WAYS OF WALKING

Anthropological Studies of  
Creativity and Perception

*Series Editor:* Tim Ingold, University of Aberdeen, UK

The books in this series explore the relations, in human social and cultural life, between perception, creativity and skill. Their common aim is to move beyond established approaches in anthropology and material culture studies that treat the inhabited world as a repository of complete objects, already present and available for analysis. Instead, these works focus on the creative processes that continually bring these objects into being, along with the persons in whose lives they are entangled.

All creative activities entail movement or gesture, and the books in this series are particularly concerned to understand the relations between these creative movements and the inscriptions they yield. Likewise in considering the histories of artefacts, these studies foreground the skills of their makers-cum-users, and the transformations that ensue, rather than tracking their incorporation as finished objects within networks of interpersonal relations.

The books in this series will be interdisciplinary in orientation, their concern being always with the practice of interdisciplinarity: on ways of doing anthropology *with* other disciplines, rather than doing an anthropology *of* these subjects. Through this anthropology *with,* they aim to achieve an understanding that is at once holistic and processual, dedicated not so much to the achievement of a final synthesis as to opening up lines of inquiry.

Ways of Walking

Ethnography and Practice on Foot

*Edited by*

TIM INGOLD and JO LEE VERGUNST

*University of Aberdeen, UK*

Routledge

Taylor & Francis Croup

LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2008 by Ashgate Publishing

Published 2016 by Routledge

2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

Copyright © Tim Ingold and Jo Lee Vergunst 2008

Tim Ingold and Jo Lee Vergunst have asserted their moral right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as the editors of this work.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Notice.

Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

Ways of walking : ethnography and practice on foot.-

(Anthropological studies of creativity and perception)

1. Human beings - Effect of environment on 2. Walking -

Cross-cultural studies 3. Geographical perception -

Cross-cultural studies

I. Ingold, Tim, 1948- II. Vergunst, Jo Lee

304.2

**Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data**

Ways of walking : ethnography and practice on foot / [edited] by Tim Ingold and Jo Lee Vergunst.

p. cm. -- (Anthropological studies of creativity and perception)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-7546-7374-3

1. Human beings--Effect of environment on. 2. Walking-Cross-cultural studies. 3. Geographical perception--Cross-cultural studies. I. Ingold, Tim, 1948- II. Vergunst, Jo Lee.

GF51.W38 2008

304.2--dc22

2007051241 ISBN 9780754673743 (hbk)

Transferred to Digital Printing in 2014

Contents

*[List of Figures vii](#bookmark20" \o "Current Document)*

*[Notes on Contributors ix](#bookmark44" \o "Current Document)*

*[Preface and Acknowledgements xi](#bookmark47" \o "Current Document)*

1. Introduction

*[Tim Ingold and Jo Lee Vergunst](#bookmark55" \o "Current Document)* [1](#bookmark55" \o "Current Document)

1. Before a Step Too Far: Walking with Batek Hunter-Gatherers in the Forests of Pahang, Malaysia

*[Lye Tuck-Po](#bookmark93" \o "Current Document)* [21](#bookmark93" \o "Current Document)

1. Walking Stories; Leaving Footprints

*[Allice Legat](#bookmark111" \o "Current Document)* [35](#bookmark111" \o "Current Document)

1. The Dilemmas of Walking: A Comparative View

*[Thomas Widlok](#bookmark135" \o "Current Document)* [51](#bookmark135" \o "Current Document)

1. Feet Following Hooves

*[Pernille Gooch](#bookmark161" \o "Current Document)* [67](#bookmark161" \o "Current Document)

1. Performing on the Landscape versus Doing Landscape: Perambulatory Practice, Sight and the Sense of Belonging

*[Kenneth R. Olwig](#bookmark185" \o "Current Document)* [81](#bookmark185" \o "Current Document)

1. Listen to the Sound of Time: Walking with Saints in an Andalusian Village

*[Katrin Lund](#bookmark217" \o "Current Document)* [93](#bookmark217" \o "Current Document)

