

FREE THEME

WALK DOGS ON SHORT LEADS

For some, 'wellbeing' simply means feeling good; both about yourself, the world around you and being able to get on with life in the way you want. However, 'wellbeing' as a concept is a difficult and often contested concept to define. Part of the attraction of wellbeing reflects a neo liberal political agenda that wants to see people look after themselves in order to limit demands on health and social services. The World Health Organisation defines wellbeing as a state where everyone is able to realise their potential, cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and fruitfully and contribute to their community.

Often approaches to wellbeing have adopted a place-based perspective. Influencing health related wellbeing through engaging an emotional response not only through the experience of moving through a place, but the mental stimulus derived from their material characteristics and atmosphere.

In 2015, The Wellbeing Walk, was launched as an alternative walking route for people that travel, between Euston Stations, King's Cross and St Pancras International Station in London is funded by a local council and business partnership with the prime objective of building and sustaining a thriving urban neighbourhood. Traversing through Somers Town, the walk offers a healthier, less stressful route as well as opportunity to improve wellbeing simply by the act of walking and is now promoted as a pilot for other areas of London to adopt.

A testament to the route, this new body of work hints at the effect of neoliberalism ideology on the urban city, not only as a physiognomy of place by its presentation of surface and appearance but also the psychological state of place which could serve as a metaphor for the current shape of wellbeing healthcare within the UK. The visual content captures small oddities and nuances that act as indicators of the characteristics and identity of the area and allow for humorous elements to come through, displaying a sense of naivety but without being naive. Visual connections and metaphors render the invisible visible. The banality of the subject and repetition of bold colours within, juxtapose with the walk's intention bringing into play doubts and motives at a deeper level. Through the context of the work, the walk is now something to be negotiated and more considered.