Teaching research methods: Introducing a psychogeographical approach

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Abstract

This article explores teaching business students research methods using a psychogeographical approach, specifically the technique of dérive. It responds to calls for new ways of teaching in higher education and addresses the dearth of literature on teaching undergraduate business students qualitative research methods. Psychogeography challenges the dominance of questionnaires and interviews, introduces students to data variety, problematizes notions of success and illuminates the importance of observation and location. Using two studies with undergraduate students, the authors emphasize place and setting, the perception of purpose, the choice of data, criteria of success and the value of guided reflection and self-reflection in students' learning. Additionally the data reflect on the way students perceive research about management and the nature of management itself. The paper concludes that the deployment of psychogeography to teach business research methods although complex and fraught with difficulty is nevertheless viable, educationally productive, and worthy of further research.

Keywords: dérive, higher education, psychogeography, fieldwork, qualitative research methods.

Introduction

This article responds to calls for new ways of teaching in higher education and specifically the dearth of work on teaching undergraduate business students research methods. Noting the importance of linking research with teaching (Brew 2012;

Cuthbert et al. 2012), we trialled a psychogeographical approach and specifically the technique known as dérive in order to provide management undergraduates with an 'authentic research experience' as a way of teaching qualitative research.

Psychogeography and the dérive, explained below, raise fundamental questions about the nature of qualitative research. Briefly, psychogeography is a way of connecting our inner and outer worlds, an exploration of space, time and passion. It is 'the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals' (Debord, 1955). The dérive, an element of psychogeography, is defined by Debord (1958, para 1) as a 'rapid passage through varied ambiences'. It is related to other concepts such as détournement and the flâneur developed by the Situationist artistic movement which critiqued capitalism and sought to bring together the aims of artists and consumers to integrate culture into ordinary life (Tate Gallery, 2018). The task of a dérive is to move on foot in a seemingly unplanned manner through a setting (Coverley 2010). This article explores the value of psychogeography and the dérive using data from reflections on dérives conducted by undergraduate students.

There has been an explosion of academic interest in psychogeography in recent years (Richardson 2015). It has been used in teaching (Rice 2009), in social analysis (Bridger 2013), and education (Rich and Brown 2012) but it has received little attention as implementable in business and management research (but see Knowles 2008; 2009). We shall explain psychogeography and the dérive, and then provide a broader context of teaching qualitative research methods in business. Having provided this theoretical context, we then describe the empirical project. The data suggests that there is a case for further inquiry into psychogeography and the dérive as a research training method. We conclude our paper with a discussion of the

opportunities and limitations of the dérive as a method for teaching research in the light of the experience of students in the study who conducted dérives.

Psychogeography and the dérive

As its name suggests, psychogeography combines two spheres which are often kept separate: the inside and the outside world of human life, the individual psyche and its geographical environment. Its aim is 'a thorough exploration of the relations between space, time and passions' (Levin 1996, p.117). The dérive was conceived to contribute to a psychogeography of the modern city. It is a concept coined by the French Situationists and by Debord (1958) as 'a mode of experimental behavior linked to the condition of urban society: a technique of rapid passage through various ambiences [involving] playful-constructive behaviour and awareness of psychological effects'. It is a walk 'endowed with a deeper meaning and significance as a critical and aesthetic practice' (Bassett 2004, p.397). Bassett relates the dérive to the nineteenth-century *flâneur* ('the disinterested, leisurely [urban] observer')*,* the Surrealists' *déambulations* ('more organized walks […] extending out into the countryside') and the *Arcades* work of Walter Benjamin in the 1930s in which he examined shopping malls in the roles of archaeologist, collector and flâneur (Bassett 2004, pp.298-9). The dérive as part of the Situationists' activities was intended to subvert the power of 'the spectacle' (Plant 1992), with a focus on what is usually ignored; the marginal, the taboo and the uncanny. The *flâneur* may also be taken as a metaphor for a radical ethnographer (Jenks and Neves 2000).