1. Taking a Trip and Taking Care in Everyday Life

*[Jo Lee Vergunst](#bookmark237" \o "Current Document)* [105](#bookmark237" \o "Current Document)

1. Walking Through Ruins

*[Tim Edensor](#bookmark266" \o "Current Document)* [123](#bookmark266" \o "Current Document)

1. Walking Out of the Classroom: Learning on the Streets of Aberdeen

*[Elizabeth Curtis](#bookmark292" \o "Current Document)* [143](#bookmark292" \o "Current Document)

1. Enchantment Engineering and Pedestrian Empowerment: The Geneva Case

Sonia Lavadinho and Yves Winkin 155

1. ‘Taking a Line for a Walk’: Walking as an Aesthetic Practice

Raymond Lucas 169

1. 13 A Collectable Topography: Walking, Remembering and

Recording Mountains

Hayden Lorimer and Katrin Lund 185

List of Figures[[1]](#footnote-0)

1. Dora Nitsiza and Liza Jerameka finding stones for softening hides 41
2. Christian Rapold, Abakub //Gam//gaeb and Thomas Widlok at the

18/18 confluence, recording local stories about the land 57

1. GPS reading at a degree intersection, known among confluencers as

‘the confluence dance’, whereby the visitor makes steps in various

directions in order to have full figures on the GPS display 62

1. A walker slipping on a hillside 110
2. A granite pavement in Aberdeen 112
3. A walker on Arthur’s Seat in Edinburgh 113
4. Primary 7 pupils and AEEC leader outside Kings College, Aberdeen 144
5. Tenement buildings at 42 Esslemont Avenue, home of the fictional

Jamie Craig and evidence for working class Victorians in Aberdeen 145

1. Annotated booklet used by the author when working as an AEEC Guide 147
2. [and 10.5] AEEC ‘dream box’ in which to record thoughts and

feelings as well as drawings of places experienced on the walk,

as the basis for imaginative building back in the classroom 150, 151

10.6 Children pausing to think at Footdee 152

1. Encounter areas in Switzerland, a rising trend 160
2. Jardins de Poche: The bench acts as a framing device for enchantment 162
3. The Passerelle du Seujet, where the passing waters and the passing

people mingle together as one 163

1. Walking art 164
2. Parisian passage 174
3. Flowchart diagram from *Getting Lost in Tokyo* 178
4. Sample of Laban notation from *Getting Lost in Tokyo* 179
5. Building block archetypes from *Getting Lost in Tokyo* 180
6. The Labyrinthine Zone arrangement derived from Tarkovsky’s film

*Stalker,* from *Getting Lost in Tokyo* 181

1. The complete labyrinth, from *Getting Lost in Tokyo* 181
2. Examples of photographs, from *Getting Lost in Tokyo* 183

Notes on Contributors

*Elizabeth Curtis is* a Lecturer in the School of Education at the University of Aberdeen.

*Tim Edensor* is Reader in Cultural Geography at Manchester Metropolitan University.

*Pernille Gooch* is a Senior Lecturer in the Human Ecology Division at Lund University.

*Tim Ingold* is Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Aberdeen.

*Sonia Lavadinho* is a Research Fellow in the Department of Territorial Development at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne.

*Allice Legat* is a PhD Graduate from the Department of Anthropology at the University of Aberdeen.

*Hayden Lorimer* is Senior Lecturer in Human Geography, Department of Geographical and Earth Sciences, University of Glasgow.

*Raymond Lucas* is a Research Fellow in the Department of Architecture at the University of Strathclyde.

*Katrin Lund* is a Lecturer at the Department of Geology and Geography, University of Iceland.

*Kenneth R. Olwig* is Professor in the Department of Landscape Architecture at SLU-Alnarp, the Swedish University of Agricultural Science.

*Lye Tuck-Po* is an environmental anthropologist affiliated with the Naga Research Group and HeritageWatch.

