

Everyday Encounters: How Architecture Shapes Our Perception of The City.

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*I declare that the research contained herein was granted approval by the SPAIS Ethics
Committee.*

This study explores how everyday encounters with architecture shape our perceptions of the city. Taking an interdisciplinary approach, it considers the way movement through space allows individuals to develop and process perceptions about the city. Using qualitative data collection, it will discuss the of social, sensory and phenomenological effects of architecture on the individual as they move through the city. To achieve this, semi-structured walk-along interviews were used, with a sample of 10 residents in Bristol. This study found architecture is a central part of our perception and experience of space, contributing to the way we capture the city.

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INTRODUCTION

The city is vast, permanent, a product of movement and settlement over long historical periods. To move in a city is to experience spatial and social features, produced, shaped, configured and perceived in different manners (Martínez, 2017). As we move, we pass by objects, we carefully choose routes, deciding what or who to interact with. This process continually shapes and remakes space. The city becomes an example of time passing; past, present and future movement. Therefore, this study will question: *To what extent do everyday encounters with architecture shape our perceptions of the city?* This investigates everyday experience, considering how individuals move through space engaging with architecture, and how this movement defines the way individuals capture the city. While the term *perception* can refer to a variety of processes and meanings, this study uses the word broadly to refer to individual experience in relation to everyday social phenomena. The following will engage in discussion surrounding the built environment, social interaction and space. The literature looks at how we interact with architecture, ways to conceptualise the city, the influence of heritage and legacy, and how we define the ‘everyday’ experience. In combination with this, the study will focus on how these themes and topics are understood through perception and sensory experience, employing an interdisciplinary approach to ensure a nuanced and complex analysis.

While social interaction with, and in, space is a key principle of almost all sociological research (see Giddens, 1984; Simmel, 1903), this study will consider perception as a key, often neglected, aspect of social interaction. While the senses are often taken for granted or understood as self-evident, sensory perceptions are a central mechanism of the social construction of reality (Vannini, et al, 2012). Hence, little attention has been paid to the perceptual experience of individuals when constructing ideas about the city through architecture. The sociology of sensory perception does not currently have an established devoted subfield (Friedman, 2012), thus, gaps in sociological research on space need to be filled through understanding of individual perception. To ensure emphasis on the sensorial element of this study, participants were asked to engage in a

walk-along interview, situating them in the space I asked them to reflect on. Ultimately, this research will investigate how individual perceptions of the city are produced through movement in space. As individuals move, they engage in an endless cycle of meaning making, utilising their sensory experience to contextualise social, historical and cultural markers.

To begin, Chapter 1 will examine existing literature on architecture, the city, heritage and legacy, and ‘everydayness’. Using a range of interdisciplinary sources, this chapter will review the architectural, social and geographical landscape of the city, while establishing how the individual exists within the space. Chapter 2 explores the methodological choices made for this study, explaining why the choice of method was so important. Chapter 3 then goes on to discuss the findings. This chapter examines participant response under three interconnected themes: *Architecture as Social Signifier*, *Architecture as Aesthetic Sensorium*, *Architecture as Phenomenology* (*‘Truth’?*). Finally, I conclude with the implications of the study. Overall, this study is concerned with the significance of individual experience and perception in space, and how this informs the way we capture the city.

CHAPTER 1 – LITERATURE REVIEW

Every day, we wake and encounter architecture. Our homes, neighbourhoods, towns, cities, were all designed, and are all constructions of our society. The built environment guides us down roads and pavements, defining where we move, how we remember our past, and how to exist in space. This literature review explores the existing scholarship on architecture and the built environment, considering how meaning manifests within the design and detail of a space. Drawing on a range of interdisciplinary sources, this review will map the social and geographical landscape of the city, while establishing how the individual exists within space. The following is categorised into five sections, beginning with an in-depth analysis of existing literature on architecture and social response. After this, discussion will explore three emerging themes to contextualise the research. Finally, I will note the research gaps and limitations of existing literature, stating my justification for this project. While existing literature is rich with valuable discussion, this body of work will highlight the gaps in current thinking, providing an intersectional analysis of architecture and the individual.

ARCHITECTURE AND SOCIAL RESPONSE

Existing literature is increasingly interested in the way architecture affects behaviour and the construction of our society; considering how we interact and how it can characterise an area/place. Shah and Kasan (2007) suggest architecture plays a communicative role by expressing cultural and symbolic values of a place (2007: 351). According to Amos Rapoport (1990: 55-65), this is achieved through various materials, colours, forms, sizes, furnishings, and landscaping of a building. For Rapoport, these elements communicate identity, status and symbolism, establishing a context or defining a situation. For instance, the subject reads the cues, identifies the situation and context, and acts accordingly (1990: 56). A simple example of this would be how banks use marble and grand spaces to express values of security, trust, and reliability (Shah and Kasan, 2007).

The meaning of a place is not inherently within the building, nor is it materialised in its architecture but rather is dependent upon wider cultural markers assigned by architects and everyday people (Shah and Kasan, 2007). As such, the communication of architecture is culturally dependant, while one person may deem a bank as secure and reliable, another may see it as overbearing and dominant, depending on their understanding of society. This understanding can be influenced by identity markers, such as class, gender, age, and race, dependant on one's cultural or social experience. For instance, according to Pennartz and Elsinga (1990), adolescents may focus more on immediate sensory stimuli, whereas adults occupy an intermediate position valuing interpretation and meaning. What's more, comparative analysis by Fang He, Yong He and Liang Sun (2023) revealed gender differences in interest in façade colours within the same spatial environment. This indicates a variety in perceptions of architecture and space, dependant on cultural understanding and identity markers.

For Goodman, our understanding of a city, or place, comes from the individual way we render its character (1991: 8) dependant on experience and perception. Architecture is something we absorb every day, its bigger spatially and temporally than other forms of visual art, it is even bigger than we are (Goodman, 1985). Buildings physically alter our environment and can inform our entire experience through subconscious meaning (1985: 652). In this sense, buildings can stabilise social life but can be equally vulnerable to wrecking balls or discourse (Gieryn, 2002). If absorbing and understanding architecture is culturally dependant, then buildings present a precarious contradiction regarding their purpose. While buildings give structure to social institutions, durability to social networks and persistence to behaviour patterns (2002: 35), their architecture becomes symbolic of the agency we assign to them (Smith and Bugni, 2006). In view of this, different social groups and people typify architecture in multiple ways (Boys, 1998: 215). This, in many ways, means buildings are what we actively do with them (Gieryn 2002). With this in mind, architecture can be analysed through a structure/agency approach. For instance, Anthony Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration suggests the context of a space is defined by the social markers present, dependent on the historical and cultural context of the time and space. This includes various architectural

characteristics (noted previously by Amos Rapoport (1990: 55-65)), as well as the kind of person existing in that space. For Giddens, the way in which these markers interact produces symbolic boundaries, characterising the space or building and reproducing reflexive dynamics which influence how we capture the space (1984: 141). Thus, buildings become symbolic markers of their cultural and historical condition. Their material and aesthetic structures guide how social agents act/interact within their presence, and vice versa. This guides the intersection between presence and absence (Giddens, 1984: 129), characterising the type of person present, but also the type of architecture visible. If this is the case, architecture must play an integral part in reflecting and shaping social interaction and space, influencing how we capture the city.

