

## **What difference does walking make? Productive encounters with urban heritage on foot**

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Abstract: With research in heritage studies becoming reinvigorated in recent years through the introduction of new critical and theoretical influences, it has become clear that individual and collective experiences of heritage places are not well understood. The recent emphasis on affect and emotion has begun to address this gap, but there are other aspects of the ways that people interact with heritage, particularly in urban contexts, that remain underexplored. One example is the reality that much heritage is experienced while walking. Around the world structured and informal tours, trails and itineraries encourage visitors and locals alike to experience heritage on foot. But what difference does walking make for urban heritage? Connecting with themes in mobility studies and new interdisciplinary research on walking, this paper highlights the differences between static and walking visitor experiences. More specifically, drawing on ongoing research in Hong Kong, the paper investigates how walking generates opportunities to encounter and interact with heritage in productive ways. These include the blurring of boundaries between official and unofficial heritage, opportunities to learn how urban development and planning may threaten heritage or generate prospects for conservation, and chances to cross over or dissolve the “local-tourist divide”. Recognizing that the ability to participate in walking visits is not universal, it is a nevertheless widely accessible format with a range of possibilities, not only for visitors, but also for community engagement. By focusing on walking this paper signals the importance of an attention to grounded, embodied experiences of urban heritage in streets and neighbourhoods. Beyond this scholarly contribution, the central argument of the paper complements global trajectories in urban planning and design, in which walkability is important not only for community and environmental sustainability, but also for public health.