The point of the dérive is to drop usual motivations for movement and actions and let oneself be 'drawn in by the attractions of the terrain', or simply 'drift', which is how Nicholson (2011, p.26) translates the French term. The intention is that the

experiences collected will broaden, challenge, change and/or complement previously known data. The dérive supports the collection of data in whichever form the psychogeographer/researcher finds most appropriate and revealing. This is noteworthy for us for, as Easterby-Smith et al. (2018, p.209) argue, 'despite the pervasive nature of the visual in our everyday lives, management research has continued to privilege verbal over visual forms of communication'. Some psychogeographical work seems to suggest that it is an aimless wandering. However, this is misleading for the aimlessness is not pointless. It is intended to avoid being so focused that one's attention is too narrow to notice potentially insightful data. One thinks of 'managing by wandering about'. The seemingly unplanned nature of a dérive often belies meticulous planning, and other techniques employed by psychogeographers such as reading relevant literature, observing environments and engaging key actors within those settings in dialogue are well recognised within mainstream qualitative business research (Knowles, 2008). The dérives of the Situationists 'were not ends in themselves [but] acts of research; […] out of which might eventually spring new ways of living to transform cities' (Smith 2014, p.50). Through dérive one may learn 'how people build relationships to places; how space is surveilled, controlled and regulated…' (Garrett 2014). The relationship between research method and movement is complex. Raulet-Croset and Borzeix (2014, p.29) refer to ethnography-based research on organisations as currently being field work 'on the move' and see the origins of commented walks in France as phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty [1945] 2002), anthropology (Murray and Mauss 1934) and sociology (Goffman 1959). Sharanya (2016) clearly defines dérive as a form of ethnography emphasising the element of movement to distinguish the method. She claims "The

dérive as an ethnographic form highlights its ongoing, present nature of exploration, without ascribing spatio-temporal borders to it." (P.211).

Teaching research methods

Learning research skills and techniques is a 'vital element' of management education (Cassell et al. 2009, p.514) which can enable students to develop a range of transferable skills. However, exposure to the research process is limited in undergraduate studies (Buckley, 2011). Furthermore, research and teaching might be linked in various ways (Visser‑Wijnveen et al., 2010) to the benefit of undergraduates. Bowden and Marton (1998) explored this link and suggested that both learning and research are concerned with discerning the 'critical features of phenomena' (as quoted in Brew 2010, p.112). Teaching research methods is challenging because only actually carrying out research rather than merely reading about it makes it properly understood. As Van Maanen (1998, p.xi) noted, 'research is most often designed while it is being done'. He stressed that the researcher's use of his or her own body is the primary instrument of research. It is this 'physical presence' which allows the researcher to relate together 'images, sounds, perceptions, thoughts and words' (Raulet-Croset and Borzeix 2014, 31; Van Maanen 1996, p.380.).

Cameron (2011) in her study on mixed-methods research in business and management, shows how the diverse field of management does not rely on one theoretical base, but a myriad of research approaches. Management and organizational research faces a diverse spectrum of research fields and thus makes use of and needs an open approach to the use of theory and methods (p.248). It has, however, been acknowledged that the study of business education is in need of new root metaphors,

that this research field is theoretically rather arid and that new methods should be explored (Albert and Couture 2014; Alvesson and Gabriel 2013).

This relates to calls for an undergraduate education which offers 'the breadth of outlook and conceptual agility for living in a global century' so that business and management students 'understand the relation of business to the larger world' (Colby et al. 2011, p.2). Shulman (2011, pp. ix-x) links students' ability to relate analytical and multiple perspectives to a sense of self and the formation of identity. From another perspective, students need to learn to appreciate diverse ways of knowing, 'personal, narrative, embodied, artistic, aesthetic - that stand outside sanctioned intellectual frameworks' (Knowles and Cole 2008, p.5). There is a clear demand for innovation in management education and in research methods which will equip students to deal creatively with the 'novel, complex and unstructured' challenges central to a 'super-complex society' that they will encounter in their working lives (Brew 2010, p.141). This would entail a shift from 'thinking of society and culture as a collection of things, i.e. people, organisations, job roles, information' to 'complexity thinking' with an emphasis on 'relationships between things' (Keegan 2009, p.238).