‘THE CITY’

The concept of the ‘city’ – as we understand it to be now – is relatively new in human histories (Frey & Zimmer, 2001). Phil Hubbard (2017), in his book entitled *City*, suggests the rise of mobility and wearable technologies has altered the way people interact with their urban surroundings, and as a result the way we capture the city has shifted. The ‘cultural turn’ of the 1990s (Anderson and Tolia-Kelly, 2004: 672) meant cities became more than mere utilitarian structures providing work and housing. ‘New’ cultural geography placed considerable emphasis on the meanings sedimented in landscapes, resulting in the reading of buildings as signs or symbols (Hubbard, 2017: 190). Buildings and architecture became a way of suggesting industrial progress, or historical significance, giving a place attraction. According to Lees (2001: 51-53), buildings and the geographical architecture of a city, assumes more than materiality and representation but engages with performativity, in the sense that ongoing social practices and interaction continually shape and inhabit the space. Thus, cities become products of the historical and cultural contexts of the population. With this in mind, just as we may be dependent on cities for transport, work or education, cities are also dependant on social agents for meaning. In the same way Giddens (1984) theory of structuration assumes a codependent agent/structure relationship, bodies (social agents) act upon the city,

“inscribing their presence in a continual process of remaking” (Edensor, 2000: 76). In view of this, a city isn’t just its buildings and people. Its infrastructure, histories, social norms, cultural influence are all intersecting elements to which social agents engage with and shape, producing the city. When considering how we capture the sense or character of a place – in this case the city – understanding the significance of histories, social norms and culture, is central to grasp how we visualise and process our surroundings. While some may place more emphasis on histories or legacies, others may find aesthetics, or practicality more important. As established prior, the meaning of a building is not inherent in its materiality, we assign meaning based on cultural markers most relevant to our lives (Shah and Kasan, 2007), whether that’s design, practicality, history, etc. As society progresses, how we construct buildings changes (Gann, 2000), cities become scattered with a multiplicity of buildings, showcasing different styles, construction techniques and histories.

HERITAGE AND LEGACY (AND MEMORY)

This leads into the idea of built heritage, which alludes to the implication of social and cultural life on the architecture of a place: its buildings, streets, geography, monuments. Existing literature about the concept of heritage focuses primarily on heritage sites and museums, paying little attention to the cultural built heritage surrounding us in our everyday lives (Pendlebury, et al., 2004). The heritage of a place becomes an integral part in evolving our social and cultural competences. The landscape of a place – both socially and geographically – is in a constant mode of flux, developing and mutating alongside constructions and social change. Therefore, the landscape of a place becomes “a cultural image, a pictorial way of representing, structuring or symbolising surroundings” (Cosgrove and Daniels, 1988: 1). Thus, any reading of it must focus on the visual images and symbols that help create it (McDowell, 2008: 39). As such, visual image and cultural landscape are key resources in the interpretation and articulation of heritage (2008: 39). Inherent to this, is the environment they are placed in or exist in, for instance the city, county or country. Furthering this notion, Albert S. Fu (2022), suggests the environment

of a place comes to represent the ideas and structures of the society it creates. Fu is suggesting architecture is no different from any other form of cultural production or reproduction (2022: 443). Buildings – and their architecture – are not inherently anything other than bricks and mortar, they do not speak or express certain beliefs, but despite this they operate as an influence or structure to our behaviour.

Furthermore, this relates to the concept of ‘collective memory’ (Rothstein, 2000, 2005), whereby memory is used as a strategic tool to foster trust and cooperation (Rothstein, 2000). For Rothstein, collective memory is not something given by ‘culture’ or ‘history’, instead, it is a strategic tool or action (2000: 497). In relation to built heritage, collective memory is a means by which councils or governments can decide how society will remember the past. The term “remember” should be interpreted broadly to include everything from how people choose to honour certain historical phenomena through politically resolved ceremonies or memorials (buildings, statues, museums), to more experience-based memories handed down from generation to generation (Rothstein, 2005: 162). Architecture is one way this is completed. For example, war memorials; often state funded and designed to remember those who fought and to signify the importance of military. These can be statues, parks or buildings, and all transfer a message of collective memory and heritage. Another example is Wills Memorial building, found on the University of Bristol campus. Built to commemorate a family who profited from the labour of enslaved people (Birdi, 2023), which sees students graduate and tourists admire. In this instance, we see heritage and legacy built into the fabric of the building, symbolising a manifestation of wealth and success, characterising the image of the city and its university. Using Rothstein’s (2005) analysis, this would be an instance of collective memory whereby people are encouraged to consider the city’s history as an example of wealth and success.

‘EVERYDAY-NESS’

Exploring how everyday encounters shape perceptions of the city draws together ideas discussed in the previous sections. Webb Keane (2014: 453) understands ‘everydayness’ as a concept describing the day-to-day “approach to the concept of freedom as long as we realise that conduct is not [ours] alone but [ours] in response to and drawing response from others”. From this, we can understand everydayness as a shared experience drawn from our understanding of those around us and the objects we encounter in our lives. This includes the way we understand and experience buildings and their architecture. As established, social agents take on a transferable relationship with cities, as we shape them, they shape us. As a result, everyday encounters are vital to the manner by which we inform and are informed by surrounding architecture. For instance, Grand Central station, New York, while at first encounter you may be in awe of its grand architecture, if you pass through every day, it may blur into the background. As such, the idea of ‘everydayness’ becomes integral to how we perceive a place or city. In the same way buildings are materially vast, their occurrence in everyday life is even vaster. The ‘everydayness’ of buildings is undeniable; we walk through the streets of a city and are met with towering structures overhead, we go site-seeing to uncover the history of buildings, we live, learn and rest inside buildings. Thus, we encounter architecture on a daily basis, and often in unnoticed ways, yet the meaning is still communicated to us (Hammett, 2021). This meaning is communicated in multiple ways; for example, through structure/agency relationships (Giddens, 1984), or through collective memory which establishes a set of cultural norms or beliefs (Rothstein, 2000, 2005), or by constructing heritage and legacy (McDowell, 2008). The following research will explore how (or if) these elements emerge through everyday encounters with architecture, and in what ways people think they experience this.

RESEARCH GAPS AND LIMITATIONS

While there is an extensive amount of literature on architecture and the implications of design on human behaviour, certain aspects fall short, particularly concerning how architecture informs an individual’s perception of space. Although several authors note

the way architecture influences behaviour (see Shah and Kasan, 2007; Amos Rapoport, 1990: 55-65; Pennartz and Elsinga, 1990), these tend to be generalised observations about cultural background or social climate. Existing literature fails to connect this notion with perception and sensory experience resulting from movement through space. Philip Vannini, et al, (2012) suggest sensory perceptions are a central mechanism of the social construction of reality. The senses are “fundamental to personhood” (Edwards, et al., 2006), as such, they are integral to understanding individual experience, especially in regard to experience of space. Despite the regularity and variety of architecture within cities, current discussion seems to consider the city as a descriptor of modernity; a way of describing vast buildings or landscapes. In opposition to this, I am conceptualising the city as a vessel containing structures which communicate physical and symbolic meanings crafted by the individual’s perceptual experience and movement.

This literature review has traced the current discourse surrounding architecture and space, highlighting the social significance of the built environment on social interaction. In combination with this, three intersecting themes emerged from the literature; how we understand the city, the significance of heritage, legacy and memory, as well as the concept of ‘everyday-ness’. While previous research has touched on these elements, I will expand on and combine these themes with reference to sensory and perceptual experience. As such, my research question is as follows: *To what extent do everyday encounters with architecture shape our perceptions of the city?*

CHAPTER 2 – METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to comprehend how everyday encounters with architecture shape our perceptions of the city, this project used qualitative semi-structured walk-along interviews and reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2022). This method allowed insight into how individuals felt in the specific time and space of the interview, providing an understanding of emotions, feelings, and thoughts. Using Bristol as a case study, participants were invited to a ‘walk-along’ interview. With a choice of 3 routes (City Centre, Clifton/Cotham, University of Bristol campus), participants were encouraged to engage with their local neighbourhood through questions and prompts about the built environment (Bartlett, et al., 2023). The exploratory nature of semi-structured walk-along interviews meant rapport could be developed, generating data about a person’s reflections on themselves and their relationship with others, as well as the space around them (2023: 5). In combination with this, structure could also be maintained through walk routes and prompts. After some gentle questioning, participants were given the opportunity to essentially lead the interview, enabling rich insight into their unguided interpretation of the architecture visible on the walk. The use of flexible, yet structured discussion allowed for in-depth, truthful data, developing nuanced themes.

