



Writing Walking

(One day in late Spring during a global pandemic)

Edited by Emma Jackson

Zoom Group Chat: Where will you be walking today?

Hackney

Walthamstow, London

I'm in Hackney, East London

Lisbon

Glasgow

Brixton, London

Around Deptford, south-east London

I'm in Margate

Salford, Manchester

Cambridge

Sheffield

Catford, s-e London

North Shields, North Tyneside

Chester

Rushwick village, Worcestershire

Kings Heath in Birmingham

Sheffield.

Ladywell

Cardiff City Centre

Tooting, SW London

Hi, Hulme, Manchester

Taplow, Bucks (Maidenhead)

Central London

Cardiff

Hi everyone/ I'll be walking around Sherwood, Nottingham.

I'll be walking in Islington/Hackney London

Mumbai India

Kings Heath Birmingham

In SW London

The woods (Wales)!

Forest outside Kungälv, Sweden

Rural northwest Germany

Writing Walking at the Centre for Urban and Community Research

There is a rich tradition of using walking in research and teaching at the Centre for Urban and Community Research (CUCR) at Goldsmiths. Since the centre's inception in 1994, we have been organising, thinking and writing from walks. These have consisted of local walks in our immediate neighbourhood of Deptford and New Cross, as well as across London. And walks with collaborators in other cities, including Beijing, Berlin, Copenhagen, Hong Kong, Lisbon, Paris and Coventry. The focus of these walks has been plural too. There have been infrastructural exploration walks, Benjamin-esque walks, sound walks, reggae walks, anti-racist walks, feminist walks, soil, plant and mulberry walks. Despite building this body of scholarly research practise through walks, we have not often discussed together how we translate these into written pieces. So, one morning in May 2021, we organised an online event where we could think, walk, and write together with others.

The event was put together in direct response to the time of the pandemic that for many of us had reconfigured our relationship with walking, with the places in which we live, and that had also reshaped the public life of the city. For many, this was a time when our worlds shrank. Daily routines were shaken up and we became newly connected with our locality through new practices such as the 'daily exercise walk'. This was a very particular time, then, to consider questions of walking and writing.

The event was deliberately organised to fall before lockdown restrictions were lifted further in England. This was partly so we could capture this period in our walks, but also to make the most of the online event format at a time when we might start moving back towards in-person events.

We wondered, what can these new repeated walks tell us about the places we live in and move through? Can we use these ways of walking to help us to interpret these pandemic-related changes? Perhaps to tease out subtle – and not so subtle – shifts in how power is working through urban space. Or at least to help us to find the questions that we want to ask.

In order to give participants some ideas to take for their walks, we heard from three speakers.

Nirmal Puwar, spoke about her work as what she terms 'the writer as resident' in Coventry, her hometown. She explored care in the city, histories of racism and conviviality in the run up to it being the UK City of Culture. Caroline Knowles discussed her writing up of walks through Mayfair to examine the world of the super-rich and their impact on urban space. And Amani Hassani talked about the walks she has taken with young Muslim people in Montreal and Copenhagen, to tease out how racialisation and spatialisation work through and are challenged in their navigation of the city.

Each speaker posed a question or questions for the participants to take for a walk in real time in their local vicinity. The speakers asked us to think with the following prompts:

How is money inscribed in the landscape?

Look at the buildings and trees around you – what has been there a while? What is emergent? What does it prompt in you? How are our life histories inscribed into the spaces that we walk through?

How can a temporal perspective on space help us to understand how power plays out in space?

We then went our separate ways to walk, in Glasgow and Mumbai, in Sheffield and North Shields, in Lisbon and London, in the woods outside of Cardiff and of Kungälv, among other places.

The walkers then reconvened online for a writing workshop, led by Nirmal, who offered another set of writing prompts.

The pieces contained in this booklet were created in real time during the workshop and in reflection in the hours immediately afterwards. We have also used passages of the Zoom chat from the event – another feature of pandemic times – to include more voices and to capture snippets of our discussions.