*Jo Lee Vergunst* is an RCUK Academic Fellow in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Aberdeen.

*Thomas Widlok* is Senior Researcher at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen and Professor of Anthropology at the Department of Anthropology, Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands.*Yves Winkin* is Professor of Social Sciences at the Ecole Normale Superieure Lettres et Sciences Humaines in Lyon (France).

Preface and Acknowledgements

Let’s get going then. In September 2005 we held a three-day event at the University of Aberdeen that was simply called the walking seminar. Although for much of the time we were sitting in a traditional seminar room, the journeys recounted by the participants left us feeling well-travelled indeed, through places both near and far, both extraordinary and everyday. In our free afternoon we went to Bennachie, Aberdeen’s own mountain, and climbed up through the forest and out to the open hillside. We moved from quiet pine needles underfoot to rough boulders, heather and a buffeting wind, at which point we mostly gave up talking, but carried on walking.

The purpose of the seminar was to begin to explore the diversity of walking practices in the places where anthropologists and others work. We felt that although this topic - of ways of walking - is probably one that crops up frequently in ethnographers’ fieldnotes, it rarely sees the light of day in the articles and books that they eventually write and publish. It rather seems to be pushed into the wings, by way of a separation of *what* is being purposefully done (arriving somewhere, say) from *how* it is done (by getting there, step by step, along a path). We wanted to find out what insights might be had through paying attention to both. So we invited participants to bring to the seminar the actual walking experiences of the people with whom they had spent time, in order to explore how life is led on the ground, along paths. They responded to the task with enthusiasm. In the papers they presented they not only described the ways that people walk through their inhabited places, but also reflected on walking as a technique of ethnographic research. For as researchers, we are inhabitants of the world like everyone else and need to find ways to get around in it as best we can. For everyone, learning how to do so is a process that has no clear beginning or end. Likewise the end - really a pause of one walk, or one journey, usually marks the beginning of another. So let’s carry on, going along.

We heartily thank all the seminar participants for their efforts. With the one exception of Paul Basu, all are included among the contributors to this volume. We also wish to thank the many members and friends of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Aberdeen who also joined in the discussions. The seminar was made possible thanks to an award from the UK Economic and Social Research Council for a two-year (2004-06) project of research entitled *Culture from the ground: walking, movement and placemaking* (RES-000-23-0312). Some of the results of this research are reported in Chapter 8. Finally, we are proud to launch, with this book, the first volume in a new series of *Anthropological Studies of Creativity and Perception,* and we would like to thank Neil Jordan, of Ashgate Publishing, for his encouragement and help in getting the series off the ground.

Jo Lee Vergunst and Tim Ingold

Aberdeen, May 2007

Chapter 1

Introduction

Tim Ingold and Jo Lee Vergunst

When did our walk begin? When will it ever end? We cannot remember, and will never know. Walking, in this regard, is much like talking, and both are quintessential features of what we take to be a human form of life. We are already talking by the time we realize that this is what we are doing; and only those who remain after we are gone will know which words will have been our last. So it is, too, with our first and last steps. Life itself is as much a long walk as it is a long conversation, and the ways along which we walk are those along which we live. There are beginnings and endings, of course. But every moment of beginning is itself in the midst of things and must, for that reason, be also a moment of ending in relation to whatever went before. Likewise, every step faces both ways: it is both the ending, or tip, of a trail that leads back through our past life, and a new beginning that moves us forward towards future destinations unknown. The same goes for the words we read and write. We begin to write, and you begin to read, in the thick of things, and only because we have set aside other tasks for the time being. We do not, however, travel alone. Our principal contention is that walking is a profoundly social activity: that in their timings, rhythms and inflections, the feet respond as much as does the voice to the presence and activity of others. Social relations, we maintain, are not enacted *in situ* but are paced out along the ground.