For this project, 10 residents of Bristol were invited to take part, with the option to do one-to-one or group walks. These took place in 3 different areas of the city; the City Centre, starting from Broad Quay and completing a circuit of Harbourside; Clifton, starting at Victoria Rooms and covering the Royal York Crescent, Clifton Village, the Suspension Bridge and more residential areas such as Lansdown Road; and finally, the University Campus/Cotham, starting at Berkeley Square, then moving up Whiteladies Road, finishing on Tyndall Avenue. Determining a set route in advance gave me the advantage of focusing the interview on specific places that are relevant to the goals of the research

project (Evans and Jones, 2011: 850). For example, Wills Memorial building presents unique architectural design, as well as social (and to an extent, moral) significance to the city, thus the walk-along interview allowed for visual context to inform responses. Questions were categorised into 4 themes; experience of space, design and detail, social and cultural meaning, and changes over time. These ranged from ‘how does the scale of the building affect you?’ to ‘who do you think this space was designed for?’ and ‘does the design encourage or discourage interaction?’, followed by prompts to elicit more detail, such as: ‘has this changed’ and ‘would you feel differently if [building/architecture] wasn’t there?’. In combination, participants were also encouraged to walk in silence for a short time in order to absorb their surroundings. This was with the intention of observing and understanding their perceptual experience, allowing for the participant and I to engage on equal terms, as we both move through the space (Bartlett, et al., 2023: 11).

The present study used convenience sampling, starting with students at the university, which then snowballed to others in the city. While the representative effectiveness of a convenience sample is generally less than purposive sampling (Battaglia, 2008), this project didn’t require any specific diversities. The main concern was with residency and familiarity to the city, hence convenience sampling ensured participants lived in Bristol; either working or studying. I initially approached my university peers then community groups throughout Bristol, such as women’s groups, community kitchens and heritage organisations. I provided an information sheet about what the project entailed and potential walk routes. The final sample ranged from ages 20-65, encompassing students, professionals and retired people all currently residing in Bristol.

WALK-ALONG INTERVIEWS: WHAT AND WHY?

The walk-along interview method is epistemologically aligned with applied phenomenological research (Bartlett, et al., 2023), offering an account of human existence and perception. Using this method to explore individual understandings of the

city is both analytically and methodologically relevant. In this project the relationship between self and space is significant, as such, movement is a key element to this research. The walk-along interview, rooted in phenomenology and methodological innovation (Kusenbach, 2018), provides a sensitive and methodologically refreshing way of interacting with participants. By taking the interaction out of a formal, high-pressure setting, the method is more enjoyable and less disruptive of normal activities, allowing for more natural, unscripted questions or discussion (Carder et al., 2022: 165-6). As such, the decision to use walk-along interviews was clear; not only are they methodologically practical, but they are also analytically compatible with the findings of this project. A significant aspect to this project is the dynamic between self and place (or space), understanding how encounters with architecture inform our perception of the city. In view of this, philosopher Edward S. Casey speaks of a 'constitutive coingredience' of self and place, claiming "each is essential to the being of the other" (2001:684). If environment and place are fundamental features of human identity and social life, they must play an integral part in scholarly investigations and representations of the study of space (Kusenbach, 2018:6). The moving aspect of the walk-along interview allowed for participants to connect with place and space, deepening their perceptual experience by giving context to their thoughts and feelings. The element of movement was central to this research; without it we are limited to ideas rather than real experience. To capture the city, or a place in general, we must be in that space, we must feel, see and sense what is around us in order to engage with the social and physical structures of a space. The walk-along interview provides a place-based and person-centred approach (2018:9) rooted in movement which is both central to the data collection and analysis. While a place-based approach highlights place and spatial environment as components of human existence and social life, situating the participant in a natural space, where their lives literally 'take place', allows them to move and speak freely. Simultaneously, Gieryn (2000), argues place, as opposed to space, has three core elements: a specific location, a material form, and an infusion with social meaning. Each element contributes to the person-centred approach of walk-along interviews, with the primary goal being to understand individual or collective social meaning through movement and interaction.

DATA ANALYSIS

Informed written consent was obtained before the walk-along interviews went ahead, paired with an information sheet to ensure participants were fully informed. Due to the public nature of walk-alongs, safety for both researcher and participant was a core ethical concern. One element of this concern was the practice of care. While they offer a situated, embodied, and rational approach to making sense of the world (Larrington-Spencer, et al., 2024: 695), the walk-along generates issues of care for both the researcher and the participants. Hence, the project used a 'care-full' approach ensuring an ethical, reflexive process that prioritized care, empathy, and mutual understanding (Larrington-Spencer, et al., 2024). The route was picked prior to the interview by the participant, and the data was recorded via an audio recording. Partial transcripts were completed and anonymised, any identifiable information was removed. Mention of personal experience was retained if it was relevant to discussion, however any identifiable features were disguised or removed to protect participant anonymity.

The transcripts were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis with a hybrid of inductive and deductive coding, identifying recurring patterns and themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The analysis takes an interpretive phenomenological approach, which aims to provide detailed examination of personal lived experience (Smith and Osborn, 2015). To achieve this, all transcripts were read thoroughly so that I could become fully immersed in the data. The transcripts were then analysed using deductive coding, determined by the topics used to guide the interviews, as well as themes established when reviewing literature. Transcripts were then inductively coded to establish new insights emerging throughout the process. Both the deductive and inductive codes were then assessed using axial coding to establish a coding paradigm, connecting categories via casual conditions, context, and consequence. Throughout the process, the axial code was rearranged and redrafted to truthfully reflect the participant's voice, ensuring a valid reflection of each phenomenological experience. For instance, establishing subconscious markers, 'blending of old and new' and use of specific descriptors. This

gave insight into the gaps in the established literature. After establishing the axial code, the final interrogation of data produced selective coding which unified data and theory creating a 'storyline'. The final code assembled 3 interconnected themes, highlighting the social, sensory and phenomenological findings. These methods allowed for in-depth and nuanced exploration into how individuals capture the city.

This chapter has outlined the methodological approach used in this project. As demonstrated, the chosen method was both methodologically and analytically appropriate, enabling participants to offer nuanced and authentic insights generating rich data. Careful ethical considerations, thoughtfully selected routes, and the use of reflexive thematic analysis – with its layered coding process – produced a deep understanding of the findings. With this foundation established, the next chapter turns to three major themes that emerged from the data.

CHAPTER 3 – FINDINGS

As individuals move through space they encounter objects, buildings, pathways, people. These encounters shape perceptions of the space, informing us of actions and interactions, giving context to our entrance or exit, and saturating a place with meaning. The following chapter will explore how this process shapes perceptions of the city, in order to address the research question – *To what extent do everyday encounters with architecture shape our perceptions of the city?*

SILENT COMMUNICATION: ARCHITECTURE AS A SOCIAL SIGNIFIER

One of the clearest themes emerging from the thematic analysis was the silent manner by which architecture becomes a social signifier. Giddens (1984) notes, social agents become an interconnected marker when contextualising or defining space. For Giddens, the way social agents interact with the social space produces symbolic boundaries (1984: 141). These boundaries can influence ways of being, acting and thinking, inadvertently assigning a space with certain intensions or characteristics. With this in mind, a frequent theme throughout each interview was the sense of participants being influenced by architecture or being overly aware of how they think they should act because of certain architectural features. Participant 7 notes:

“I’d sort of say the architecture is maybe a bit of a deterrent for certain communities to experience this place.”

Which touches upon the way space can make one feel unwelcome or produce feelings of isolation. In this instance, participant 7 talks of “*certain communities*”, the generalisation of this gives insight into the interpretation of the area, commenting on communities separate from the one which is perceived to be present. This perception not only reflects the way space can influence thinking but also nods to the typification of

specific design features. Participant 7 goes on to justify this assumption, by suggesting the architecture looks “*expensive*”, describing it as:

“At least three stories, big, big flashy windows, balconies...”