In his short book *An Attempt at Exhausting a Space in Paris* (1982), the writer Georges Perec sets out his task as discovering 'what happens when nothing happens'. And some of these pieces have Perec-like undertones in their attention to everyday rhythms and the easily overlooked. Looking back on this collection from the vantage point of a year later, it also serves as a rather extraordinary time capsule. The pandemic shapes these walks in explicit and implicit ways, the inclusion of a trip to get a vaccination, the reflection on being in hospital during this time, but also in the references to pandemic walks, or 'the walk I usually take'. Other, more longstanding, concerns and forms of spatial processes also echo through these walks – gentrification in Lisbon and in New Cross, the encroaching bio-medical campus in Cambridge. Our walkers also move between other times, they cross borders, two are led by their canine companions. Trees are blown over, political graffiti is read.

What happens when nothing happens on a day in late Spring during a global pandemic? And, we might add, how might writing walking sociologically help us to make sense of it?

Emma Jackson and Nirmal Puwar

Pass the carwash and the church,

Zig zag across road works

Smell weed, weeds, smoke, barbeque, tarmac

Teleports me back, 1986ish

Sticky pavements, newly covered, Uncle's new polaroid camera

Playing out paused for an awkward family pose.

Not a special day but It's stuck, the only photo I have of us all

Snapped back by a phone, gravel crunches, car swerves

In the park (is it a park? It's just a triangle with benches and bushes)

in the maybe park an encounter not meant for me

a secret exchange I don't want to interrupt

hoods up all round

veer right, past garden statues: Buddha, lion, windmill, gnome,

Painters scaffold, waterproof bright

A flurry of blue-tits, not the right word but the right bird and they delight me Onto the main road and the pub.

Closed of course

I peek in the window, stools on tables, Christmas menus, clear bar I miss it pangs.

Lovers rock on Friday, slowly speeding up with every one for the road Stolen afternoons shouting at gameshows or mending a world Guinness in a glass, the meaningless, meaningful blether with the regulars I wish The Three Legs back to life

And wonder

How will we mind the gap?

Morag Rose



A flurry of blue-tits, not the right word

but the right bird and they delight me

Being Prompted: Walking Around the Cambridge Biomedical Campus

How did walking smell? I did not know how to respond to this question. It smelt fresh. The wind and sun were on my face. It was lively. It was outside.

As a sociologist of the new life sciences and a Cambridge resident I have been fascinated by the continuing growth of the biomedical campus ten minutes from my house. It is an ever-expanding collection of hospitals, laboratories, and biotech businesses that will eventually draw in 30,000 workers per day and require its own railway station and power plant. I have walked the site many times, often alone but also with groups – students discussing biocapitalism and locals concerned about house prices and carparking.

In 2020 the campus was the backdrop for far too many evening lockdown-ed walks. Then in August I had what turned out to be a series of small heart attacks and was admitted to Addenbrookes hospital on the edge of the site. My bed was then pushed to the brand-new Royal Papworth Hospital using an underground tunnel than runs below the campus. I spent ten days alone in a room on the fifth floor of Papworth waiting for by-pass surgery and five recovery days in another room on the other side of the building, COVID meant I had no visitors and the staff that cared for me were masked. The shock admission, the endless chats via iPad, the Travelodge chic of the box-fresh room, and the masks made me feel I had been abducted by benign aliens. I did, however, have a great view of the campus from my sealed window.

My rehabilitation centred on walking. I used to joke with my partner about being 'triggered' by sightings of the hospital but my academic preoccupation with the campus returned in 2021. But one location still stirs me so much I usually avoid it or stride quickly past: the side entrance where two masked nursing assistants wheeled me out to Sharon's car. I paused there. How did it smell? It smelt fresh. It smelt like outside. It smelt like I had returned to earth.

David Skinner



It smelt fresh.
It smelt like outside.

It smelt like I had returned to earth.

What did you follow?

I followed a path straight down to Finsbury Park, reached a railway bridge, turned around and came back. The path was a disused railway line, which through landscaping stood higher than the surrounding streets. It was also the only way I could walk to or from my flat without going up or down a large hill.

It was so ...