It is for the above reasons that a qualitative approach, methodologies such as psychogeography, and techniques such as the dérive are appealing, but they are not unproblematic. Even business research manuals are hard-pressed to reach an agreed definition of high-quality qualitative research (Cassell et al. 2009). Gummesson (2006, p.167) refers to the strengths of the qualitative approach as favouring a complex environment characterized by 'fuzzy phenomena', for which statistical methods are inadequate. For management students 'the sought-for knowledge is not "certain truth" but "useful knowledge"' (Guercini, 2014, p.670).

Some of the concerns related to the dérive as a research activity can be compared with general concerns related to the creation of qualitative data: access, ethical issues and entering the field; small and unrepresentative samples, unsystematic methods, difficulties in generalizing, and a failure to test explicit hypotheses (Easterby-Smith et al. 2018; Zussman, 2004, p.352). The problems of replication, objectivity and statistical generalizability are outweighed by the benefits of uniqueness. It can achieve 'internal generalizability (ability to explain what has been researched within a particular setting) and not statistical generalizability' (Easterby-Smith et al, 2018, p.269). Zussman (2004, p.352) adds that:

> Qualitative research, […] is at its best precisely when it works from cases rather than samples, when it is opportunistic rather than systematic, when it specifies rather than generalizes, and when it struggles to find unconventional ways of linking research to concept.

The dérive has its limitations but it also exploits the above benefits of the qualitative paradigm.

Our aim in this study was to use psychogeography and the dérive as an exemplary way to teach research methods and explore the teaching, learning and research nexus. Our objective was to test this as an alternative way of learning which physically and sensorially engages the students' sense of self, confronts them with complexity and uncertainty, and allows them to experience the challenge of open, critical inquiry.

Into the field

We base our claims on two studies using psychogeography and the dérive with a total of 72 business school undergraduates on a first semester Research Methods course at

a university in Germany offering study programmes in English. An initial pilot study with ten students in one semester was followed by a later one with 62 students. The students had no business experience beyond short internships or work placements. As part of a 'Principles of Research and Academic Writing' course, the students were required to complete a research project which involved primary data collection. We had noted that, given a choice of questionnaires, interviews and/or observations, the former two are almost always preferred to observation. We surmise that this is because they sidestep the challenges of qualitative data collection discussed above. The dérive was purposefully set up as an exploratory activity to be carried out in the initial stages of their research before the students were introduced to the theory of research methods. It was deliberately presented as an exercise where students were not aware of the sorts of issues and ideas that they might confront. The emphasis was on discovery and on the students' own construction of knowledge (Cuthbert et al. 2012). Given its experimental nature, it was not part of the course assessment. Students were given, both orally and in writing, a brief background on psychogeography and the dérive to provide them with a workable framework. Through class discussion they were made aware of potential ethical issues inherent in research such as confidentiality and anonymity and intrusion of private space. Initial reactions made it clear that students were not confident going into the dérive. They were told that the aim of the exercise was that we, the researchers, would collect the students' experiences during the dérive and their later reflections on the activity with the ultimate aim of analysing the data and researching the applicability of 'alternative' research methods in university studies and in the development of management skills. It was also stressed that the dérive was seen as helping them to form their ideas for further primary data

collection such as the questionnaires and interviews mentioned above. Although this was not mentioned to the students, we were aware that students were likely to broaden their view of their topic (whether broadly 'management' or a chosen area within the field – see specific topics below) and become more aware of their role as researchers particularly with regard to preconceptions, expected outcomes and relevance. Deliberately, not too much emphasis was put on expected outcomes as this could easily have led students to seek these outcomes. Participation was voluntary for the pilot group and part of the lecturing schedule for the second. Students were given written and oral instructions. The instructions which were deliberately brief to foster spontaneity included: 'A dérive involves moving through a, usually urban, landscape and collecting experiences. These experiences can be noted in multiple ways: photos, recordings, souvenirs found along the way, oral impressions etc. Any, all or many more can be used. The task is to move on foot in an unplanned manner through a setting being aware of "your chosen topic/ management".' The topics chosen in the pilot study were sustainability, brand awareness, dress codes, social/electronic media use, advertising. The later group all shared the topic of 'management'.