And continues to suggest that these elements could be excluding those who cannot afford to live in the area, making them feel “*intimidated*” or like an “*outsider*”. The use of this language not only reflects a process of perception, wherein participant 7 selects, organises and interprets meaning (Qiong, 2017), but also gives insight into the way architecture becomes a social signifier. For participant 7, this is a signifier of wealth and exclusion. This sense was also alluded to by participant 3 who commented on sometimes feeling “*self-conscious*” and as if they had to “*walk[ing] on eggshells*” when in certain spaces because of certain architectural designs. Similarly to participant 7, participant 3 also noted windows and balconies as symbols of wealth, suggesting the large windows made it feel as if the buildings were “*always looking out*” at you, watching how you act and present yourself.

For both participants, architecture thus becomes a social signifier through assigning feelings of separateness and alienation, by which social actors are inadvertently removed from a space or feel as if they should be acting in a certain way. This suggests an emerging theme of security, as some may feel more or less secure than others in a space. By *security*, I refer to the state of being free from fear or judgement, secure in one’s belonging and space. Analysis of the findings suggests this feeling of security, or lack thereof, is related to different components within a space, including the architecture. Considering participant 3, they felt less secure in Clifton because of the way they processed their perceptions of the space, assigning meaning and symbols to objects which undermined their security.

While this is the case for participant 3 in Clifton, architecture in different spaces may support one’s security, or build it up. For example, architecture in the city centre may be supported by information points explaining the building’s history or design, making the space accessible to more people. Whereas in Clifton, the architecture is largely

displayed through residential homes. This results in different social engagement for people visiting and residents of the area. Interestingly, both spaces can exist in one place, meaning how we perceive the city can change when we enter different spaces. Despite being in the same city, each walk-along interview set up differing backgrounds and social engagers, in this instance, the contrast in area resulted in opposing feelings towards the space.

Throughout data collection, participants commented on the sense that Bristol was compiled of different “*pockets*” of architecture, wherein some felt more secure than others. This security intersects with feelings of safety, belonging and economic or social capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Architecture can thus dictate our movement, informing our decision to enter or exit a space based on preconceived assumptions about our own security. This security can manifest in many ways, rooted in assumptions about class, gender, age, race, or education, work, and residency. As noted previously, one may feel less secure in a space because of their class, meaning they may not frequent certain areas out of fear of alienation or intimidation.

Despite this, participants 3 and 4 commented on the way architecture can produce ambiguous social meanings. Despite participant 3 alluding to feelings of exclusion, they also commented on romance and beauty. In this instance, the walk-along interview took place in Clifton, Bristol, a wealthy and historic area within the city. Clifton is well known for its example of Georgian architecture, with grand merchant houses made of limestone (Lewin-Turner, 2025). A standout response from both participants was the feeling that Clifton felt separate, “*its own little world*”. They suggested this feeling was connected to the uniformity of the architecture as well as the absence of noise and people. Both participants assigned meaning to the visible architecture, suggesting the intricate yet grand design of the buildings was romantic and separate from their understanding of the rest of the city (Smith and Bugni, 2011). While this notion reinforces the sense of exclusion, it brings to light the unclear boundaries of security; even though one may feel a lack of security, they can still appreciate the space and its design. While assigning this agency to the architecture, in response to being asked if that made the area feel welcoming, both participants agreed that the architecture felt individualistic:

“It's like very individualist, like the design of the building, although it's uniform, and whatever, it's very individual and very sectioned.”

Suggesting while the space was “pretty” and peaceful, the design of the architecture felt as if it intentionally segregated the area and people present, feeling it was not a communal space:

“You're always looking out. You're not having anyone, like, looking back at... it feels like it's a one-sided perspective...”

Participants 3 and 4 illustrate how space and architecture can signify different social meanings, dependant on individual experience and identity. Both participants utilised their life experiences to contextualise the space they were in, both physically and symbolically. As a result, they concluded that the architecture made the area feel safe but not entirely secure. The segregated feeling participants 3 and 4 felt, is representative of the practise and interaction of that area specifically. During the walk, both participants touched on this sense:

“The fact that all the houses are very aligned, to me, mirrors the type of people that would live here.”

Taking note of the type of person, they felt they expected to see, and the way they assumed they should act as a result. For example, participant 4 noted they had only seen “white, middle-aged people” and then went on to assign a middle-class status to these people. Not only does this reflect how participant 4 felt the architecture of a place characterised its people, but it also suggests that the architecture influenced their perception of the space. Both participants felt strongly about this, claiming their understanding of the space was influenced by the architecture and its effects on them and the people in the area. For Oscar Newman (1972) this notion contributes to the concept of *defensible space*, whereby safety is enhanced through creating environments where residents feel ownership and can easily observe public areas, thus discouraging

crime and anti-social behaviour. Responses from participants 3 and 4 reflect this sentiment. While both observed a sense of safety, recognising the area as clean and peaceful, they felt disconnected from a sense of security which they assume comes from class, age, race and residency. Therefore, in many ways Clifton may feel safer because of the uniform, clean architecture, however its safety does not equal inclusivity. For Giddens' this is a form of symbolic boundary (1984: 141), wherein social actors and space are producing interconnected meanings of security, safety and class presence. This results in an insider/outsider dynamic, maintaining the image of space, but also of the person. Participant 4 comments on this:

"It is quite a white middle class area, and it means that there is a lot less diversity."

The lack of diversity is not only reflective of the people but also of the architecture. As noted, Clifton has uniform architecture, a specific demographic, and a well-maintained image, in contrast to other areas in the city. Conversely, participant 6 commented on the "vibrancy" of the city due to the variety and abundance of architecture and people. For participant 6, this comes from the exciting, unpredictable nature of city life. While both areas are understood to be part of the same city, they signify different social realities and expectations. Walk-along interviews which took place in the city centre were largely focused on a sense of vibrancy or excitement of space, commenting on specific buildings/areas feeling welcoming because of the diversity in architecture, and thus people. In light of this, Jane Jacobs (1962:39) suggests the pavement exists in conjunction with the buildings, meaning the streets we walk only mean something because of the architecture which borders them. Our decision to walk down a street is not simply because there is a designated path, but rather because of the objects in the space. With this in mind, the city becomes a cluster of different overlapping social, architectural and cultural boundaries, stimulating individuals, allowing for perceptions to be developed. Our encounters with architecture signify social existence, informing us about action, inaction, interaction and so on. This gives us scope to assign meaning and create symbolic boundaries; thus, architecture becomes a social signifier informing how individuals capture the city.

FEELING TOWARDS SPACE: ARCHITECTURE AS AESTHETIC SENSORIUM

The term *sensorium* (from Latin *sentire* – “to sense or feel”, and *rius* – “place of...”) means the place or world of senses (Bolt, et al., 2007: xii), encompassing the entire perceptual system. Aesthetics examines judgement of taste and the feeling of the beautiful and the sublime in relation to nature and art. In the Western tradition, art and aesthetics have often been undervalued compared to other human faculties of cultural activity due to the elevation of intellect over sense (2007: xiii). While aesthetics is commonly understood as a concern of Philosophy, the issue of embodiment and bodily experience is pertinent to understanding architectures sociological provenance. The decision to examine architecture as aesthetic sensorium reflects the everyday, temporal and spatial existence of architecture in our society, considering how the built environment takes up so much space in our social existence. In modern and postmodern eras, our understanding of architecture lies within the frameworks of ‘functional’ or ‘art’ (or ‘functional art’) (Trisno, et al., 2026), hence understanding architecture through aesthetic sensorium will give insight into how individuals draw these boundaries. Understanding the aesthetic ramifications of architecture in our everyday encounters begins to create an image of the city as a whole. In conjunction with architecture as a social signifier, aesthetic sensorium provides a nuanced and intricate justification for social, cultural or historical meaning, contributing to the social and geographical landscape.

As aforementioned, a persistent observation was the subconscious manner by which architecture informs action. This theme is not only relevant to social understandings but also gives insight into feeling and emotion. Georg Simmel (1903) understands the city as a backdrop to continuously changing stimuli, shifting between momentary impressions of rapidly changing visuals (1903: 455). According to Simmel, this form of sensory overload leads to a ‘blasé’ attitude – a detached, rational indifference required to cope with constant stimulation. Rapidly changing visuals consist of close proximity to people, architecture and technology. Elements of Simmel’s theory are pertinent when examining the emerging theme of subconscious response, regarding aesthetic sensory experience. Participant 8 captures this:

“It’s like subconscious, I guess... you’re never really looking up... you’re just so busy, you’re not looking around...”