It was so windy that a tree had blown over. The large tree had cracked at its base and fallen across the path, which I was walking along. A jogger ran towards the tree, stopped, looked slightly confused, stepped over the trunk and the continued running down the path towards me. Where the tree lay, some of the different limbs had snapped off, and a man and a woman were picking them up and moving them to the side of the path. The wind continued to blow, and I thought about whether or not I was at risk from another tree falling.

What did you hear?

As well as the wind, I could hear birds and the sound of joggers coming up behind me, some at a faster tempo, some slower. Some quietly sneaking up on me, other's footsteps making a louder noise on the wet ground. Two dogs barked at each other and then started scrapping, one owner whistled for her dog whilst listening to music and walking on, after it didn't respond she turned around to shout her dog's name. The other dog's owners, a couple, told their dog to 'stop it' and offered the dog a treat, whilst demanding that it sat. I was then overtaken by another jogger who was having a loud conversation through his Bluetooth headphones.

Harry Owen, Parkland Walk, Finsbury Park

I decided to do the walk I usually do at lunchtime, since the pandemic started and I began working from home. I used to walk in my neighbourhood, but these "pandemic walks" (as I decided to call them) made me cross through areas I usually wouldn't, knowing places that I wouldn't walk by, in a normal basis. I introduced myself to my own city.

Since it is a well-known route, that I usually do at my own rhythm (and I am a very fast walker), I decided to slow down my pace and to pay attention to the things that I would come across with also having in mind the prompts that Emma, Caroline, Nirmal and Amani gave us. It would be a good start to rethink the way I walked in such a well-known area, mainly to look at economic, political and racial questions that might be engraved in the space, or even at new building developments it might have. I tend to look at it through its architectural and urban issue characteristics, so it was a refreshing new way of doing it and of considering other aspects that produce the image of the space, enriching the urban knowledge with new layers of information.

The walk started on the top of one of Lisbon's hills, on an old rural road that connected with the city centre and near a Convent, and went down and up the hills, during an hour where I discovered hidden alleys, that resembled the countryside, with a blackbird showing me the food he collected on the floor, and a cat approaching for some cuddling, the silence of the space, the wind on my face, the view of the city in the back, as if it was scenery and not part of the where I was. I crossed busy roads, ran away to a garden, caught some rain and smelled the soil that only rain brings, saw poppies and daisies and other wild flowers that grow in the middle of the untreated hill, spotted graffiti, political billboards on the walls – "No more Fascism", "Free Lula", "Bolsonaro is a Genocide", "There are Lives Here", "Anti-globalization" – stating questions of globalization, gentrification and how important the Brazilian migrant community is in Lisbon.

The Gentrification problem was also quite visible while walking, as I came across many high middle-class building developments (for French and English buyers), located in a traditionally historical and poor quarter, that used to have a wide community sense, that these developments and the Airbnb market, in some way, destroyed.

I returned home quickly, spotting some dark clouds approaching, and while doing it, I had a sense of belonging and rooting, a knowledge of place and of being part of it, instructed by senses and, surely, by slowing down and relaxing.