In the pilot group, of the twelve students invited to participate, ten took part and submitted report forms. In the second group, 62 dérive report forms were submitted.. The 'dérive report form' focused on research topic, location, previous knowledge of location, background research, time, group size, roles, data collected, attitudes to research topic post derive, information from the dérive different from other data collection methods carried out (questionnaires and surveys), and usefulness of the activity.

Time was not a restriction, but a minimum of one hour was suggested. Dérives take place alone or in groups, but as large groups often divide four people was given as a maximum group size. In the pilot group, most students chose to collect their experiences individually, focusing on the topic of their upcoming research project, and in the second most worked in groups. Students chose the setting – urban environments, the university and surroundings, or a selected rural environment were suggested. Most of them chose to conduct their dérive on the university campus or in nearby towns.

The first group selected their topics independently but received confirmation from the lecturer that these were suitable in terms of having realizable objectives. The topics at this stage of the course were very broad in definition and mostly expressed in key words (as stated above: sustainability, brand awareness, dress codes, social/electronic media use, advertising). As the course progressed post-dérive, many were developed further; for example, 'Are consumers willing to pay more for sustainable products?', 'To what extent do international students adopt local brand awareness?' These questions were developed by the students independently at least partly based on their observations during the dérive. The second group all had the same topic of 'management' and post-dérive began to consider the exact topics for their research projects.

Data could be submitted in whichever form students wished and they submitted text, recordings, photos and voice memos.

We analysed the data using a content analysis approach which foregrounds the actual words of the students. This was carried out by examining both the data the students collected on their dérive and the feedback they submitted on the experience. The aim was to search for material that confirmed or refuted the usefulness of the

dérive to the students (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). The report forms were compared initially by categorising comments into positive and negative. Sub-categorisation then took place looking at the reasons for this feedback. For example, in the positive category, the dérive was a success due to broadening of perspective (sub-category 1 perspective), finding what I expected (sub-category 2 preconceptions). Due to the relatively small number of students, especially in the pilot study, this was only used to give us an overview of student reactions and attitudes post dérive, not to claim representative data. The data itself, such as photos, leaflets and objects was considered along with comments students provided in writing or in class discussion post-dérive. The variety of approaches and data collected provides rich material to explore the sensory aspects of research and knowledge construction. The diverse ways of knowing discussed above are pertinent here (Knowles and Cole 2008). We were able to draw several significant issues from the students' reflections about the v*ariety of data, the problem of assessment, notions of success and locale.*

Variety of data

Significant differences were found in the amount and type of data students collected. Students in both groups were interested in the activity as any previous primary data collection experience they had tended to consist of questionnaires at school, where the method had not offered so much flexibility.   The variety of approaches that the students adopted also offers challenges to our concept of the characteristics of data.

On their dérives, students all concentrated on visual impressions (cf Easterby-Smith, 2018, p. 209) which they collected either in photo and/or in written and recorded spoken text. The number of photos and amount of text varied considerably.

However, as this was at least partly due to some being more 'snap happy' and variation between speaking/writing in short bullet points or longer description, this was not seen as significant and therefore not part of the data analysis. In the pilot group this could, in some cases, be related to their particular chosen research topics, but those researching generally on 'management' also focused on what could be seen. One student listened to music whilst walking therefore precluding aural impressions from the surroundings. Two students, whose topic was advertising proved open to further data. They commented,

> We experienced the verbal advertisement on the market, drawing customers from miles away, with words like 'fresh' and 'cheap'. Food stores, for example, are also able to advertise through the smell of baked goods or spices, which led people to be curious about their products.

One student conducted participant observations, in a lecture, on a train, and also at a train station. Another carried out her research by stopping passers-by to answer a survey and whilst waiting, dérived. Six students (working partly independently and partly together) talked to other pedestrians. Interestingly, this had not been mentioned as a possibility, but simply that students could collect whatever data they found appropriate and interesting. 'We took the chance to ask a couple of pedestrians about their opinions and found that they had very different ideas than we did'.
Ingold (2013) points out that participant observation is not a data collection method but 'knowing from the inside'. A combination of survey and dérive seems to create a 'knowing from the outside'.