And goes on to make a distinction between Cabot Circus (the shopping quarter in the city centre) and the University of Bristol campus, noting the spaces feel different despite not regularly considering the architecture of both. Cabot Circus was described as *“not pleasant”*, in contrast to the university campus feeling *“nice”* and *“intellectual”*. Many elements contribute to this feeling, in this instance, participant 8 explains ‘nicer’ areas include *“green space”* and *“old buildings”*. This typification is drawn from the sensory experience of the space, inferring that green space is quieter and therefore *“nicer”*. Drawing on the notion of the subconscious response, the built environment begins to shape how we filter and move through space. Despite adopting a shield of indifference to our surroundings, we still make distinctions between spaces, illustrated by participant 8’s observation. Thus, our ‘blasé’ attitudes may influence how we move through the city, but architecture seems to stand separately from this, almost informing individuals when, and when not, to take a blasé attitude. Yes, in busy, high-rise areas individuals may become disconnected from the objects in a space; however, this is not characteristic of the entire city. As established, the city consists of *“pockets”*, and participant 10 suggests:

“It’s, like, a small little pot. It doesn’t encapsulate the city.”

Exemplifying the way different spaces can exist separately within one place, in this case in the city.

Aesthetic sensorium animates our perceptions, allowing for the filtering of emotions or feelings. This is illustrated by the differing responses from participants who walked in the City Centre, compared to those who walked in Clifton or Cotham. Participant 5, walking in the City Centre, mentioned the space feeling like a *“hotchpotch”*, a confused, jumbled mixture of architectural styles. Similarly, participants 9 and 10 agreed on the City Centre feeling full of *“big buildings”*, *“bustling and hustling”* for space. Whereas participants 1 and 2 described Clifton as *“looking like a period drama”* and as if they could picture a

“really fancily dressed lady” emerging from the buildings. Not only does this reflect a sensory experience, but it also exemplifies how space can affect our perceptions of place, whereby a space becomes imbued with subjective meaning and value (Agnew, 2011). These descriptions give insight into the way participants process and picture the area. For participants 5, 9, and 10, the onomatopoeic descriptors reflect their feelings in combination with the nature of space, whereas participants 1 and 2 allude to a historic feeling. The contrast in these descriptions highlights how individuals filter through *“pockets”* of architecture using their sensory experience.

Given this, the city becomes a kaleidoscope of sights, sounds, and encounters, wherein interconnected elements come together to form an ever-shifting mosaic of culture, experience, and space (Prcindia, 2025). Thus, the differing pockets of architecture become characteristic of the space, allowing individuals to capture the city. Furthermore, the *“hotchpotch”* nature, participant 5 describes, is inductive of the way social agents inscribe their presence in a continual process of remaking and shaping the city (Edensor, 2000: 76). The suggested contrast between Clifton and the City Centre may be indicative of the way individuals capture the city as a whole, dependant on different spaces or locations, marking diverse feelings and sensory experiences. In this case, while being a part of the same city, Clifton has a distinct, separate aesthetic and sensory experience, whereas the City Centre felt more mixed. Bollati and Collina (2020:317) argue the design of a place can be a trigger of cultural city experiences, becoming a know-how provider and social engager, whereby the design of architecture can inform the way one acts within or characterises a space. In many ways, this begins to combine the aesthetic sensorium experience with architecture as a social signifier. Both elements become entangled with social meaning, allowing individuals to exist in space and for spaces to be diverse.

With this in mind, one of the most salient themes emerging from the analysis was the sense of aesthetics being a significant factor to consider when moving through the city. While typically a concern of Psychology, the profound influence of architecture on human feeling (Zhao, 2016), in particular its effects on behaviour through shaping the atmosphere and flow of a space, is also highly relevant to this sociological research.

Aesthetics are principles, study, or styles of design which induce sensory experience (Brielmann and Pelli, 2018); hence, aesthetics becomes a way of filtering feelings. Throughout data collection, a recurring descriptor of architecture was “*pretty*”, and the notion that if a place was ‘pretty’ it was worth seeing. As established, participants 3 and 4 note a romantic feeling and aspect to the architecture which surrounded them:

“I think there's a romantic aspect of older looking buildings... when you see the structures of these, you think, wow, that's beautiful...”

Suggesting, the ‘romantic’ architecture was part of the reason they choose to come to the city. As John Cage discovered, “beauty is underfoot wherever we take the trouble to look” (1961: 98). Not only does this reflect the nature of beauty and aesthetic appreciation, but it also calls on the significance of architecture in space. The sensory experience of walking and observing asks individuals to unpack their feeling towards the space, and to consider if those feelings are positive or negative (*attractive* or *unattractive*, *pretty* or *ugly*, *welcoming* or *unwelcoming*, etc.). For Mirza Tursić (2019: 209), this response is reflective of an aesthetic experience, characterised by the potential of the individual to imaginatively engage with the object of aesthetic attention, in this case, architecture. When we observe or engage with an environment in the aesthetic mode, some elements rise from the scene and ‘excite’ us (2019: 212). For example, some participants were drawn to colour:

“I like the bright orange... It's uplifting.”

And others commented on the blending of old and new, suggesting the use of glass reflected surroundings, and aesthetically contributed to the space:

“...they're very modern... [they] have loads of glass, so they reflect the surroundings... and actually don't detract.”

Additionally, several participants used the word “*tastefully*” to describe the blending of old and new, suggesting when preservation and addition is done “*tastefully*” it

aesthetically adds to the building or space. In contrast, certain buildings – notably brutalist ones – were described as imposing or “*prison*”-like. What is more, participants often valued aesthetic beauty over didactic, moral, or practical function. Claiming their attendance in a space or building was determined by its aesthetic nature, likening architecture to art.

Interestingly, participant 8 commented on the potentiality to separate the architectural design and aesthetic form, from the social and historical context, considering the moral implications of architecture. For example, when asked about Wills Memorial building, participant 8 stated:

“I don’t like the money that was used to make that building. You still can’t deny that it is a very beautiful building, and I think it’s such a shame that the money use to build it was from such an unfortunate source, because it does make you not want to like it, but you still do...”

Not only does this speak to the history of the city, participant 8’s comments also allude to the dilemma of aestheticism; should we prioritise beauty and sensory pleasure over moral, ethical, or utilitarian considerations? (Dell’Asta, 2017). Multiple participants recognised this dilemma when considering colonial architecture in Bristol, noting social, cultural and historical significance of certain areas or buildings. Participant 7 hinted at this dynamic:

“I think it’s important to preserve the architecture, and... use the buildings in a modern way, but also preserve the historical architecture and significance of the building.”

In this instance, the notion of preservation seems to relate to aesthetic and sensory experience, as a “*favourable*” way of maintaining the city’s image and landscape. This notion draws together aesthetic sensorium and the idea of architecture as a social signifier, challenging which aspect has higher value to the individual. To unpack this, the

following will consider architecture as a form of ‘truth’, acting as a knowledge provider, informing passers-by of historical and socio-economic contexts.

CONSTRUCTING KNOWLEDGE: ARCHITECTURE AS PHENOMENOLOGY (‘TRUTH’?)