Carla Duarte, Lisbon



I saw that seeing is such a human preoccupation. Rafa barely looks: he whuffs and snuffs. I look around, and up; he hunkers over, and down, nose quivering, quaintly rabbit-like. Today, on this exploratory journey, rather than hastening to a destination, I afford Rafa even greater on-leash freedom than usual. It allows him to move at a lingering pace, reading with his nose as he goes. And Rafa, with his more-than-human abilities, perceives the olfactory street invisible to me. He lingers at a crack in a wall, and finally, thoughtfully, cocks his leg and – one, two, three seconds, and stop – his wee locates him at the spot. Then, a step to the side, a bend, and he targets the singular interesting item by a plastic bin bag. Huff, puff, a dog's exhalation doesn't just expel air, Rafa's nose blows an air jet directly onto the interesting source of smell that funnels even more information up with the next inhalation. It turns out that it's a piece of carpeting below the bag that fascinates. Rafa would like to roll the bag right out of the way to get to his target, but I encourage him forward. Rafa 'sees' all the action in our environment before I do – we're only a few steps on when his nose lifts, catching the airborne trail of someone – a dog? A fox? A cat? He stops, ears pricked up. Smell first, hearing second, sight third? A man and a cockerpoo round the bend some moments later. Rafa's curly fry of a husky tail gives the merest tremble across his back. The dog passes by. Next stop, a plastic bottle lying in the kerb. I think Rafa is going to pick it up to play with, but he gives a quick sniff and moves on. I concoct a disappointed dialogue between us as we simultaneously realise that the contents, that looked like Fanta, are in fact human urine. How is it to drive all day on zerohour contracts in a lockdown Britain with no time nor space for which to rest and park and pee? Rafa slow, yet fast, is already on to his next observation. He's poised, one paw lifted, gazing at a door. A dog begins to yap within. I saw then that I couldn't count the times that Rafa stopped to sniff, as had been my first intention for this walk. Rafa's smellings are not the discrete actions I had imagined them to be before I really looked. Rafa continuously, as easily as breathing, experiences the street through its odorous messages. What must it be like to *think* through smell?

Lisa Rabanal

Walk to Walthamstow Library and back down Walthamstow high street

My walk was slightly different. It coincided with my COVID vaccine appointment, so I had a purpose, a place to be, a (typical) lack of adequate time. My walk had a function, it seemed.

Walthamstow central library has been transformed into a vaccination centre, the square outside reserved for queuing. I arrived, panting, just in time for my 12.10 appointment. I was signalled by a masked volunteer to wait in the signposted, '12.10 queue'. The city adapting to the calls of the pandemic. The library square a node in these emergent webs of pandemic connection.

I saw a man, a speaker attached to his back, reggae music playing. A white plastic bag blowing in the wind alongside him. The man danced slowly, in time with the plastic bag, in time with the wind, in time with the music. Who was following whose rhythm?

As I walked home, slowly this time and ready to observe, I was nearly knocked over by a man jogging, his daily exercise, his fresh air. A woman walking an empty pushchair, her toddler close by, walking in a different direction, the woman negotiating, pram and child. The wind still blowing.

I saw litter, blowing around in circles.

I looked up, I saw the tops of buildings, remnants of the past of the High Street, a stone cockerel, a plaque on the house where outsider artist Madge Gill was born and lived 1882-1890.

I saw a beautifully painted wall mural stating: 'SPEND YOUR TIME TOGETHER', with a graffitied reply, in faded white: 'EASIER FOR SOME THAN OTHERS'. The stories the walls can tell.

Still the wind blew, sweeping the litter down the street, hitting against the shop signs, which chimed in response. Another gusty beat. The stories the wind can tell.

An electric scooter flew past the empty tables on the High Street's new café

quarter. The lack of bustle made conversations close by stand out. A woman talking about shoes, 'In Durham I needed hardy shoes, in Cambridge I could wear high heels because it was flat, but in York there were cobbles. . .'

These things that shape our relationship with the space. The stories our shoes can tell.

At the end of the high street, I popped into the 'international supermarket', noticing how gendered this space: women behind the cash desks, men shifting the heavy boxes. One man received a box of chocolates from a visiting 'girlfriend', shared some with the cashiers, 'Sharing the love'. 'When we sharing the love, love is getting more bigger'.

Olivia Sheringham





EASIER 4 SO THAN OT



The city adapting to the calls of the pandemic.

Prompt: what I heard Walking in: Margate

I heard two conversations in a shop, though only one man's voice was audible in both. Presumably he was asked by the woman behind the counter whether he wanted a bag, or perhaps whether he had a bag, because he said, emphatically, in what I think was a Polish accent "oh yes, I need my hands free" and gestured towards his electric scooter, which rested against the shelves of sweets beside me. I was next in the queue. A woman of African heritage came to stand behind me, holding her toddler by the hand. The little girl had colourful beads in her short hair and gripped a box of shortbread biscuits. She seemed mildly stunned as the man turned, noticed her and bent his knees to direct some cutesy noises towards her before asking "shortbread – are they all-butter?" Her mother laughed convivially and the man – reclaiming his scooter and rearranging his backpack (he had brought his own bag) – bustled out of the shop. I stepped up to the counter and the Tamil woman was so softly-spoken, her words barely reached me.

