The miracle of the road: The affective atmospheres of Europe’s roads.

Michael O' Regan, PhD

Bournemouth University
Previous Research

By exploring interacting rhythms, moorings, and materialities, HH learn during their journeys, gradually becoming more skilled at shaping their mobilities. Rhythm as a mode of analysis
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The ‘system’ of automobility

Complex system of roads and motorways ..... designed for people? or creating car-dependent cultures with banal infrastructural spaces of car parks, filling stations and repair garages to service motorways that structure and produce unsustainable automobilities.

- "Humanity of the car" (Miller - 2001)
- “Cars divi..."
• "Humanity of the car" (Miller - 2001)
• “Cars divi...
• "Humanity of the car" (Miller - 2001)
• “Cars divide people, just as mass transport systems bring people together” (Nayar - 2009)
• Significant part of physical space and in terms of function. The road system, and particularly the motorways have become an alien place.
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Analytic
Autoethnography

What we know!

The ‘system’ of automobility

Ireland - August 2017

Thank You!

Corporeal Involvement

Throughout my journeys, there was an affective atmosphere...
What we know!

- Unique form of mobility.
- Under-researched - Walking and cycling.
- Transgressive but sanctioned.
- De-privatizing of vehicles.
- Mobility Culture.
- Roads hold HH in circulation.
- Welcome Friction.

"It's a dangerous business, Frodo, go!..."
“It's a dangerous business, Frodo, going out your door. You step onto the road, and if you don't keep your feet, there's no knowing where you might be swept off to.”
It's a dangerous business, going out your door. You step onto the road,
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Michael O'Regan, PhD

Bournemouth University
Disclaimer: I am a middle class able-bodied white man, and...

Bochner and Ellis (2006), an autoethnographer is “first a...

When you are preparing for a journey, you own t...

Analytic Autoethnography

- Participant observation.
- Autoethnographic field notes.
- Memory work.
- Photography, video recordings enabled me to explore the intersections of corporeality and mobility.
- Recognises the researcher’s presence.
- Mobile, inventive, live, engaged research
When you are preparing for a journey, you own the journey. Once you've started the journey, the journey owns you - Shope, 2006: 165
Bochner and Ellis (2006), an autoethnographer is “first and foremost a communicator and a storyteller.”
Disclaimer: I am a middle class able-bodied white man, and I tend to take for granted the privilege of my Irish/EU passport. While I have felt restriction, I am aware of the constraints and injustice experienced by many who hitchhike and who do not share my privilege.
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Corporeal Involvement

I found myself amongst single people, couples, families, groups, businessmen, farmers, whose in a rush to work, and those on holidays, those rushing to tell me about their life, work, problems, hopes and dreams, and those who do not say anything. I am been in cars whose drivers keep the accelerator pressed, to slow buses and speed limited trucks.
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Thank You!
Throughout my journeys, there was an affective atmosphere (such as danger, rage, thrill, safety), with each journey having a particular time and experience that changes in the course of a journey.
• Hitchhiking requires a willingness to embrace uncertainty, live with mystery, and make peace with ambiguity. By giving up on public transport, I was forced to deal with unexpected scenarios, think creatively, utilize available resources and transform myself into an active social being as I was forced to listen to my thoughts, feelings and emotions.
Hitchhiking provided embodied emotions, feelings, senses and affects.

I felt more susceptible to fear and pessimism, joy and happiness to shame and acts of stupidity.
Hitchhiking emphasizes the capacity for doing things in ways which affirm dignity and the value of all life. Encounters unfold to hold subjects responsible and accountable to each other at some level, and provide space to redefine, reveal and disrupt taken-for-granted orderings, alignments, institutions and networks.
.... To a small degree, you have to set aside your personal ambitions and go with someone else’s flow and engage in a strange sort of intimacy. I did not reflect on chief advantages of car usage such as its comfort, status, or any other benefit inherent in vehicles themselves.
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By appropriating and disrupting infrastructural elements, such as service stations and kerbs, we remind ourselves (and others) that roads are not solely for commerce and traffic but also for creative engagements.
Anthem by Leonard Cohen

Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack in everything (there is a crack in everything)
That's how the light gets in
Alternative movement has the potential to leverage progressive change and/or make further inroads into conventional mobility systems that flattens space to facilitate the ceaseless circulation of money, commodities, and bodies....... and forces drivers to consider the coexistence of different types of mobility projects.
For me, the road became a contact zone which vibrates with potential encounters, conversation, small kindnesses, recognition, and the discovery of shared interests and concerns that offer important opportunities for connection and mutuality. It provides evidence of the continued power of the HH as a representational figure.
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Thank You!

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Michael O' Regan PhD
@michealoregan
Irish Guy interested in tourist/urban/

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