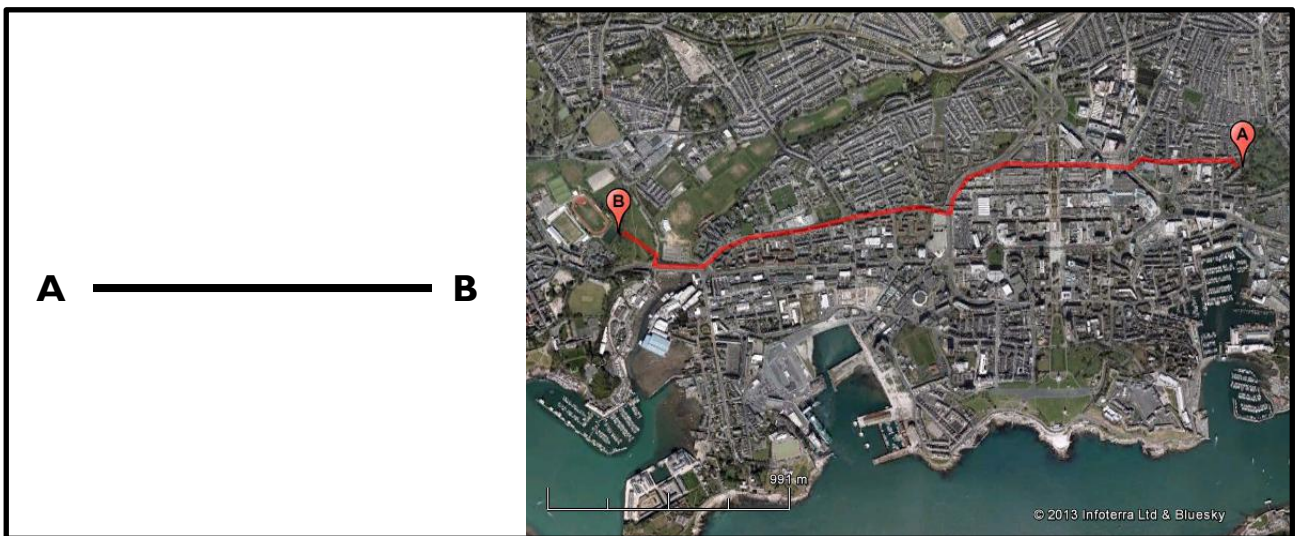
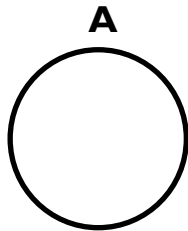


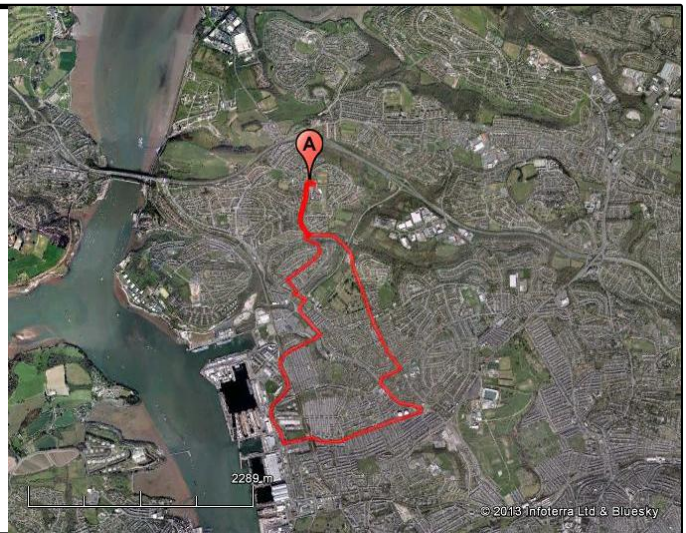
Figure 17. The line – diagram and reality



## The Loop



## The Lollipop



## The Out and Back



\*involves running a line with an identical return trip

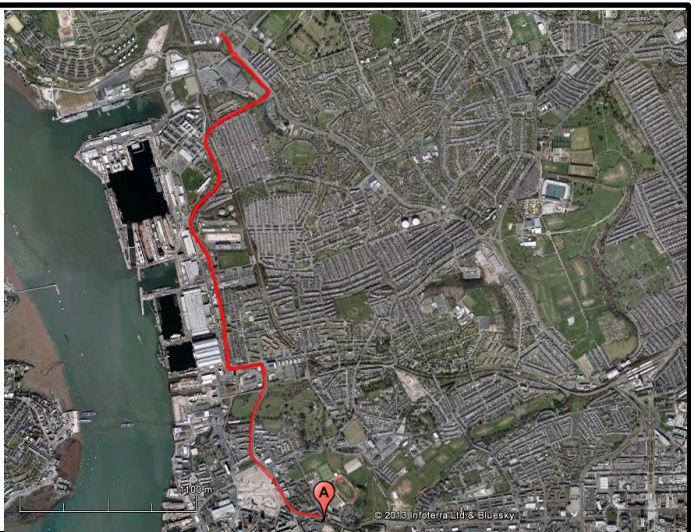


Figure 18. The loop, the lollipop and the out and back – diagram and reality

## Summary

This exploration of the routes runners recorded during the research period offered some much needed insights into *where* runners ran. Some interesting points were raised and exemplified, most notably that runners' mobilities tend to be pointless, consisting of loops ran on the main roads of Plymouth emanating from individual nodes, in three cluster zones, often near water. Such indicative understandings can be seen as acting as a call to arms. A larger study could significantly improve the understandings offered here, fleshing out the bones provided and perhaps attending to more dimensions of movement rather than merely *where*. This method would also be significantly improved if post-diary interviews (Latham, 2003) were conducted to ask *why*.

# Meaning

The movements of running presented in the previous chapter are the simplest understandings of mobility (Cresswell, 2006). But we recognise that these are not simply lines on a map (Cresswell, 2001b) and indeed the physical movements of runners are highly saturated with meaning. I would like to attend to that meaning in this chapter; representations revealed in narratives, conversations and dialogues held with participants. As shown in the literature review, a huge variety of such depictions of running coexist alongside one another and any number could be derived from the interview transcripts to enlighten this chapter, yet unfortunately it is not possible in the confines of this dissertation to address them all. Subsequently, I would like to illuminate ideas concerning two eminent themes that emerged from the research – running as escape and running as a chore. Although a chapter engrossed predominately with meaning, unavoidably discussions will explore and draw upon movements and experiences due to the intermingled and co-constitutive nature of holistic mobility.