Rachel Seoighe

Zoom chat: What did you follow?

Carla Duarte 14:50:36

I think I followed some peace and quiet and places I usually don't go to. I wanted to solve the mysteries those places suggested to me, so I just went to look for them and discovered new and exciting spaces, full of things to unravel and to get acquainted with.

Louise Rondel (she/her) 14:51:07 I followed my dog. And the advice to 'stay safe' whilst out with your dog

Carrie Benjamin 14:51:41

I followed my memory first, walking down the roads that I knew led to zebra crossings. Cars and vans stopped as I claimed my right to cross the street. I slowed my gait ever so slightly as I approached the crossings, taking my time to enjoy my moment of power over the vehicles and their (law-abiding) drivers. Although if they felt so inclined, they could have ended my walk then and there.

Alison Stenning 14:52:51

I walked through streets I've learnt and mapped during lockdown. I couldn't have walked them without a map before lockdown. But now I know them all so well, their paths and cut-throughs, the connections between neighbourhoods, the links to the river. So I walked, knowing that I could make my way to the Tyne and back.

Rachel Seoighe 14:53:00

I followed a route that I knew would take me down streets defined by contrasting wealth and inequality. and the route to the post office to return some packages:)

Gav Maclean 14:53:03

I set out to follow 'care' – whether that was the well-groomed hedges of the 'garden suburb' or the uncared for gardens filled with dandelions. But before I knew it, I was following a 'care walk' that Emma talked about at the start, the walk I had done many times before trying to get my then daughter to sleep or to keep her occupied while her mother slept all those years ago

What I saw...

Signs of decay and renewal. Silver birch rotting in a bluebell carpet. Muddy tracks – human, dog, deer. Feathers, coins, cones and a small silver love spoon dangling from the shrine-post. Old branches falling. New green leaves budding.

I felt...

I feel the ground beneath my feet. My body slowly easing into movement. Up the hill, along the path. A loosening and letting go. A separation and connection.

Theard...

I hear the wind high in the trees, swirling, blowing, bending, creaking. A rustle and a flutter. A twig cracking underfoot. My own breathing.

What did you follow...

I follow the path, textured by rock and root. Winding up the hill. Along and away.

Charlotte Bates

Following South-east London

We followed the same route we take to the park every day.

On the streets, she followed my instructions, 'wait', 'leave', 'this way'...

In the park, off her lead, she followed her nose, investigating one scent, then another, then another, then another ...

She followed the scents into the bushes.

I followed her, scolding her for eating bread left for the squirrels.

On encountering other canine/human pairs, we followed canine/human etiquette; polite sniffing (her); polite chitchat (me).

Louise Rondel



polite sniffing (her)

polite chitchat (me)

Zoom chat: What did you follow (cont...)?

Anousheh Haghdadi 14:53:07

I followed a grudge / grievance... I've had it in my head that people round here are obsessed with flying flags outside their houses - especially in COVID-19 with VE Day, and more recently St George's Day and Prince Philip's funeral. So, I combined my usual two walking routes to follow and test my gripe

Anita Strasser 14:53:22

I followed green spaces in Deptford that have been fought for by local residents at some point.

Elahe Karimnia 14:53:31

I had not much choice, followed arrows and signs of the construction works, paths with fences on both sides...

N Waltham-Smith 14:53:46 I followed snippets of music along the canal path.

Astrid Z 14:53:51

i followed mental quiet in the greenery, away from people

Hannah Jones 14:53:51

I followed, mainly, the plan I had to explore the different relationships to the neighbourhood I have now and will have when we move. Set out with a plan, to go to the new house and come back via the park. On the way I got attracted by things I wanted to note and notice, to make connections with later. But it was only really once I got to the park that I allowed myself to be drawn off course, because I didn't have a course really except where I was going to enter and exit. So the thing I followed most definitely was the Memorial Tree – it pulled me over to a corner I hadn't really thought to go to, out in the open. It pulled me over because at first it looked like a warning that a tree was to be felled – the tree was wearing a yellow jacket, like a danger sign, but next to it, bunting (the bunting has been there a while I think). I wandered over to explore; getting closer thought maybe there had been a kids' party. But no, it was a Memorial Tree, decorated by local

Craftivists, with space for people to leave memories of those lost to Covid, where people hung their crafts and names of those they had lost, I found a yellow sun had blown off onto the ground.

