Wandering Minds: Interdisciplinary Experiments on Self-Generated Thought

Initiative: European Platform

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Projekt-Website: https://www.dur.ac.uk/cmh/researchprojects/wanderingminds/

This project is an interdisciplinary investigation - both empirical and conceptual - of the phenomenon of mind-wandering. Having only recently become an object of major study in psychology and neuroscience, mind-wandering is today positioned as key to understanding many aspects of human cognition and psychological wellbeing. However, researchers are still puzzling over how best to concretely define mind-wandering and related phenomena (e.g. daydreaming, self-generated thought, fantasy, or spontaneous cognition). Such clarification is critical to developing neuroimaging paradigms to investigate these states. At the same time, scholars in the humanities and qualitative social sciences have produced rich elaborations of the phenomenology of mind-wandering, and have developed methods for analysing the content of thought. This project thus draws these endeavours together, in order to design an innovative, interdisciplinary mind-wandering paradigm, incorporating neuropsychological data, fMRI data, and qualitative data. Collaborative projects involving the neurosciences and the interpretive social sciences remain relatively rare which is the reason why the project also analyses the interdisciplinary procedures underpinning this investigation: it uses auto-ethnographic and historical methods to specify what is involved in experimentalizing humanistic and social scientific knowledge in an interdisciplinary setting.

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