“A being who could sense – that is, coincide absolutely with an impression or with a quality – could have no other mode of knowledge” (Merleau-Ponty, 2012: 13)

The movement of phenomenology is concerned with how individuals subjectively experience, interpret, and construct their reality. Rather than ‘armchair theorizing’, phenomenology asks us to consult ‘the things themselves’ (Overgaard and Zahavi, 2009). In many ways this project asked participants to do that, to consult the ‘life-world’ (Husserl, 1970) in front of them and to question the backdrop which shapes human perception. As such, a recurring observation was the manner by which architecture became a source of knowledge, providing context to the aesthetic sensorium and social symbolism. For example, for participants 1 and 2 to describe the architecture in Clifton as “*looking like a period drama*”, they must experience a cognitive process whereby they connect their sensory experience to their knowledge. Through this process, they can thus connect specific histories to specific social markers; for instance, Georgian architecture is well-kept in Clifton, hence one could assume that is the reflection of wealth being maintained and concentrated in that area. The process of connecting aesthetics, sensory experience, and social symbolism with knowledge and history allows individuals to ‘fill in the gaps’ of their perceptions, helping them capture the city. As such, architecture becomes a form of truth entangled with knowledge. Although *knowledge* and *truth* are analytically separate, they become entangled through real-world perceptions, as we consider ‘the things themselves’.

As established, Bristol’s landscape is rich with historic buildings, contributing to the way architecture assumes the role of social signifier and allows for aesthetic sensorium. The variety of architecture imparts a form of cultural knowledge on individuals, informing

them of subtle historical events or communicating a form of truth about the past. Bristol was once a major port city which saw slave ships and goods come in and out of its water ways. A node of commercial and cultural exchange, a centre of transportation of enslaved peoples spanning back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Schütz, 2021). This history is visible in Bristol's architecture, especially in areas like Clifton, Harbourside and the University campus. Throughout interviews, several participants remarked on this observation, participant 8 suggested:

"It's interesting to think about the history of the slave trade"

When asked about their opinion on the way the built environment may affect people or culture, suggesting the architecture provokes thought about the past. Similar to the ideas discussed under *Silent Communication: Architecture as a Social Signifier*, participant 4 notes the concentration of wealth in certain areas (such as Clifton). They attribute this wealth to the city's history, suggesting efforts to preserve image and architecture, is reflective of the city's wealth disparity. This assumption forms a backdrop to the way they assign meaning to the space. As Fu (2022) argues, architecture is no different from any other form of cultural production, thus the environment of a place comes to represent the ideas and structure of the society it creates. In this instance, participant 4's observation of colonial Georgian architecture is reflective of how they understand architecture as a knowledge provider. Suggesting that the architecture of Clifton symbolically informs people of Bristol's history; its involvement in the Transatlantic slave trade and the economic and social hangovers from that time.

Mention of colonialism and Bristol's colonial history was discussed in several walk-along interviews. Participant 8 notes:

"...I'd say for a lot of Bristol architecture as well, because a lot of Bristol wouldn't be here without the slave trade."

Which in many ways rings true, some of Bristol's most notable buildings are reminiscent of a colonial past. Clifton, Royal York Crescent, Guinea Street, Commercial Rooms, all

saw slave traders walk by (Lewin-Turner, 2025). These places all celebrate architectural triumph, and yet have underlying roots tied to colonial wealth, exemplifying how space and place are orientated towards cultural norms and expectation (Fu, 2022: 445). Not only does this contribute to our aesthetic sensory experience, but it also creates a collective memory (Rothstein, 2005) whereby meaning becomes associated with history. In this instance, the cultural norm is to remember our history and past, and in many circumstances memorialise this history. For several participants this was a challenging perspective; Participants 1,2,4 and 8 all commented on the difficulty of living alongside visual reminders of colonialism:

“But it is just a reminder of the slave trade, but it is almost like, are you gonna knock it down and start again and build something uglier?”

Not only is this further cementing the dilemma of aestheticism, but visual reminders of colonialism also become sources of knowledge or truth, whereby the architecture of a place diffuses legacy and memory. Our knowledge of a place – and thus our existence in a space – is influenced by the architecture present, informing us of our past, present and future. As the landscape of a place (socially and geographically) is in constant flux, transforming alongside construction and social change, architecture becomes a pictorial way of representing, structuring and symbolising space (Cosgrove and Daniels, 1988:1). While some participants expressed discomfort, others commented on the way this discomfort has thrust the city into a culture of recognition and acceptance, suggesting that conversations about the city’s past have resulted in a multicultural future:

“...when you walk around Montpellier and St. Agnes and places like that, there's lots more memorials showing local West Indian people. you know, important voices for the community and they're memorialised on the side of the buildings.”

Despite opposing interpretations from participants, architecture and buildings are key resources in the articulation of heritage (McDowell, 2008: 39). Participants 6 and 8 both affirm the concept of heritage by giving a voice to the architecture of a place. They capture the city in different ways yet speak to the idea of built heritage and collective memory

(Rothstein, 2000, 2005) by commenting on the ways we choose to remember the past and exist in the present. Participant 8 felt very passionate about this topic noting:

“I think having a building named after a slave owner is just completely inappropriate, but also changing the name is not enough to address the history.”

Considering this, Alvin Birdi (2023) suggests that the University of Bristol comes to represent the city’s history, affirming ideas of wealth, segregation and alienation. Birdi argues the university memorialises its relationship with slavery through the names of some of its buildings and faculties. In this capacity, Birdi suggests the heritage of Bristol’s colonial past is built into the fabric of the university: its buildings, environment, geography and connection to the city. This assumes the university is a manifestation of heritage, materially and symbolically continuing a colonial legacy (2023: 121). In light of this analysis, architecture assumes a position of truth, wherein it reveals the values of both the past and present. Not only is this reflective of a continual process of remaking and shaping the city’s social and geographical landscape (Edensor, 2000: 76), but it also speaks to the regularity of architecture in constructing our everyday routines. As Hammett (2021) theorises, we encounter architecture on a daily basis, often in unnoticed ways, and yet the meaning is still communicated to us. This meaning is an accumulation of social, aesthetic and phenomenological experiences which engage with the interplay between individual ‘meaning making’ and spatial knowledge production. Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) calls this *ideation*, whereby, the object that appears in consciousness mingles with the object in nature so that a meaning is created, and knowledge is extended (Moustakas, 1994: 27). In this sense, architecture becomes a form of knowledge production entangled with truth, informing us of social, aesthetic and historical phenomenon, guiding us as we move through and navigate space.

In this instance the object of nature is the variety of architecture; while Clifton is an example of one design, the City Centre is another. Individuals assign meaning to this distinction as their consciousness ‘mingles’ with reality. For example, participants assigning notions of wealth and exclusion to “old” Georgian architecture in Clifton, reaffirms sentiments of colonialism and the continuation of concentrated wealth. These

subjective assumptions, in many ways, become a form of reality as individuals adopt common understandings and collective memories. Participant 8 alludes to this:

“Wills was built roughly 100 years ago... not that long ago, and it was built to look older, which I think people tend to associate... with more impressive, more grand, money, wealth.”

Touching on the way typification's (Schutz, 1967) lead to certain associations and designs, hence, a space becomes perceptualized by its architecture. In view of this, social, aesthetic, sensory and phenomenological experiences knot together, informing how individuals capture the city, guiding them through space, informing their interactions, broadening their knowledge.

While phenomenology is typically understood in relation to philosophy, it has a sociological pedigree. For instance, Alfred Schutz (1967) theorised that the social world is constructed through shared interpretations of behaviour, which requires communal understanding of subjective experiences. This explores the relationship between human experience and social actions through the lens of phenomenology (Roth, 2022). Similarly, this research is interested in how our understanding and perception of the city is made up by encounters with, and in, the world. Considering this, an emphasis on movement must be established. To move is to sense and experience, to create and mould perceptions about space. For participants, movement through space produced new understandings and knowledge. Participant 5 commented:

“I mean, like, it is really interesting doing this walk... for example, that one over there, Custom house, I don't think I've ever noticed that. And I mean, look at it, and the big crest over the door. And yeah, the really big windows. I mean, that's obviously... was built to impress.”

This comment reflects the connecting of sensory experience, movement, and social symbolism, allowing participant 5 to ‘fill in the gaps’ of their perception. They connect

specific architectural details to specific social markers, while movement allows them to experience this process and develop perceptions about the space.