Lisa 14:53:53 I followed my dog Rafa, and he followed his nose, and I couldn't follow...

Morag Rose she/they 14:54:03 i vaguely followed the last remaining blossom

Nick Foard 14:54:23

I was interested in seeing the differences in types of housing around the area, so in a sense I was following history – the history of housing development, and this took me on a particular route through different eras. The link between time and place became extremely apparent.

Who: Anita Strasser

Where: Deptford, SE London

Prompt: How can a temporal perspective on space help us understand how power plays out in space?

I followed the green spaces in my neighbourhood which were established by local residents in times of more community-focused urban policies. Green spaces are often taken for granted when in actual fact campaigners worked tirelessly to secure them for future generations. There is a long history of grassroots community development and community arts in Deptford, with community workers able to exploit policies and funding opportunities to make life more liveable locally. I start with Twinkle Park, which was renovated by local residents with Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) money, leasing the park from the council to organise carnivals, festivals and art workshops with and for local residents. This work came out of Greenwich Mural Workshop - a community arts initiative set up in the 70s, painting murals and doing other creative workshops to incorporate the voices and perspectives of local people. The same group also maintain Charlotte Turner Gardens just around the corner, which was refurbished with an orchard, décor inspired by the Thames and Deptford's maritime history, facilities for physical activity and a toddler's playground. The recent planning proposal to build at the edge of the park after a charity sold the land gifted to them by the council, completely overshadowing the toddler's playground, was fiercely contested by local residents and councillors. It was thrown out... for now at least. I continue to McMillan Herb Garden, another SRB initiative on common wasteland led by a group of local activists to have an educational space for the children of McMillan Nursery. In later years, it became a space of radical community arts, organising art workshops for local children and hosting radical poetry readings, music gigs and performances. Since 2014 it has been mostly closed due to lack of funding and health and safety concerns but there is hope it will reopen soon. My next stop is Sue Godfrey Nature Reserve, a space that once housed a pottery and a lorry park and later became council wasteland. The space is of ecological interest due to ground that encourages a wide diversity of plants. It was lovingly cared for by local resident and campaigner Sue Godfrey who secured the site as a green space for the people of Deptford. I

wonder what life in Deptford would be like if it weren't for those past community activists who secured those green spaces, particularly with a current policy that sells off common land to property developers. I think of Tidemill Garden around the corner, a community garden on public land destroyed two years ago to be replaced with housing. It was landscaped by local teachers, pupils and parents in the 90s and maintained by local residents and artists who campaigned to save it. It was a socially autonomous and culturally democratic space that provided opportunities for many excluded from dominant society, either socially, culturally or financially. It was a space for political art and dissent, care and affection, community and belonging. The loss of this space has left a grievous wound on Deptford and local campaigners.

I wonder what life in Deptford would be like if it weren't for those past community activists who secured those green spaces

I saw Rain

I saw rain bouncing silver-grey off the black-surfaced car park.

I saw rain pockmarking the calm greenish water of the canal.

I stepped over the water pouring from drainpipes and spilling across the pavement into the gutters on Garden Lane where the students live with the Chinese takeaway and the new fancy café, still closed.

I saw the Grosvenor Hotel, accommodation of royalty, and Michael Portillo, and owned by the Duke of Westminster (who also owns acres of Mayfair, connecting me back to Caroline's talk).

I saw the 'Closing Down' posters in the windows of Browns, which we used to call Debenhams but now refer to again as 'Browns of Chester' to emphasise the depth of our loss. Once known as 'The Harrods of the North' it's been around for 230 years, started by Susannah Brown and continued by her sons. The 1791 building has chandeliers, a stained-glass window and glass domed roof.