Students who wrote text tended to give a brief overview. Photos were complementary and provided opportunities for further comment in the light of information that had not been evident when the photos were taken. For example,

students with the topic of advertising later noticed many additional small adverts and attention grabbers in their photos. Again, we have a challenge to any easy acceptance of data, or findings: is it worth making a distinction between what was noticed on site and what was noticed afterwards about the site via a photograph? By contrast, voice memos made during the activity provided much more detail and the impressions were instant. A noteworthy advantage of introducing the dérive to students seen here is that it raises student engagement with the topic and raises their awareness of diverse forms of data and accessibility.

The challenge of assessment

The variety of data and the challenge of assessing the students' efforts relates to assessing the value of the dérive as a teaching technique. This makes it difficult to make a dérive an assignment; a 'pass' could be given for completion, but grading would require more sophisticated marking schemes. What could the assessment criteria consist of? However, the dérive is ideal as a formative assessment as it raises questions, invites reflection and considers how to improve for a later, formally marked assignment.

Since researchers collect impressions in the form that suits them, that they can best process, or in the type best suited to the research objectives, this presents challenges in terms of assessment. In terms of summative assessment, where grades are desired and these become a criterion of whether the work is worth doing or not, it forces reflection on the legitimation of knowledge, as would any example of personalized learning where students do it in the way they prefer, and may suit some more than others. One of the students opined it was a 'waste of time', another 'this is not for me', but this may have been because they did not yet know how to process it.

For many students, their attitudes to their research topics changed during the dérive, but this did not strike them all until they came to complete the dérive report form later. The issue here may be the time to reflect. Cassell et al., (2009, p.528) advise that 'training should be carried out with enough time between sessions to allow students to have ample opportunity to reflect upon their learning and experience'. An aspect of our learning in studying the experiences of these students was that they are not able to immediately assess the usefulness of a dérive. Student reflections on the usefulness of the activity can be divided almost equally between 'yes, the dérive was useful', 'not sure', and comments explaining how the dérive had broadened their view of either their particular topic or 'management' as a concept. Interestingly, the pilot group who completed an additional report form three weeks post-dérive all found the dérive useful on later reflection. The second group completed the form within one week of the dérive. However, they also were much more positive in the ensuing class discussion, than immediately after the dérive. The lecturer's impression was certainly that students were more open to the discussion of research theory having experienced many issues and challenges in the field (for example hypothesis testing, research design, ethical issues, reliability, validity). It therefore, certainly contributed to students learning about research. This is enmeshed with an assessment of its value as a research method, and here students can be expected to have different notions of success. Views on whether or not the dérive was successful revealed much about its pedagogical value.

Notions of success

It is possible that students were initially over-challenged by the activity. One voice memo stated, 'Well, I hope it comes out kind of okay. But as I have no clue, or

little knowledge what I'm actually supposed to do, let's see what comes out'. Another student commented, 'I had no idea how to start with my dérive'. This points to the aim of research, particularly a dérive, sometimes being discovered whilst doing it. Sinclair (2002) refers to road users as 'goal-oriented', and 'going somewhere'. Voice and written memos show that the dérive students did not know where they were going. They said they were unsure of what to do and how to collect data. At first, some even thought they would find no data. Placing students in positions of uncertainty clearly relates to emergent learning. Keegan points out how research objectives may be fluid and may develop as a project develops: 'Nowadays, research objectives are often multi-layered, sometimes contradictory and may change as the project progresses' (2009, p.237). Success from an educational point of view does not necessarily correlate with an easy student experience from the student's point of view.

One student reported, 'I did it alone, as to concentrate on the task. I was only listening to music.' This implies that 'success' is related to concentration and this is easier alone. This is surprising because when the activity was initially discussed in the lecture, students turned to one another for support as they lacked confidence in what was expected of them and even how to go about it.