## Running Away? Running as Escape

Thus far, literature concentrating upon escapism in running has been limited but touched upon interesting points that I hope to flesh out and develop using empirical examples from this study. Allen-Collinson and Hockey (2001) have argued that runners regularly exploit running for the respite it can provide from the complexities and commotions of life. This meaning is a representation of running that many participants recognised, with some participants able to shed great light onto the ways running can be represented in such a manner

Escape holds many connotations and implies the getting away, a respite from the places or problems that are troubling you. One method through which road-running offers such a service is through the freedom to move, movement that can neutralise feelings of confinement or claustrophobia. Such feelings can be exhibited towards a variety of spatial scales in urban areas from that of a room to the city itself as Participant 14 explains:

“The original reason I first started taking up running again in Plymouth was I felt locked inside those tiny little rooms in university halls ... and I suffered depression the winter before last and I thought I’ll go out, get healthy, get some fresh air and it all started from there ... It’s a complete escape, from being trapped inside the house or trapped inside the city centre with no means of getting out. I used to love Central Park because it is so quiet and you kind of escape from the noise and the city because I am

a country person that moved into the city and never realised how noisy and non-stop it is. It doesn't stop at night or ever but at Central Park, it is quiet" Participant 14, Video-Ethnography

This quote also demonstrates that more than just literally getting out, running can give the chance to go someplace different and perhaps experience something unlike one's usual day-to-day encounters. This sense of escaping to somewhere else, to something different, to someplace more desirable was also discussed by Participant 10 when in conversation about their preference for running in more 'natural' places:

"I think it's just not having the cars, no other distractions and then occasionally you look up and there will a bird of prey on the way in or something going on. But it's just the clean air I think, so occasionally I will get across on the ferry and run around the coast that way er, Oreston is always quite a nice one – it's really hilly." Participant 10, Go-Along Interview

Moving between places does not only involve the passing and changing of spaces as demonstrated above. Making such movements requires time and runners often use this temporal journey as a means of bounding problems, securing troubles in one locale and utilising the duration and distance of the run to put time and space between themselves in attempts to restrict said complexities from becoming a ubiquity in their lives. A vivid exemplification of this point was narrated by Participant 17:

"I work as a social worker and have done for about 15 years and I've always dealt with confrontation and I've dealt with challenges ... I try and run home from work and ... my run home can be my de-stress, well not de-stress because I don't get stressed but I think clearing out my mess before I get home ... I'm very boundary setting, my home is my space so I don't like to bring work into my house or I don't like to bring the worries or the anxieties or the confrontation into my house so I will run home ... that is my escapism." Participant 17, Video-Ethnography

Sentiments as those given by Participant 17 correlated strongly with the arguments of Jain and Lyons (2008) who contemplate the role that travelling can have in acting as and allowing for a transition to occur between work to home; adjusting mind frames, shedding burdens and experiencing distance. In this respect, running may be more desirable practice as it is slower mode of transport, therefore may provide greater transition time compared to quicker modes.

The time running gifts those who choose to undertake it can also provide very personal time. Related to previous points, running does not just enable one to escape *to* or *from* somewhere but to perhaps escape *inside* oneself – experiencing time with oneself:

“I use it, I guess, as retreating - sometimes just grounding myself and time to myself” Participant 10, Go-Along Interview

“It’s so de-stressing, I’ve got proper time to think and I never get that anywhere else. Normally because I live in a flat with people who insist the TV’s on all the time. Yeah. I like to have that time to think, you know, that you just can’t get elsewhere and I think, as I say, that comes back to the noise as well, noise of the cars and everything. You just don’t get time to think unless you go out where you can block it out of your mind.” Participant 14, Video-Ethnography

“So my run ... or my time out – I like to go away with my music and just take in the space. So I think that’s my offloading really.” Participant 17, Video-Ethnography

It would appear then, that thinking, and more specifically the time to think, is a great gift to the runner. Such thoughts can not only be used to distract from life’s confusions but the combination of being somewhere else and having time to oneself can provide a perfect environment to solve one’s problems and escape them perhaps permanently. This form of escape was expressed by a couple of the participants:

“I go out and I start thinking. Very often, something rational that I didn’t think of throughout the whole day, suddenly comes to my mind ... this can be solved so easily if I just took five seconds out and stop worrying. I can problem solve whilst running.” Participant 14, Video-Ethnography

“I make decisions when I’m running because it is my time and I don’t have the distractions around. Sometimes that really helps, if I am really struggling with something I’ll just think I need to go for a run, let’s think about this. Because I am away from home, away from work or whatever and I’ll just go.” Participant 17, Video-Ethnography

The final offering as to how running can be constructed as an escape, relates to the foundation of the practice itself. Movement. Not just moving to get elsewhere or the time afforded by such movement; but the physical and bodily act of moving. Farquhar *et al*’s (2011) suggestion that is such absorbedness in action that allows the mind to solve problems or the quickening of the pulse that

can reveal different perspectives on life (Lorimer, 2010) certainly have some advocates within this project:

“Every time I feel down now my first instinct is - I'm gonna go for some exercise, go do something” Participant 14, Video-Ethnography

But what exactly is it about moving and the rhythmic action of running that helps a runner to escape? In a very personal account, Participant 10 actually suggests a contrary reason to that of Farquhar *et al* (2011). They suggest that such absorbedness in action had the ability to overwhelm thoughts and emotions, instead focussing the body on consuming mobility. Such a shutting out of thought restricted any chance for one to be overcome with feeling and only letting emotions return in small, manageable chunks. In effect, they escaped their worries by engulfing themselves in motion and then confronting their feelings gradually until they had settled on a more agreeable perspective:

“I remember very vividly when my granddad passed away, that I got that phone call and my housemates went ‘you alright?’ – ‘yeah, going for a run’. I just ran and ran and I ran harder and harder until I kind of shut out everything, and then just eased up and let little bits in at a time when I was taking it in as I ran away. So not trying to forget it completely but it’s just trying to use that rhythm to control each thought till I came back and went ‘he was 85, he had a really good life.’” Participant 10, Go-Along Interview

### **Reluctant Running – Running as a Chore**

Almost to juxtapose the above representation of running, I will now turn my attention to the ways in which running has been constructed as a chore by participants in this study. Whilst related to punishment, I propose that a chore is a meaning slightly distinct: incorporating some sense of choice and value; running as something one is reluctant to undertake but does so for the benefits it can bring.

My recognition that such a representation may be an emerging theme was first aroused during the responses I received to questions akin to the following:

Author: “So why do you do running?”

Participant 12: “O god, I ask myself that all of the time!” Go-Along Interview

Author: “So why do you do running?”

Participant 4: “Err, well I don’t really *do* running!” Go-Along Interview

Author: “So why do you run? What is your motivation to do it?”

Benjamin Hayter: “Good question.” Video-Ethnography

Author: “Do you enjoy competitions?”