I saw the square steel skeleton of the new Northgate shopping centre and the Welsh hills beyond under a canopy of blue sky as I passed the tenacious punters outside the pubs, empty tables and chairs puddled with rain.

Julia Bennet

I knew where I wanted to go, but I felt as if I was following someone who, in her everyday life, walked there before me, a long time ago. In our glade there are three houses, all built on old agricultural land. In our common playground there are ruins of the old croft, built by the people who farmed the small fields, that are now our plots. As I walk along the old stone wall that bounds the old garden, I notice the cherry tree in the corner, a trace from the past. It is a young tree, but I assume that it springs from the crofter's orchard. Then as now its flowering lets us know that summer is coming. But what were winters like here in the woods, over 100 years ago?

In the morning, my son had thrown his iPad on the floor, crying over the survival mode in Minecraft being "impossible" to manage. In the creative mode you have all the material and food you need, but here you need to mine, grow vegetables and keep animals. And watch out for zombies, but that is another story. To him, our life must seem to be lived in the creative mode; if we need things, we just go get it, or order it. That was not the case for the woman whose footsteps I imagine to be following. If I had to live her life for a while, in the dark winter, I would probably soon be throwing things around me too.

I take a walk along the winding gravel road that leads out of the woods. In the fields that people established hundreds of years ago, with indescribable efforts, animals are still grazing in the summers, subsidized by the EU to "keep the landscape open". It is about cultural heritage and biodiversity, I know, but on this spring day it mostly seems like a scenery to me. It is such a beautiful place, and it means so much to me. But what am I doing here? What will this place look like in another hundred years? How will my life appear to future wondering wanderers?

As I get back home, I inspect my pallet collars. The radishes and the salad appear, but there is no sign of the carrots yet. I don't save my vegetables for the winter, but they do give me a feeling of, very limited but still, self-sufficiency every summer. Or, in a Minecraft vocabulary, managing the survival mode.

Helena Holgersson

I knew where I wanted to go, but I felt as if I was following someone who, in her everyday life, walked there before me

Postscript

Day 2 Walk: after a radical abdominal hysterectomy

I manage to take very slow-coach steps and make it past the bathroom in the private room that has been my home for 36 hours. I then see a long corridor to my left. I make it to the nurses' station, with my hospital blue gown on. I am given reassuring smiles by the nurses who lift their heads from frantically focusing on getting patients ready for surgery. Today it is their turn. I have made it through the theatre of surgery, my journey is now on the other side.

I walk back the half length of the corridor to my room. At the threshold I am asked if I want to do another walk. I say no, as I remember friends and family saying you have to take your time to recover, this is a big operation, listen to your body. I am used to stomping around everywhere, I don't drive.

I walk into the bathroom. For the first time I stand in the mirror and lift up the thin gown to see what is tight underneath it. There is a long 4 centimetre wide plaster running high above my belly button all the way down... This is a big cut, bigger than I thought it would be. Scenes of animals slit in the middle and hung at the back of lorries before being moved into the butcher shop fridge flash up in my mind, as does the taste of blood, metal and flesh in my mouth.

Nirmal Puwar



List of Authors

Charlotte Bates is a sociologist at Cardiff University. Her research explores the interconnections between the body, everyday life and place, with a particular focus on illness and wellbeing.

Julia Bennett is a Senior Lecturer in sociology at the University of Chester who researches place, community and belonging.

Carla Duarte is an architect who was born, lives, works and walks in Lisbon. She is currently a PhD candidate at ISCTE-IUL, focusing her research on the importance of walking in the city.

Helena Holgersson is a senior lecturer in cultural studies at the University of Gothenburg. She researches urban inequality with place sensitive methods.

Emma Jackson is a Senior Lecturer in Sociology at Goldsmiths and is the Director of CUCR

Harry studied a master's in Critical and Creative Analysis at Goldsmiths between 2019 and 2021.

Nirmal Puwar is a Reader in Sociology, author of Space Invaders (2004) and Walking Along With ... (forthcoming), always collaborating with a space shifting mutating imagination.

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