Much depended on how the student perceived the purpose and the actual benefits of the exercise. There was a marked difference between the pilot group already with their research project topics and the second group researching more broadly 'management'. One of the students from the first group stated, 'I thought it makes more sense to do it alone so you [lecturer] would get more different answers.' This student clearly saw the project as for the benefit of the lecturer who would require as much student feedback as possible, making an individual approach apparently more 'productive'. His research project concerned attitudes to clothing

brands. 'Useful for you probably, ha-ha. Not so much for my own research. I enjoyed doing it anyways.' This raises the complex relationship between a student meeting the lecturer's expectation (or at least what they perceive to be the lecturer's expectations) and their own learning. We should also ask what sense the student may have of his/her own learning, and is it actually accurate? Is it actually possible the students learnt nothing?

The students, in the second group, who worked in groups rather than alone or in pairs reported, 'it was more fun', 'it was more exciting', 'it's nice to have someone to discuss about your thoughts', 'you have more & different ideas and opinions which leads you to a better & more widespread result', 'teamwork is better', 'to think outside the box', 'more brains, better outcome'. Here the students clearly see team work of benefit and increasing the success of the activity.

Other student responses also indicated questionable assumptions about research knowledge (cf above on legitimating knowledge). One student in the pilot group, asked if the dérive had changed her attitude to her research topic, responded, 'Not really, as I found the results I expected to find.' The student claimed the activity was not really a success as, 'It was a nice thing to do, definitely opened my mind for the topic. However, the results I achieved were mainly as I expected them to be.' The student implies that finding expected results makes the activity less successful. It is interesting to contrast this with Arthur Conan Doyle (as quoted in Easterby-Smith et al. 2018, p.60), 'It is a capital mistake to theorise before one has data. Insensibly one begins to collect facts to suit theories, rather than theories to suit facts'.

Another student stated, 'My attitude to the topic did not change but I actually started to think about the reasons […] and what the results of our questionnaire will be.' This can be deemed a success due to the accompanying oral reflection on how to

construct the data collection tool and how one's own researcher bias can influence the data collected. According to the student the dérive produced a clearer focus on her topic than brainstorming. A further variation was supplied by a student who conducted the dérive alone because, 'I often notice that people from certain target groups have a certain dressing behaviour'. This implies that as she knew what data she would collect in advance, she could focus better alone and so it was not really worth getting together with someone else. In both cases, the students were pleased with their results, but only on reflection could see that they had fundamentally decided in advance what data they would find. As discussed above, this was evident in oral reflection where students discussed their own bias and their previous lack of awareness of researcher bias and potential impacts on data reliability.

Success, it seems, is bound up with relevance: 'It has only shown us that our topic is relevant' is a fascinating comment by a student implying that relevance had not been the primary concern. In the course itself it is actually quite difficult for students to select 'relevant' research topics. This student's repeated mentions of the connection to the topic imply that this is a measure of success.

A student researching the use of social media in public places commented that the dérive made her want to monitor her own behaviour: 'I think it is also a positive experience for me, because I can learn out of these situations and can try to not behave the same way'. She also commented that questionnaires show how people perceive themselves but the dérive 'was useful to get additional valuable and reliable results!' Several students found the dérive useful in confirming the significance of their chosen research topics: 'It was an interesting experience and I found it really helpful to get a better look on the importance of my topic'.

One student dealing with student attitudes to sustainable actions found the dérive useful: 'I noticed how broad the topic actually is and how narrow our view'. Most students analysed what they had seen and said they would then use that to search the literature for their assignment.

Several student groups valued the dérive as opening their minds, 'be more aware of our surroundings which doesn't happen with questionnaires and interviews', 'it gives more clear sight', 'you get more information if you get outside of the box', 'it was useful to actually go out and explore because usually we only learn theoretically', 'It offered a new perspective'. These quotes are from both groups, but overall it was particularly evident in the 'management' group, who all noted that it made them question what management is and the nature of finding/seeing or experiencing management.

Overall, students clearly defined research success in different ways. Both team work and working alone were seen as fostering concentration as well as finding 'relevant' data and discovering new insights. The notion of success was definitely different in the two groups. The pilot group saw more direct use of the data and experience in already planning their research project on their chosen subject. The second group concentrated more on the way the dérive opened them to the notion of management as a broader concept and the benefits of doing this with other people.