Benjamin Hayter: “I enjoy every part of it apart from the actual race.”

Author: “How do you feel when you know you are about to start running?”

Benjamin Hayter: “Dread.”

Whilst often said with an air of sarcasm, I believe this sarcasm is very much based on truth. Indeed, I would propose that every runner at some point or another will, even for the tiniest amount of time, have some sense of running as a chore. I propose this based upon the four ways participants’ narratives constructed running in such a light: pain, demotivation, inconvenience and pointlessness.

Constructing running as a chore based on the toil expended and pain it can produce is an easy representation to fathom. Indeed, one participant encapsulates this point with such frankness it leaves very little need to explain further or little chance to build much of a rebuttal:

“It just tires you out – it’s not that fun being knackered is it?” Benjamin Hayter, Video-Ethnography

He expands upon this by providing examples of how such pain and effort can be demotivating and increase the sense of laboriousness he associates with running:

“I usually just give up if I’m by myself.” Ben Hayter, Video-Ethnography

Author: “What do you think about when you are running?”

Benjamin Hayter: “I think about the finish.”

Author: “Why’s that?”

Benjamin Hayter: “Because I want it to end.” Video Ethnography

Occasionally however, running can become a chore long before the foot is even in the trainer and that is because running requires time. Whilst this time was a gift to those escapist runners, it can easily be a burden to anyone when their time is in short supply or in demand. The time in which running is to occur must be able to synchronise with the rest of life's rhythms – no matter how mundane. If there is a clash of rhythms, running can easily be constructed as a chore and an activity not worth undertaking due to its disruption of everyday life as Participant 4 explains:

“It's all to do with when I am washing my hair ... because if I'd just been in the shower, I'd spent two hours drying and straightening my hair - I don't wanna go on a run straight away and have to do it again as soon as I come back. Just for ten minutes running ... So I wouldn't do it then. I would wait to just before I need to go in the shower and then I'd do it.” Participant 4, Go-Along Interview

The final construction of road-running as a chore develops from the idea of pointlessness. This sense of pointless is not the same as in the previous chapter; rather than having no physical point to the run this denotation refers to the run having no purpose. For many habitual or high-frequency runners it can be difficult to justify individual runs, become difficult to find reason why undertaking these movements, running these particular routes at these specific times is important or even necessary:

Author: “What impacts on your motivation?”

Benjamin Hayter: “If there is a reason for doing it or if I think it's pointless.”

Author: “Is running ever pointless?”

Benjamin Hayter: “A lot of the time.” Video-Ethnography

So it beckons to return to the questions that first prompted such a line of enquiry – why do runners run? The researched has hinted that it is the multi-meaning nature of road-running that can turn such a chore into an activity still worth undertaking. The ability to associate multiple-meanings to one practice, to attribute dual representations to a single movement manifests itself to bestow that inconvenient and pointless run with purpose; purpose derived from the advantageous representations of running; purpose that justifies its undertaking.

Author: “And the running you do do – why do you do it?”

Participant 4: “To try and lose weight.”



Author: “So why have you chosen to run?”

Participant 4: “Because it is one of the best sports to lose weight with.”

Author: “And how do you know that?”

Participant 4: “Because I looked online.” Go-Along Interview

Alternatively, it could be running’s ability to compress time-space, a simple human technology to overcome distance (Bale, 2004) that can give the run a purpose. One participant explained how, when running by himself he will often plan his run to somewhere, therefore ascribing purpose to the run as a means from getting from A to B and the benefits B can give him. It is this newly ascribed meaning to the run that counteracts any sense of chore and ultimately encourages the run to be undertaken:

Benjamin Hayter: “When I run on my own I usually try and incorporate it with going to the shop. I’ll run to Asda and get some chocolate ... it’s sort of a reward and it gives the run an aim.”

Author: “Is running something you look forward to then?”

Benjamin Hayter: “I look forward to going to the shop after the run.”

Author: “So what influences your choice of route?”

Benjamin Hayter: “Which shop I want to go to!” Video-Ethnography

## Summary

This chapter has attended to the ways in which road-running has been constructed by participants in two very different ways. Illuminating ideas about how the run can be a form of escape by affording the runner a means to escape *to* somewhere, *from* somewhere and *inside* oneself working to overcome problems, feeling of confinement and bounding issues in particular places. Contrastingly, it was also discussed how the same practice can be constructed as a chore by inflicting pain and demotivation upon a runner, by being an inconvenience and ultimately pointless. I then demonstrated how runs are actively ascribed dual-meanings, therefore being given purpose and justifying its undertaking. Yet there is still much room to improve and expand upon knowledges regarding the representations of road-running as the limited confines of the chapter was unable to delve into the wide range of meanings associated with running that emerges during the project or ideas concerning how these multiple-meanings coalesce and even change over time.

# Experience

This chapter addresses the final facet of mobility – that of experience. The many ways in which road-running can be experienced, the ways that a line on a map can be enlivened and the ways representations brought to fruition are hugely diverse and accordingly have been approached from numerous perspectives in running literature and mobilities more widely. Thus, it would be nigh-on impossible to even contemplate attending to them all, particularly in such as short research project. I will therefore focus more deeply upon a single theme that was discussed by all participants and materialised in many discussions and in many fashions – that of negotiating space. It is all too easy to overemphasise the rare and dramatic experiences of mobile practices at the neglect of the mundane and commonplace (Pooley *et al*, 2005). Yet the humdrum, ordinary and almost invisible experiences of mobile practices are often the most important and interesting when considering how practices are actually accomplished and embodied. Correspondingly I wish to examine in this chapter *how* road-runners manage to negotiate space whilst on-the-move through one everyday yet essential aspect of *doing* running; transient propinquities or passing pedestrians – how movement, people, things and place interact to achieve running and embrace dynamism to establish order.

## Negotiating Space

Hockey and Allen-Collinson (forthcoming) have duly noted that road-runners are accustomed to running in public spaces and managing the variety of challenges, encounters and gauntlets that momentary meetings with pedestrians and place generate. As Participant 16 notes, the intensity of such interactions are much greater in urban areas, to the extent that they become an integral experience of road-running:

Author: “So how do you find running in the urban environment of Plymouth?”

Participant 16: “I don’t really like it when it comes to running on the pavements, urm and sharing it with other people because you have to get out of their way and they have to get out of your way and they don’t see you and crossing the road rather too frequently is quite dangerous because I think driver’s expect runners to get out the way, not to be there.” Video-Ethnography

The above statement also hints at the idea that, although commonplace and familiar, there are no rules, no conventions and no codes of conduct for negotiating such encounters. Hockey and Allen-

Collinson (2007; forthcoming) also debate this, suggesting that no consensus exists regarding how best to regulate the sharing of space by differently mobile subjects. It is an idea as intriguing as it is fascinating. Humans have been sharing space and moving through spaces in different ways for eons, yet no customs have ever been devised for how to co-habit that space and solutions are still improvised *ad hoc*, *in situ* and extemporaneously. Some insights as to how and why space is negotiated in such a manner have emerged from conversations with runners, aided in particular by the mobile methods which have been able to overcome some of the difficulties in discussing the mundane, habitual and unreflexive nature of these experiences (Simpson, forthcoming).