CONCLUSION

This study explored how everyday encounters with architecture shapes perceptions of the city, using a qualitative approach to establish individual experience of space. The project asked participants to observe their experience in space, prompting them to explore how objects around them influence their perception and senses, both consciously and subconsciously. This research contributes to literature on the concept of space, utilising an interdisciplinary approach to establish the sociological significance of perception. While typically a concern of Philosophy and Psychology, the sociological consideration of perception gives insight into individual experience of space. Though recognised as an emerging area of inquiry, the sociology of sensory perception does not currently have an established devoted subfield (Friedman, 2012). As such, this research aimed to rediscover human sensorium as an embodied way of understanding social structures, culture and space.

As established, the regularity and breadth of architecture in the city, shapes the social and geographical landscape of a place. The city becomes a vessel of meaning-making objects, engaging in a back-and-forth translation of physical and symbolic meaning. By this, I refer to the relationship between people and the built environment. As analysis of the findings explored, this relationship embodies three different elements; *Architecture as Social Signifier*, *Architecture as Aesthetic Sensorium* and *Architecture as Phenomenology* ('Truth'?). While each element is typically understood as analytically separate, real-world research sees each aspect become entangled with one another, acting simultaneously to inform our perceptions. Participants made sense of the space through these experience markers, pointing out the significance of histories, aesthetics and social structures reflected in architecture.

The implications of this effect how we capture the city. While there is no singular objective way to 'capture' a city, everyday encounters with architecture inform our

perceptions of the space. In this instance, the space was the city, thus participants were capturing the city through perception and experience. For participants, the variety of architecture reflects a kind of fragmentation in the city, with some parts feeling more accessible than others. This accessibility refers not only to physical movement, but also socio-economic and cultural access to space dictating absence and presence. Thus, influencing how we move through a space; where we decide to go or live, and how we act. The findings show architecture is a key marker informing how participants move, providing context to an area or place, and leading them to typify space as *quiet* or *loud*, *vibrant* or *peaceful* etc. Furthermore, these characteristics are then combined with assumptions about wealth, class, and heritage, further limiting accessibility. These processes – typification and assumption-making – are informed by a process of perception, creating social, cultural and economic structures. These structures are reproduced through interaction within the space. As a result, everyday encounters become influenced by architecture as we continually negotiate with space, actively deciding on where we move; our walks to university or work, where we exercise or socialise.

In conclusion, individual perceptions of the city are produced through movement in space. As individuals move through a space they engage in an act of ‘meaning making’, informed by their sensory and perceptual experience. This act encapsulates action and interaction with objects in space. The visual nature of architecture means it is a central part of our perception and sensory experience. Its presence and absence take up space, towering over us, guiding us as we walk through the city. We notice when it’s there and when it is not. An element of space we cannot ignore.

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APPENDIX 1

Transcript of interview 5, participant 7

Researcher: We can start here, yeah.

Participant: Um, I saw, when I, when I first saw, I came to Bristol, it was more, I was quite, I'd never really been to the south of England, and I think the architecture, in a way, sort of... Not intimidated me, but maybe surprised me, because everything seems to be, on a much bigger scale. Everything seems to be, you know. A lot more expressive, because, you know, where I'm from, it's more... And he was like, that's not just happened. Architecture's not as grand. very... It's more reserved and that sort of shocked me a lot when I 1st came to Bristol. I mean, and as I've lived here for a long time, I've sort of got used to it, but I still, whenever I look at things like Victoria Rooms, it's still sort of like shocks me. It makes me think, you know, all the money that we... Like, all the money there, and... just trying... to...

Researcher: Do you think he looks like a welcoming building?

Participant: Yeah, I mean, it's got a grand entrance, and, you know, you spot it from, from, from far away. I've never been inside... but no, it does welcome with the pillars and, you know, it's a very pretty building, and yeah, it is quite inviting, especially at the top of the street.

Researcher: What about the way that it has these gradual steps and the fountains and stuff. Like, it has gradual steps, does it ease you into the building? And then the big fountains there are oxidised and, like, look a bit warn...

Participant: Yeah, I guess that sort of, that maybe pulls you in. It doesn't look too intimidating. You know, it's not sat high above the street. So, yeah, I guess that makes a bit more welcoming.

Researcher: Considering you've never been in it, do you think it's actually, like, significant to the university or not?

Participant: Uh, I think it's the music development. I don't really know. By the sides of it, it does look quite a big, important building of the university, but I don't really know what its purpose is...

Researcher: What do you think about, um... these buildings? Do you know anything about them? Like, I know what these buildings used to be. Do you know that?

Participant: Well, they still, I mean, they all look to be sort of officers now, so they don't really look like...

Researcher: Originally, they would have been merchant houses.

Participant: So, would there have been slaves living in that?

Researcher: No, there wasn't any, really, any slaves in Bristol, but people obviously used to trade in them, and trade in the goods produced by slavery.

Participant: I thought, I guess, maybe they're still standing today, 'cause, like... They're so nice, so pretty to look at, and they're so, you know, well put together that they've been protected. You know, now you've got businesses occupying them, and maybe that just.... I don't know that just sort of says about the architecture and how...

Researcher: Is there anything you, like, I think, obviously we've said that there's, like, a theme in Bristol? Is there anything that you do like that? Like, do you like that this architecture is similar? Do you like the way the architecture looks?

Participant: Yeah, I think it makes Bristol the very, you know, central Bristol and like Redland, very attractive place to be in. It's someone you wait. somewhere where you want to be. And I guess you don't always think about the history and why the buildings look the way they do, just sort of makes the, it does make the place feel nice and very, you know, attractive place to be. Yeah, no one seems to live in these ones, which is...

Researcher: Well, I don't think people do live in the merchant houses anymore, because they're obviously so expensive, but, you know, the arts complex. All of those buildings were merchant houses.

Participant: It's interesting that they're all built out the same or similar materials, and they all look... They're all unique in sort of their style, but they all... sort of look the same. You know, they're all, like, at least three stories, big, big flashy windows, balconies, but they're all built of the same stone, but they, I don't know, they just sort of look impressive just in their own different ways.

Researcher: Yeah. So, there's these ones, which I think are... pretty much, if not, like, basically in their original form. Obviously, they've been renovated, they've been maintained.

Participant: Yeah, the exterior has, yeah.

Researcher: Whereas these ones, at the end, have changed well. They might even be, like, replica buildings...

Participant: Yeah, that sort of that, I mean...

Researcher: But at the same time, you can see that they've been added to, and the top of that is, obviously, not the original top.... How do you feel about the way that buildings are even built in the style of? Do you think that that's successful? And like maintained in the style of

Participant: I sort of, I think, I quite like that, that sort of practice, because it, you know, it keeps, it keeps with, like, the way, the streets, it just keeps the way it looks, and it keeps with sort of aesthetic, and how, like, the experience of walking down it. I think if there was a huge modern building that was built out of glass or concrete, you know, it would stick out like a sort of, like a sore thumb, and you just sort of...

Researcher: It's interesting, you say that, because, like, behind these pillars, where the broadcasting house is, there's a lot of glass there, but I feel like if you walk past it, you wouldn't necessarily notice it.

Participant: It's also that modern, well, sort of modern facade is sort of set back and you don't notice that until you're directly in front of it.

Researcher: Do you think that's a good way of blending modern and old traditional architecture?

Participant: Yeah, I think I think it's a, I think it's important to sort of keep the old architecture. I think doing it, that incorporating new architecture in a subtle way, I think, I think it is important because, you know, like I said, it's nice to have that sort of consistency in buildings where they all look the same because when they stick out, personally, I don't think that looks quite nice, that nice.

Researcher: Yeah. So, we said, obviously, that, like, the architecture that you feel is, like, I guess, significant to Bristol in that... It's all very similar, and it kind of characterises the city. Do you think that then, the architecture, I guess, specifically in this area, becomes, like, culturally significant and symbolic of its people or its history and its culture?