There was plenty of evidence of student learning in particular based on reflection, the role of the researcher, expectations and in that sense the exercise was pedagogically successful. However, it must be remembered that results varied and not all students provided the same feedback or experienced the same. An interest was kindled in both 'research' and 'management' as students moved beyond uncritically accepting definitions and began to question their theory and practice.

Locale

We offer some final comments on the importance of locale. One student chose the local town 'as I hoped to find visual proof of sustainability', an interesting expectation about the visibility of sustainability in a town. The same student responded to the question on whether he carried out background research on the location with the comment 'No, I was going with the flow', implying quite astutely that he could not have carried out research beforehand as he was not sure where he would end up. Dérive means to drift, but we, as the psychogeographer may choose whether to drift , or to allow the environment around us drift while we stay physically still, as seen in the students who at least partly stayed in one place and questioned/observed pedestrians.

Students generally commented on the suitability of their chosen location for their topic. However, one student showed the practicalities of research: 'Another reason why we chose this is because it was very convenient for us to get there'. This student also mentioned the fact that taking photographs can be intrusive and so the location should be one where this does not strike people as much (see Sinclair 1998, for an experience of being banned from taking photographs in an inappropriate London location).

All in all, students clearly showed that they considered the location carefully before beginning the dérive and certainly considered some locations more appropriate than others. The emphasis was on the urban context, but no evidence was given that rural environments might not be appropriate.

Discussion

In teaching research, we tend to focus more on the nature of research rather than on the nature of learning. Using psychogeography and a dérive as a means of teaching research facilitates a focus on learning as 'a fostered process and not a managed process where diverse options and opportunities are required' (Sinha 2012, p.11). There is a strong sense that there is space for learning. Brew (2010, pp.139-40) uses Bauman's term (2006) 'liquid modernity' to refer to a society where '[k]nowledge now comes in sound bites; chaotic and unplanned' (Brew 2010, p.140). The students have access to instant knowledge through the internet and, as Brew points out, this can actually throw into question who the teacher is and who is the learner. The dérive allowed both students and lecturer to focus on learning and produced interesting insights into data collection. These students in a German university found the informality of the activity quite a novelty, and perhaps their varied interpretations of 'success' was a reflection of this. Their focus was on visual data and locale, and in reviewing the process and the student feedback we have discerned how the crucial issues of theory and practice play out in the process of collective versus individual inquiry and the importance of context.

The students began naïvely as none of them had much experience in any form of educational research and. In this context, adopting the dérive as a way of broadening students' perspectives on their initial ideas for a research project was a teaching point, for students can learn the theory passively but they have to find out experientially what works locally. The results of the dérive showed that students had independently begun to question not only what research is, but also the nature of management and how it can be defined and indeed researched. In some ways, this experiment with dérive and undergraduate students vindicates the findings of the

anthropologist and educator Tim Ingold (2013, p.11) who states the aims of his

university course in art, architecture, anthropology and archaeology as:

> […] to train students in the art of inquiry, to sharpen their powers of
>
> observation, and to encourage them to think through observation rather than
>
> after it. Like hunters they had to learn to learn, to follow the movements of
>
> beings and things and in turn respond to them with judgment and precision.

This is the essence of learning research methods. Ingold (2013) also stresses that

teachers are not there simply to pass on their knowledge, but to provide situations in

which students can discover what they already know and even move beyond it: 'We

grow into knowledge rather than having it handed down to us'. For the students the

dérive was an intensive learning experience. They entered the activity feeling unsure

and aware that they were 'on their own' to make decisions including where to dérive

and what data to collect. Their uncertainties included the aspect of 'What if I find

nothing?' 'What if there is no data?' These questions were clearly answered with an

increasing awareness that data is everywhere and observation of the complete context,

as much as possible, is vital. The students' increased awareness of being open to what

the research environment presents, rather than searching for the 'right' or 'desired'

answers was evident in all student feedback.