### **Transient Proximities: Negotiating Pedestrians, Mobile Politics and Order on the Street**

Mobile social order often arises out of ongoing competition for and over spaces and an almost inevitability of striving for such order is conflict – battles over space and mobility (Binnie *et al*, 2007). My interest in this aspect of road-running did not only emerged from the fascinating conversations I held with runners, but was similarly aroused by a proclamation made by Hockey and Allen-Collinson (forthcoming). They contend that runners are deemed the ones responsible for avoiding pedestrians due to their superior velocity and notions that pedestrians are using pavements appropriately whereas running on the streets was in some form deviant or a minority. I would like to offer some developments upon this observation.

To immediately bring Hockey and Allen-Collinson's observations into contention; emerging from participants' interviews are three predominant ideas or viewpoints regarding how passing pedestrians should be negotiated. Predictably, these outlooks incorporate a whole spectrum of beliefs; from the responsibility lying with the runner, to the onus being on the pedestrian and via ideas concerning a shared duty to ensure that co-presence is managed successfully. Runners' who confessed a belief that responsibility should rest with themselves expressed similar reasons for why this is so as those listed by Hockey and Allen-Collinson (forthcoming). The idea that road-runners are a minority, a minority in the manner of which they use the streets entails, to some, that they should be the ones to ensure passing encounters are handled successfully. It is more convenient and perhaps just for them to avoid pedestrians than to make the majority avoid them:

“No, I see it as my responsibility. I think everybody else is trying to use the environment in a relaxing way and there is me trying to use it in a more, probably productive but personal way so I think it is my job to not interrupt their free time in the way that because, because *I* can do that but I wouldn't expect a hundred people to move out of their way to avoid *me*

and my free time ... I think that would be selfish because clearly there aren't as many runners as there are dog walkers for example ... we are probably inconveniencing their space.” Participant 14, Video-Ethnography

Whilst minority, Participant 14 did not agree that runners are deviant in their use of space. I can comprehend that perhaps the streets are understood predominately as a space for walking and that any movement made by a different mode can be seen to be straying from the norm and by default, a deviant act. Running could be characterised alongside skateboarding in this respect (Borden, 2001). Yet this suggestion was repelled by participants:

Author: “So do you think you're misusing space as a runner- using it for something it wasn't built for perhaps?”

Participant 14: “No, because I think these places where built for it! I think these days, perhaps not originally, obviously this is a manor house park, but at some point somebody went - 'we'll turn that into a public park' and they must have known that people that want to go for a run are gonna use that; and if they didn't - they weren't thinking.” Video-Ethnography

It could be argued that there is a recognition in this quote, that running is perhaps not the originally preferred or anticipated activity to be undertaken on the streets, but its rather ubiquitous presence within the developed world (Latham, forthcoming) refutes any inferences of this being deviant, proposing that the runner is, or at least should be, an expected mobile subject.

The role speed plays in debates regarding whose responsibility it is to manage such scenarios are beguiling. Those who advocate runners' obligations claim that their speed advantage, perhaps a speed greater than anticipated on the streets, necessitates them to bear the responsibility:

“I think I would take responsibility because I'm the one moving faster”  
Participant 12, Go-Along Interview

“It my responsibility to make sure we don't hit each other because I'm going faster.” Ben Hayter, Video-Ethnography

Extraordinarily, some runners use the identical argument – that runners are moving more quickly than pedestrians – to entail that pedestrians must assume the lead in negating collision:

“Because they're walking and I'm running, they can get out of my way.”  
Participant 19, Video-Ethnography

Author: "So whose responsibility is it to ..."

Participant 4: "...theirs. I'm going at the fastest pace. Just like if you were cycling you'd expect them to move." Go-Along

It seems quite remarkable then that the simple fact of differentiating speeds can form the basis of two antithetical arguments. Perhaps pedestrians' relative slowness gifts them an advantage in agility, enabling pedestrians to stop more quickly or more hastily change direction than runners and thus are better situated to ensure the successful passing-by of each other.

Most participants in the study happened to be of a more diplomatic viewpoint however, with the majority expressing ideas that the task is a shared one; both runner and pedestrian should be involved in negotiating their fleeting and mobile co-habitation of space.

"I always think it is our responsibility as much as anyone else's." Participant 10, Go-Along Interview

"Well it would be both of ours." Participant 9, Video-Ethnography

"I think it's a joint effort." Participant 18, Video-Ethnography

Unfortunately, such statements were rarely expanded upon. The existence of three differing views upon who should assume responsibility for negating confrontation during passing propinquities begs the question as to how passing-by is actually accomplished.

### **Choosing a Side, Stepping Down and Slalom: Accomplishing Transient Propinquities**

Throughout the research, many techniques and strategies were demonstrated by participants as to how they manage and accomplish encounters with pedestrians. I wish to exhibit the three most common here.

The tactic of choosing a side is a technique based on the same principle that the cooperation of both parties to is required to resolve space sharing and uses bodily movements to signify a runner's intention:

"My strategy is I pick a side I am going on first ... I choose a side of the pavement first so they can see that I am on that side of the pavement."

Participant 19, Video-Ethnography

"I'll pick a side and I'll just keep going." Participant 10, Go-Along Interview

The action of physically moving is often a strong indication of the way a runner would like to negotiate the situation and can be used in quite complex scenarios. In Figure 19, Participant 18 successfully uses this technique to overtake a pedestrian from behind whilst both attempting to negotiate a cross road.

The body of a runner is essential in managing such situations and not only can it indicate how to do so but can actively move around difficult situations. Two such movements were the most apparent during the research period – stepping down and slaloming. These techniques often rely on the runner being the one responsible or the most active in avoiding collision, frequently used when space is narrow, there are large groups of pedestrians or the runner is approaching from behind. Stepping down refers to when a runner steps off the pavement, choosing to run in the separated space of the road to avoid conflict on the pavements. To some however, this notion is unfathomable:

Author: “Would you ever go in to the road to get around anyone?”