Participant: Yeah, I sort of, when I sort of look at the architecture, it just sort of looks very expensive and very expensive to live in. And I guess maybe that, you know, if you look at, if you look... Yeah, I guess if you just, maybe if you looked at who's actually living in these buildings, you know, the influence of people, it probably says a lot about the communities where, you know, it probably is inaccessible to a lot of different demographics. So sort of, it sort of makes me think about, you know, how maybe how does the architecture, you know, prevent certain people from living in certain

communities, from certain backgrounds, which I think, you know, quite obvious when you start to look at just how, like, impressive it is.

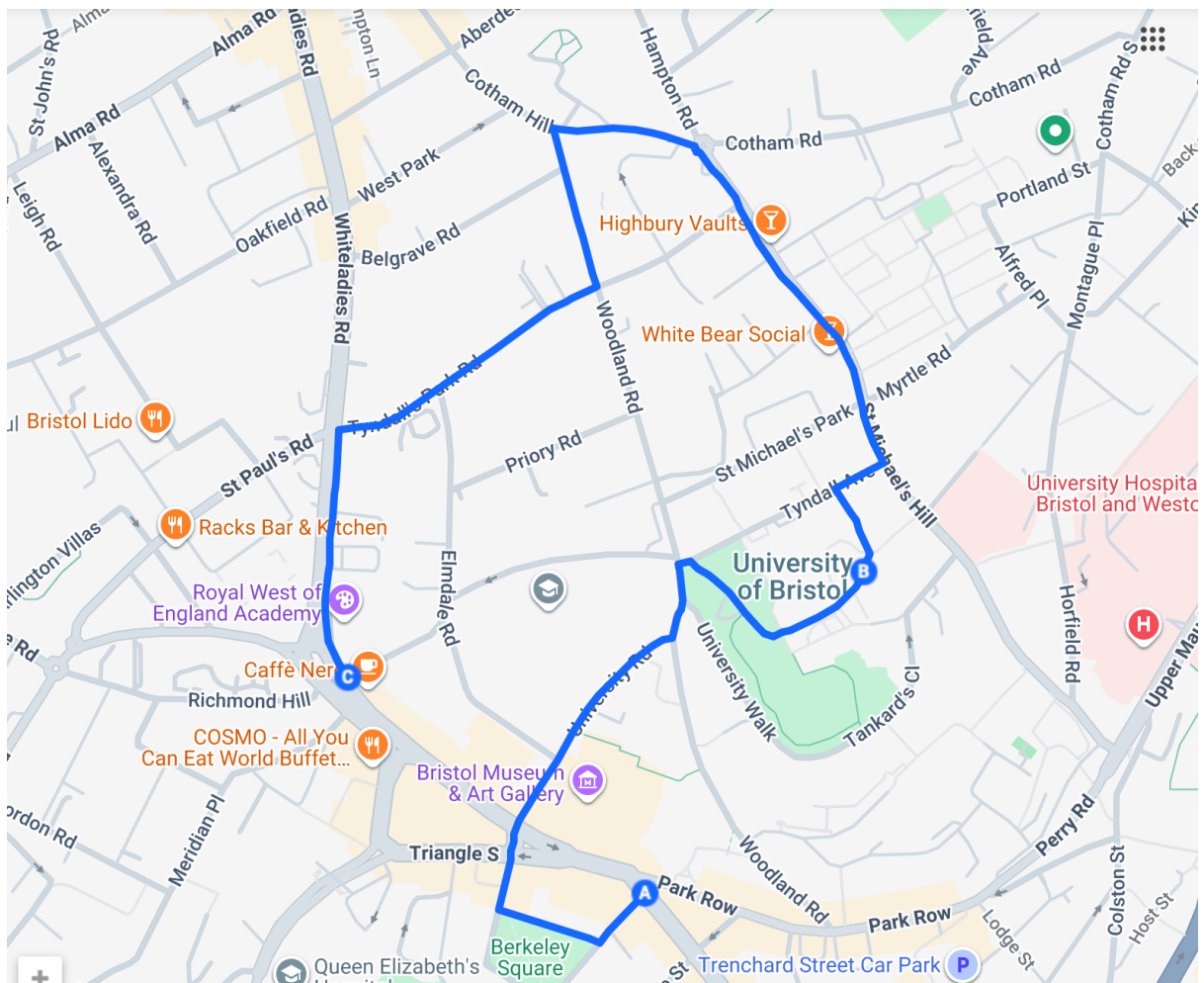
ADDITIONAL APPENDICES

Walk-along interview routes

Start – Berkeley Avenue at the top of Park Street

End – Victoria Rooms

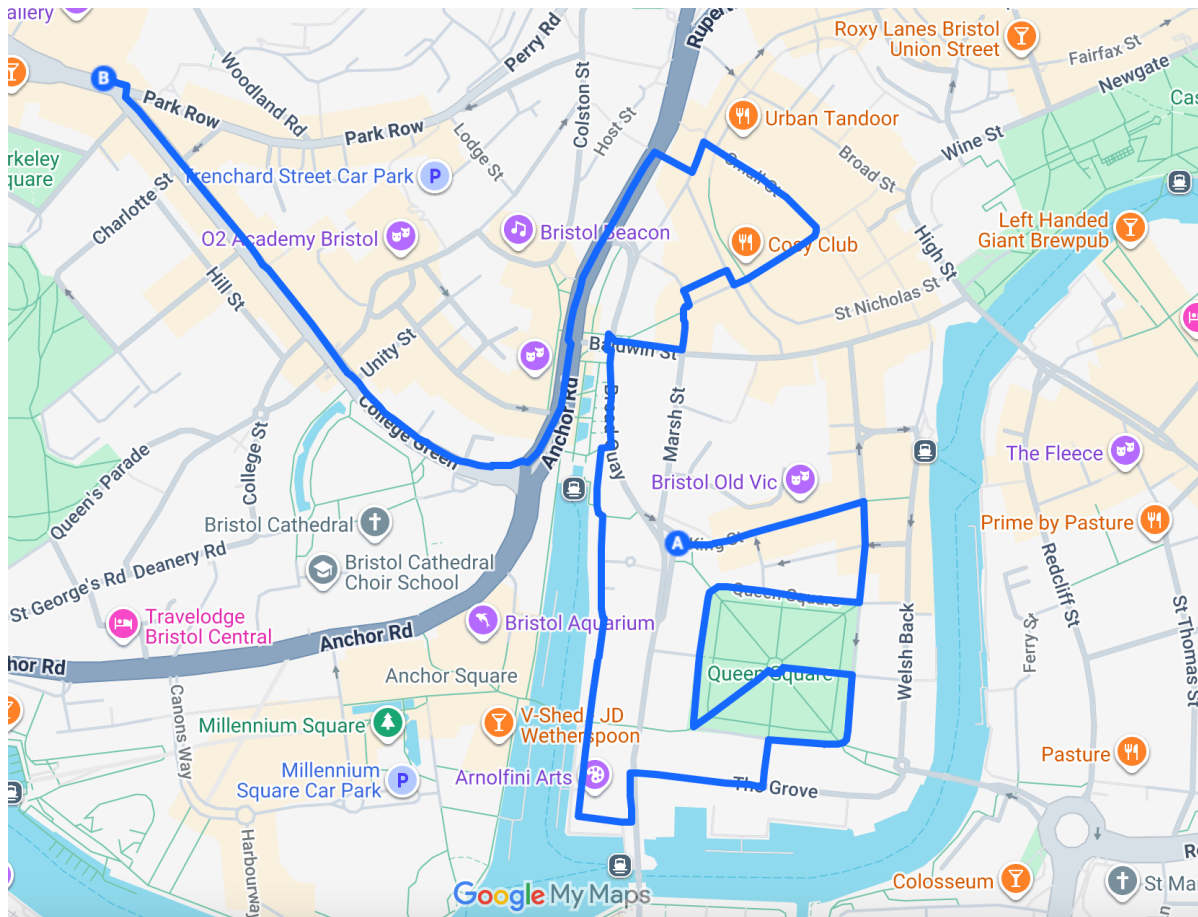
Estimated time – 30 minutes



Start – King Street

End – Top of Park Street

Estimated time – 45 minutes



Start – Victoria Rooms

End – Victoria Rooms

Estimated time – 1 hour