The relationship between theory and practice is entwined with the relationship

between teaching and learning. Rich and Brown (2012), commenting on an

undergraduate course including a dérive, suggest that a minority of students were

uncomfortable with the level of responsibility given to students themselves to

organize some activities. The students in our case study clearly had problems with

self-reliance, yet their concept of 'success' was clearly linked to either working alone

or in a team. They were told 'you can't do it wrong' but were, at least initially, not

really sure how to 'do it right' either. This clearly links to the difficulty of assessing such an activity which has, embedded within it, a paradox. In the words of Smith (2014, p.74) 'It's all about being flexible and ready… There is a paradox here: preparing to be spontaneous'. It is difficult to envisage the derive as an assessed assignment, rather an awareness increasing activity leading to reflection on business research and aspects of data collection such as bias, preconceptions and data variety.

Group work is notorious in education from first-year level to MBA for provoking personal issues and assessment problems. However, we persist because the ability to work in teams is an essential management skill. Rich and Brown (2012) point out the benefits of informal learning as very strong for team skills and team building. Psychogeography and the dérive throw up this challenge. The students in our experiment were addressed in teams, but the initial group mostly worked alone. The later group, addressed as a lecture group, mainly worked in teams. Sinclair (1998, 2002) prefers walking with a companion, suggesting that psychogeography could be a team effort. Could the team, as some students' experiences suggest, actually influence the perceived success of the activity? Some students evidently required help in being an effective team or even in combining the words 'effective' and 'team' in a business research context. The discrepancy in attitudes to teamwork can be seen as important in reflecting perceptions of success and research aims. We cannot do more here than acknowledge that assessing group work is challenging in any context, and especially in qualitative research and particularly in dérive as the dérive is an autonomous activity allowing students to make choices and establish which forms of data collection work for them.

The purpose of an inquiry is inseparable from the context of that inquiry. In the dérive, the locale is the context. Should we instruct students where to carry out

dérives – does it matter? Sinclair (2002) is irritated by organizations such as the Countryside Commission telling him what he should visit, 'Why let someone else nominate sites that are worth visiting?' (p. 318). The evidence from this small experiment suggests that finding the 'suitable', 'appropriate' place is part of the research process. The 'wrong' place does not really exist, although as objectives develop a 'more appropriate' place may be chosen. The Situationists, the original 'dérivers' located their activities in urban settings. However, to what degree this is linked to the chosen area of research and a focus on human activity is worthy of discussion and should be researched further. Surely a dérive can take place in an isolated rural setting depending on the focus of the activity?

This also invites the question of whether the dérive is appropriate or useful in all locations, with any group of students or for any topic. Our study showed that more detailed reflections arose from students who already had a research topic, but more general class discussion from those with the 'management' task. It could well be that the first group produced more detailed report forms due to already having a research topic to focus on and an assessed project in mind. However, both groups showed an awareness and willingness to reflect on issues of management and research to which they had not been previously exposed to.

The 'management' group benefitted from our experience with the pilot group which had clearly shown the uncertainties for the students of embarking on a dérive. Clear instructions are needed, yet it was important to maintain spontaneity and student autonomy. The pilot study primarily showed how students all assessed the dérive as a success on reflection. Opinions differed from during and directly after the activity. This heavily influenced the time given to reflection in the later group, both as an in-class discussion and report form completion.

The dérive has now become a part of the research methods course at the university where this study took place. We recommend using the dérive as part of a course either with student selected topics or a shared topic for the group. Student autonomy is important in deciding the size of the group to work with, where to go and what data to collect. The framework of the dérive provides a flexible structure whereby students can explore the boundaries of research allowing their own presumptions to be challenged and their ideas to develop. It could therefore be integrated in any number of ways.

Conclusion

The dérive as a psychogeographic research tool can be seen as implementable in research activities for business and higher education. It need not be presented as a new research technique to replace surveys, questionnaires and/or observations, but the evidence we have leads us to believe the students were, as a result of the dérive, better equipped to continue and develop the process of knowledge gathering and to assess their own roles as researchers. We would conclude that the earlier students are exposed to fundamental issues of epistemology and challenges to orthodoxy the better. The crucial element in students' learning from the research/dérive experience is their reflection upon choices. These relatively unstructured challenges exemplify the nexus of teaching, learning and research and can help prepare students for the complexity and uncertainty of working life. We conclude that the deployment of dérive related to psychogeography in teaching research methods in business and higher education is viable and educationally productive and there is potential for further research in this area.

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