Participant 4: “No because it’s dangerous!” Go-Along Interview

Yet the danger that descends from deciding to share space with the car rather than pedestrians also acts as a reason for some runners to perform such a tactic. If the momentary meeting of runner and pedestrian occurs in limited space, inevitably something must give and:

“I would much rather be the person who got in the road than move somebody else into the road because I would feel like that would be my responsibility. I mean they are not going to die but say if something happened in that second, that would be my fault.” Participant 14, Go-Along Interview

A sense of duty towards the fellow space-sharer was exhibited by a number of participants in the study who did not wish to endanger someone else as a result of their running and being there. As such, these runners were willing to step down into the road when required or deemed it sensible:

“Yesterday there was a guy walking his dog up towards Plymstock and he went to go in the road and I went ‘no no I’ll go in the road mate’ and I think he appreciated that but I appreciated his gesture but he had two little dogs on the lead and it’s easier for me to stay narrowly in than it is for two dogs.” Participant 10, Go-Along Interview



A) Approaching pedestrian on the right-hand side



D) Choosing a side



B) Notice pedestrian is heading for runner's line of movement



E) Pedestrian noticing the switch



C) On a collision course



F) Space successfully negotiated

Figure 19. I kind of like duck to one side as an indication saying I'm leaving you space to get past this side – kind of take the hint or I will run into you – Participant 18

The way such stepping down transpires on-the-run was recorded during a trial run by myself as depicted in Figure 20. Approaching a pedestrian and their dog from behind, I felt it necessary to step down into the road, hugging the curb in order to safely overtake the pedestrian and diminish any risk of startling or colliding with the dog – a mobile subject known for their unpredictability.

The final tactic runners embody to negotiate space on the street is the slalom. Again, a technique that puts the emphasis on the runner to create their own route through a shared space, this involves the weaving of the body around and past other space-sharing objects and subjects. Occasionally, this method of space negotiation is forced upon the runner as they have to adjust quickly to unexpected dimensions or movements by others:

Author: “So here you are just about to overtake some people but you do so in quite a strange fashion. You seem to be going to the left and then all of a sudden change your mind?”

Participant 15: “Yeah, because that guy, he didn’t seem to be too aware of me and started to move further to the left, so I thought if he is moving further across, I don’t want him to just step into the path I was going so I thought I would just take that out of the equation completely.” Video-Ethnography (Figure 21).

This is not always the case however. Despite being the most difficult and disruptive passing-by strategy for a runner to perform, there are occasions when it may be a preferred option. Having the opportunity to survey a situation before actually reaching it can afford the runner greater choice as to whether they employ a slalom-like technique as demonstrated by Participant 19. During the discussed encounter, the runner is attempting to negotiate a pedestrianised walkway underneath a roundabout with a series of interactions with people and objects to manage (Figure 22):

Author: “Here you have another awkward shimmy around some people, is that something you saw from a while off or just dealt with when you got there? “

Participant 19: “I saw it from a while off. I just squeezed through, it would take less time to squeeze through than go round to the left and I won’t have to go back on myself.” Video-Ethnography

The interview extract also reveals another facet of such encounters. The decision of which of these three tools to utilise in any given scenario had to be made momentarily, *ad lib* and on-the-run but that does not mean they are random or even mindless chooses (although often unreflexive). Runners can become quite adept at making evaluated and calculated judgements on-the-move, which



A) Approaching pedestrian and dog from behind



B) Weighing up the unpredictability of the dog with the space available and the emptiness of the road



C) Deciding to step down



D) Stepping back up after accomplishing passing by



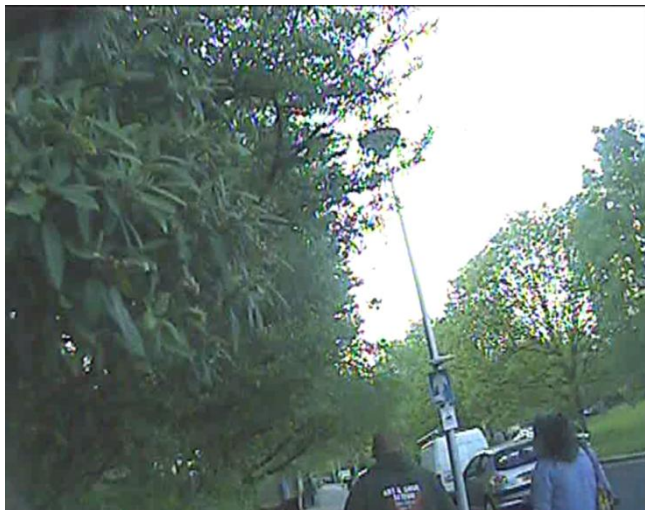
Figure 20. Stepping down



A) Approaching from behind



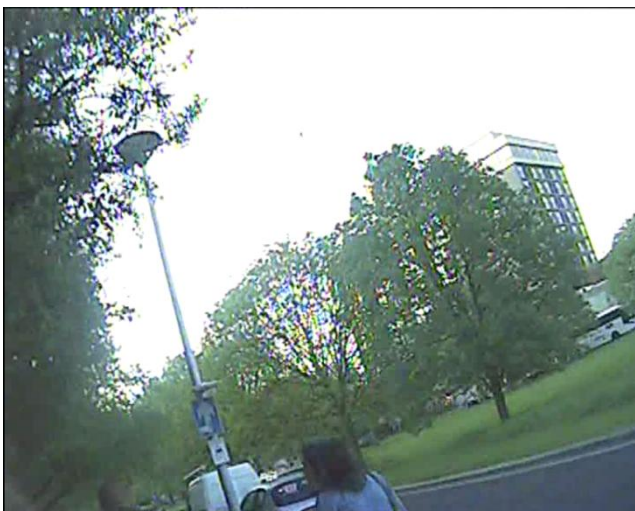
D) Change in direction



B) Aiming to passing by on the left



E) Overtaking on the right



C) On collision course



F) Return to original position

Figure 21. A forced slalom – Participant 15





A) Surveying the scenario



E) Continuing on the left



B) Approaching on the right



F) Weaving past another barrier



C) Passing-by on the right



G) Passing-by on the left



D) Weaving around the barrier



H) Successful negotiation of space

then informs them as to which spatial strategy may be the best, most appropriate and plausible in any given encounter. The use of video-ethnography made it possible to unpick such embodiment to allow runners to explain their impromptu choices:

“Well I knew what pace I was going at and what pace they were going at and I worked out that instead of going in the road and around the car, that if I just waited for half a second I could just squeeze through a gap between them.” Participant 19, Video-Ethnography

“I hopped round the person then back onto the pavement. Like I said, I’m faster – I can get to that lamppost before the person. If I thought the person was going to get there before me I would go round onto the road because I figured, I could see that he was going to take longer to get there than I would.” Participant 3, Video-Ethnography

### Summary

This chapter was interested in the experience of road-running, more precisely the experience of a humdrum and commonplace encounter on-the-run; negotiating space and pedestrians. Developing work by Hockey and Allen-Collinson (forthcoming); this chapter has revealed how there are in fact three different philosophies (from a runner’s perspective) of how such ephemeral and spontaneous meetings should be managed. The successful management of such situations was demonstrated through the use of three common spatial strategies - choosing a side, stepping down and slaloming, which are all highly embodied and extemporaneous practices. Work regarding this aspect could easily be progressed (if space allowed) to consider what conflicts might arise during these propinquities if unsuccessfully managed or how such encounters can involve more dimensions than simply negotiating each other, such as what runners think other space-users think of them and how that affects practice. Similarly, there are many other features of road-running that I could equally have presented in this chapter that do warrant illuminating in the future. The contents of this chapter should in no-way been seen as complete, instead merely inviting the proliferation and magnification of works regarding the experiences of road-running.

## Running it Together - some thoughts on holistic mobility

Being a keen advocate of this framework as a means of better developing geography's understanding of mobility and the manner in which it is produced; I argued at the opening of this dissertation that "studying the three components concurrently should foster deeper and more profound understandings of mobile practices, allowing for greater relationships and associations to be made, exploring the connections between the facets". It is upon these nexus that I want to expand presently. Holistic mobility is formed upon the notion that the movements, meanings and experiences of mobile practices are entangled and intertwined, that they simultaneously produce each other and are produced by each other – they are co-constitutive in nature.

While each facet of holistic mobility has been dealt with throughout this dissertation, each facet has not been explored holistically as the confines of an undergraduate project permitted me to only present limited aspects of each facet. Despite the narrow-view on each component of mobility, the ensuing discussions did exhibit the cross-overs and entanglements promised of attending to each facet individually. Yet, I feel this still hasn't properly portrayed the way in which mobility can be produced through this intermingling and thus I will attempt to take a holistic approach to holistic mobility, incorporating a wider range of movements, meanings and experiences in the analysis of a single run, for which I propose that **the reason** for running is the lynchpin that binds these facets together.

### Holistic Mobility in Practice – The Case of Participant I5

Participant I5's dominant reason for undertaking this run was to be able to enjoy the place they are in through sightseeing, an activity that affords them relaxation:

"I suppose the main reason I go running really is sightseeing. I listen to music as well so it is quite relaxing ." Participant I5, Video-Ethnography

Such a purpose deems the goal of the run to be experience-oriented, the aim is to gain a specific experience and thus, the movements, meanings and experiences are subsequently tailored to maximise this experience.

Reasons for running most closely relate to the meanings of the practice. Wanting to sightsee, Participant I5 associates running with two representations, which combine to provide the relaxation in the places the participant desires. Running as transport is clearly significant here as the participant seeks locational displacement in order to sightsee. Additionally, the participant clearly enjoys the escapist representation of running. This construction of escape parallels the escaping to somewhere



form discussed earlier as the runner seeks the relaxation provided by the places in which they sightsee.

Indeed, the brute facts of this movement are all aimed at maximising the pleasurable experience from being relaxed and sightseeing. As such, the routes of this runner tend to be very consistent and travel towards the most tourist and scenic areas of Plymouth, most notably The Hoe as seen in Figure 23:

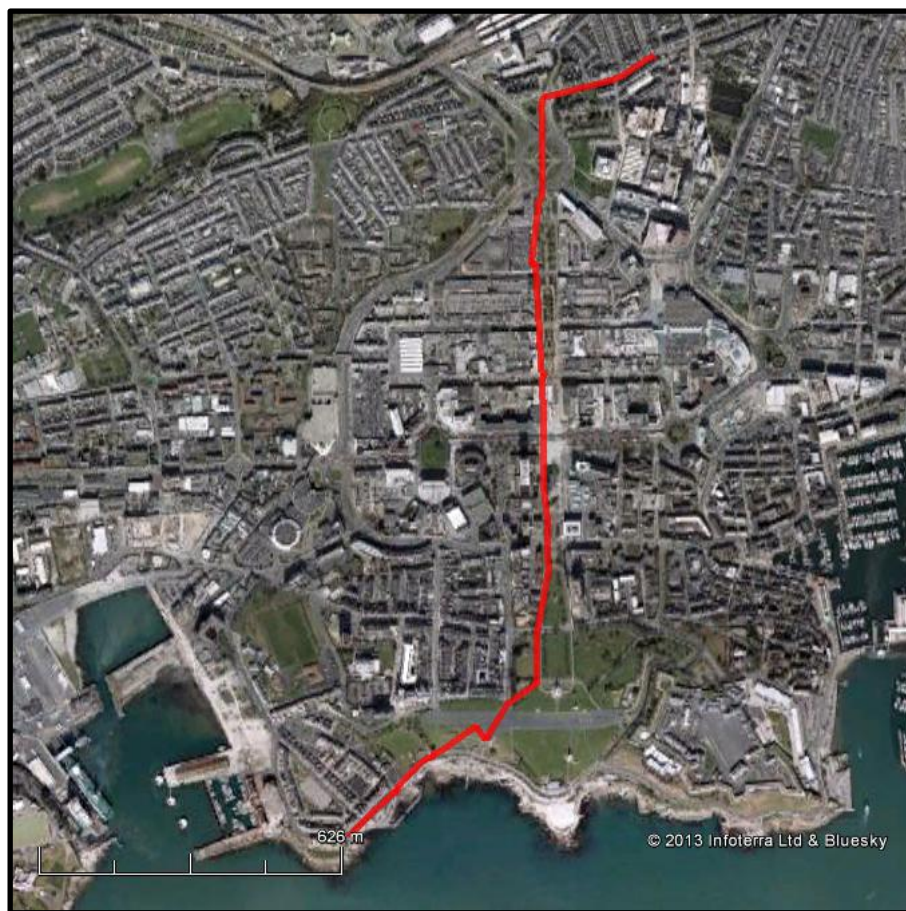


Figure 23. Participant 15's route

"I've tried a few other runs in Plymouth, but I pretty much always do the same. I think the Hoe for me is really important in Plymouth. It was one of my main reasons for moving down here and I just like the view of it so."

Participant 15, Video-Ethnography

When probed as to what it is exactly about The Hoe that the participant finds so appealing they responded as follows:

“Well I love the sea personally and for me, one of my favourite places in the world is Jersey, so I know that it’s there somewhere out at sea on the horizon, it’s not too far away really. And I’ve always like the sea, so it’s almost natural to be drawn to running there.”

As can be seen, the waterfront area of Plymouth clearly holds special significance for the runner who appreciates its aesthetic qualities and associates it with a personal and treasured place, again advancing running’s meaning as an escape.

The out and back route evident in Figure 23 is interesting in regards to the channel chosen to connect the start location with The Hoe. It is interesting as it is mainly based on pedestrianised roads, something this study has shown to not be too favourable amongst runners. Participant 15 explains that this route was created as to avoid as much traffic and crowds as possible due to their detrimental impact on serenity:

“In Plymouth there are roads everywhere and you have to watch out, cross over and there are people everywhere as well so as much as I can I try to avoid roads and things like that.” Participant 15, Video-Ethnography

“I hate having to stop like mid-run. Like stopping for traffic really messes up my rhythms. If I have to keep stopping then I get tired more quickly.” Participant 15, Video-Ethnography

One can presume that getting tired more quickly also interrupts relaxation and is therefore not desirable for this participant. Just because the route chosen was pedestrianised does not dictate that it was crowded and full with other space users, indeed this runner chose this route to The Hoe as a way as avoiding other space users:

“I ran first of all under the roundabout to avoid all the people and traffic through uni ... I tend to go the quieter way, so if I can see that there aren’t many people I will tend to go that way. I don’t mind people seeing me running but I just prefer it quieter. It’s more peaceful I think.” Participant 15, Video-Ethnography

The time of day the run is conducted also works towards the same goal:

“I tend to go in the evening which is a lot more relaxing. It’s quite nice just running along and it’s quite calm.” Participant 15, Video-Ethnography

More than just choosing a suitable route to enable the purpose of the run to be fulfilled, the participant actively manages the experiences they may encounter of the run to maximise sightseeing

and relaxation. One method the runner does this is by carefully selecting the objects they take on the run, working as an assemblage to accomplish the purpose. For example this runner does not take a watch with them, being unconcerned by time or pace – being free to enjoy the running:

“I’d rather just do it on how I feel.” Participant 15, Video-Ethnography

Participant 15 does however, run carrying their MP3 player and listening to music. This is an integral part of their running experience. In fact for this runner, the two are practically inseparable and they would not conceive or consider running without a musical accompaniment because:

“I think it’s quite calming, it’s almost poetic isn’t it running and listening to music at the same time ... quite calming stuff really. Urm, I think if I listen to relaxing music it gets into the rhythm of my run.”

Evident from this quote is how by choosing to listen to music on-the-run, Participant 15 is actively managing the experiences they have whilst running, experiences that enhance the purpose and reason for the run. To remove such an aspect from their running would make obtaining the purpose almost impossible, in turn changing the meaning of the run:

“I prefer it by myself. It’s more relaxing on my own. If I am running with someone else, I tend not to listen to music, which is then not so poetic. It’s more like exercise if I go with someone else.” Participant 15, Video-Ethnography

The purpose of sightseeing necessitates at least some of the runner’s time and experiences will be spent observing such sights and absolutely this activity featured heavily within this run. Not only was the route to the sights planned to offer vistas:

“I ran straight down the centre as I am use to seeing landmarks ... I like to see the Eye at the top as well.” Participant 15, Video-Ethnography (Figure 24)

But moments of immobility, rest and stillness are purposefully built into the run in order to sightsee and observe the surroundings. It could even be argued that running was only a tool of time-space compression to allow the runner to take the rest, relax and sightsee more quickly along with some sense of earning the scenes:

Author: “I see when you get here you are panning quite a lot, is that to get the view?”

Participant 15: “And that’s why I take a rest here as well.”





Figure 24. Creating vistas – Participant 15

Author: “Do you always?”

Participant 15: “Yes, always. Regardless of how I’m feeling.”

Author: “Would you ever consider not stopping there?”

Participant 15: “No probably not. It’s the reward.”

Such rewards are depicted in Figure 25.

So what has this case study revealed about producing mobilities. It has shown the each run has a purpose and that purpose is closely linked to the meanings and representations associated with running. The brute facts of movement and experiences are then tailored and managed by the runner in order to maximise the chance of achieving the purpose with which they set out on. Representations tend to be less flexible than movements and experiences, taking longer to change and adapt being linked to philosophical beliefs about running. Yet, overtime movements and experiences can change the meanings associated with running and represent something of a transition, which in turn can alter movement and experiences. If something new is experienced on



Figure 25. Sightseeing – The Reward – Participant 15

the run, experiences that the subject finds agreeable, meanings can be to change. This is well exemplified by Participant 14 who, as discussed earlier, began running as an escape but with time, is not much keener to take up competitive running:

“Urm, I think the turning point was when I actually started getting up in the morning just to go for a run [laughing]. And I thought I'm not just doing this for the sheer hell of it anymore - I'm doing this because I want to be doing that ... I think I am kind of at a tipping point now ... the aim now is to, you know, get myself up to a level where I feel that if I competed I could start to perform well enough to fit in with the group.” Participant 14, Go-Along Interview

A conceptualisation of running as a sport resulted in a change in movements; running more often, at greater speed and individually:

“I used to go out with somebody a lot but, er, I've suddenly become really competitive, like it annoys me if they get slightly ahead or if I get slightly ahead and they slow down so I found it was better to start going on my own.” Participant 14, Go-Along Interview

As well as a change in experiences:

“Yeah you go out, you train, you are running around the town and you suddenly realise that when you are running, the whole world isn't looking at you going: 'god he runs like a spastic'. They are just ignoring you ... When I first started running I thought I've got this strange feeling - am I running correctly, is this how people run? And then overtime you know, you suddenly go - of course this is how people run and my running style is absolutely fine and nobody is even looking at me so it's going quite well.” Participant 14, Go-Along Interview

As such, this is how mobilities are produced and can change. Much more work is needed however to understand how multiple purposes can affect such understandings and more research required to judge how valid these observations are to other mobilities. Running provides the mobile subject much greater freedom than other mobile practices, freedom that can enable them to tailor their movements and experiences with relative ease – unhampered by timetables, tracks, weight restrictions, designated seating or ability to pay.

## Politics of Mobility

As a brief endnote to this section, I will address the politics of the case study mobility. An often claimed outcome of holistic mobility is its ability in illuminating the politics that emerge from the analytical framework. Cresswell (2010) suggests six components of the politics of mobility (Figure 2), each of which I will attend to briefly now regarding the run outlines in the chapter. The motive force for this movement was voluntary, internally derived by Participant 15 in the want to sightsee and experience relaxation. The speed of which the movement occurred was desirable, a balance the want to visit areas of the city with ensuring the speed was not too rigorous as to detract from the relaxation – parched but not fatigued. The rhythms of this run were completely planned and managed. Pedestrianised routes were chosen to eliminate any forced rests, whilst areas to stop and relax were designated well before the run began, resulting in a run-stop-run-stop-run –stop rhythm of perfect suitability. The route was a very habitual and familiar routed that channelled mobility directly to the desired location whilst avoiding the majority of encounters that could diminish the purpose of the run. As demonstrated above, the experience of the run was utterly pleasurable, an experience created by mixing and tailoring meanings, routes, assemblages and vistas. Finally, friction was only experienced where desired and was of a completely voluntary nature. Ultimately, it is my aim to be able to discuss the politics of running on a city-wide scale, illuminating ideas regarding where runners are out-of-place, who has right of way on the street, are experiences gendered or classed in anyway and how do different movements, meanings and experiences coalesce and play out on the scale of the city? Yet the work involved in revealing such ideas is too large for this project but would certainly make for interesting future research.

## Part Four

## Conclusions

This project set out in attempts to fill two distinctive gaps in geographical literature – a deficiency in literature regarding the mobile practice of road-running and the need to undertake more rigorous mobilities research. To do so I adopted the holistic mobility framework developed by Cresswell (2006; 2010), arguing that is provided the most insightful and robust manner in which to explore mobile practices by simultaneously investigating the movements, meanings and experiences of road-running.

Road-running is a practice that involves the sharing and recycling of non-specialised spaces and thus is markedly different from the homogenous, rationalised and specialised environment of the track (Bale, 1994), which has been the predominant focus of much running research hitherto. The literature review traced the foundations for this study that lie in the growing corpus of work addressing running from embodied, performance and phenomenological perspectives. Recognising a glaring deficiency in the range of inclusiveness of perspectives upon the practice, this research sought to utilise the recent advances in mobile methodologies to harness and present the movements, meanings and experiences of a variety of runners within the City of Plymouth, interested in how such facets coalesce on the scale of the individual and of the city. Consequently the aim of this study was to improve geographical understandings of road-running by attending to each facet of mobility in turn before attempting to explore their entanglements.

### **Objective 1) to derive an indicative understanding of the ‘brute facts’ of road-running**

To gain indications regarding the physical movement of runners, twelve month-long training diaries, replete with dates, speed, distances and routes, were collected and analysed to explore previously unresearched dimensions of running; of which a focus was placed upon *where*. The quantitative data set revealed that running movements tend to be individual but with some interesting city-wide trends. Such tendencies included runners’ preference for running on main roads in a looped-shape in three main areas within the city. These runs most commonly stemmed from individual nodes within Plymouth and were often undertaken near water. Such findings would be of particular interest to any race organisers who could utilise the insights into where runners like to run, in order to design a desirable course.

### **Objective 2) to understand the meanings and representation of this running**

Deriving discussions about the representations of running from interview transcripts with participants, two almost antithetical meanings were discussed – running as escapism and as a chore.

The study illuminated the ways in which running can be cast as an escape by discussion three conceptualisations: running to escape *to* somewhere, *from* somewhere and *inside* oneself. Such associations entailed that participants utilised running to overcome problems, prevail over confinement and to bound and secure problems in particular places. Contrasting to the beneficial nature of the above meanings, running was also demonstrated to represent something on a chore by requiring effort, causing pain and demotivation, being an inconvenience upon life's rhythms and ultimately being pointless. Participants also revealed how such pointlessness can be overcome by ascribing new purposes upon the practice. Offering a better comprehension as to the many types of running and the push-pull factors or such representations would be valuable to any organisation seeking to promote or encourage running – whether the running club seeking to boost membership or the local government seeking to encourage active lifestyles.

### **Objective 3) to explore the embodied experiences of this running**

The hugely diverse variety of experiences that were accounted and discussed during go-along and video-ethnography-elicitation interviews entailed it was only possible to focus upon one emerging experience. This I took to account the ways in which runners think about and accomplish the passing of pedestrians and negotiating space extemporaneously. A spectrum of responsibility was presented that deemed the onus to ensure that passing propinquities should rest with the runner, the pedestrian and both space-users. These differing opinions entailed that no consensus or convention existed for how the manage encounters and produce order on the street. As such, runners utilise three key spatial strategies to negotiate such situations: picking a side, stepping down and the slalom. All of these are highly impromptu and embodied performances that are based upon rapid yet unreflexive judgements made by runners on-the-move. These experiences highlight the difficulties that can emerge from attempting to move through cities and can be of worth to organisation interested in developing 'runable' cities such as planning officers.

### **Objective 4) to tie the three-facets of mobility together in order to gain an understanding of how holistic mobilities are formed and of the politics that emerge from doing so**

The research has managed to advance understanding of the concept and politics of mobility. By analysing a single run undertaken by a single participant in the study it was revealed how runners can actively produce and alter their mobility by tailoring their movements, meanings and experiences to maximise and achieve the purpose for which they commenced the run in the first place. Exploring all three facets of mobility simultaneously also revealed that running is a very free mobility affording the runner much choice in their practice and ultimately in greater control of producing a mobility desirable for oneself.

## **Agenda Setting**

Besides running and mobility, perhaps the most common theme emerging from this dissertation is of more work and future research being required. There are many themes I would have loved to incorporate into the debates presented here yet I simply did not have the words to do them justice. Parallel to advancing work in the field of mobilities, it is hoped that any future research on road-running would be able to contribute to wider debates in social, urban, transport and cultural geography by offering understandings of how the experience and meaning of places can be filtered and reanimated by running as well as contributing to agendas regarding the body, rhythms, landscape, stillness, time-travel and methods (*cf.* Cook, forthcoming). Therein lies my call to action. Running is an extremely fertile field crying out for some fascinating, rigorous and high-quality research.



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## Appendices



## Appendix I – Participant Profiles

Participant Number	Gender	Occupational Status	Club Member	Research Element
1	Male	Student	Yes	Training Diary
2	Male	Student	Yes	Training Diary
3	Male	Student	Yes	Training Diary Video- Ethnography
4	Female	Student	No	Training Diary Go-Along
Benjamin Hayter	Male	Student	Yes	Training Diary Video- Ethnography
6	Male	Full-Time Employee	Yes	Training Diary
7	Female	Student	No	Training Diary Go-Along
8	Female	Full-Time Employee	Yes	Training Diary
9	Female	Full-Time Employee	Yes	Training Diary Video- Ethnography
10	Male	Full-Time Employee	Yes	Training Diary Go-Along
11	Female	Student	Yes	Training Diary
12	Male	Retired	Yes	Training Diary Go-Along
13	Male	Full-Time Employee	Yes	Go-Along
14	Male	Student	No	Go-Along
15	Male	Student	No	Video- Ethnography
16	Male	Full-Time Employee	Yes	Video- Ethnography

17	Female	Full-Time Employee	Yes	Video-Ethnography
18	Male	Student	Yes	Video-Ethnography
19	Male	Student	Yes	Video-Ethnography
20	Female	Full-Time Employee	No	Unused Interview