With this book we draw together several lines of thinking in contemporary social science: about the human body and its movements; about perception and the work of the senses; about education, enskillment and the formation of knowledge; about the constitution of space and place; about wayfaring and storytelling; and about the relations between humans and non-humans. We follow in the footsteps of Marcel Mauss who, in his famous essay of 1934 on *Techniques of the Body,* was perhaps the first to put walking on the agenda as a serious topic for comparative ethnological inquiry (Mauss 1979, 95-135). As in so many of his writings, Mauss left no more than a fragmentary and unfinished sketch for a programme of work that had still to be undertaken, and one that was so anachronistic in its formulation - with its lists of customs from around the world - and yet so far ahead of its time in the questions it opened up, that for long it fell on deaf ears. So thoroughly had it been forgotten that when, some four decades later, Pierre Bourdieu (1977) launched his theory of practice centred on the bodily dispositions of the *habitus,* few recalled that Mauss had already introduced the *habitus* to anthropology, as the key to his understanding of the social formation of body techniques, taking care to distinguish it from the merely idiosyncratic ‘habits’ of individuals, and illustrating it by way of a narrative of walking. Significantly, the narrative was about the arms and hands:I think I can recognize a girl who has been raised in a convent. In general, she will walk with her fists closed. And I can still remember my third-form teacher shouting at me: “Idiot! why do you walk around the whole time with your hands flapping wide open?” Thus there exists an education in walking too (Mauss 1979, 100).

Indeed, walking is an accomplishment of the whole body in motion, as much the work of the hands and lungs as of the feet.

Of course, Bourdieu’s understanding of the *habitus* was far removed from that of Mauss. For Mauss was still enough of a disciple of his mentor, Emile Durkheim, to give pride of place in his thinking to systems of collective representations. His point was simply that to be enacted or given physical expression, these representations must call upon some material means, and for human beings these means are furnished, first and foremost, by the body - whether or not extended by extra-somatic instruments. The body thus plays object to the collective subject otherwise known as ‘society’. Refusing such subject/object dichotomies, Bourdieu placed the *habitus* firmly in the space of the body’s active engagement in its surroundings, in the ‘practical mastery’ of everyday tasks involving characteristic postures and gestures, or a particular body *hexis* (Bourdieu 1977, 87). A way of walking, for example, does not merely express thoughts and feelings that have already been imparted through an education in cultural precepts and proprieties. It is itself a way of thinking and of feeling, through which, in the practice of pedestrian movement, these cultural forms are continually generated (ibid., 93-4).

But could we not also put this proposition in reverse, to argue that thinking and feeling are ways of walking? This would, admittedly, be to interpret the notion of walking more broadly than is usual, as a paradigmatic instance of what Maxine Sheets- Johnstone (1999) has called ‘thinking in movement’. Taking this step, however, obliges us to acknowledge that to think and feel is not to set up a relation of external contact or correspondence between subjective states of mind and objectively given conditions of the material world, but rather to make one’s way *through* a world-in­formation, in a movement that is both rhythmically resonant with the movements of others around us - whose journeys we share or whose paths we cross - and open- ended, having neither a point of origin nor any final destination. Not only, then, do we walk because we are social beings, we are also social beings because we walk. That walking is social may seem obvious, although it is all the more remarkable, in this light, that social scientists have devoted so little attention to it. However to hold - as we do - that social life is walked is to make a far stronger claim, namely for the rooting of the social in the actual ground of lived experience, where the earth we tread interfaces with the air we breathe. It is along this ground, and not in some ethereal realm of discursively constructed significance, over and above the material world, that lives are paced out in their mutual relations. Thus careful, ethnographic analysis of walking, we suggest, can help us rethink what being social actually means. This is a task that remains to be done. Amidst the clamour of calls to understand the body as an existential ground for the production of cultural form, rather than only as a source of physical and metaphorical means for its expression (Csordas 1990, 5), we tend to forget that the body itself is grounded in movement. Walking is not just what a body *does;* it is what a body *is.* And if the body is foundational to culture, then walking - or thinking in movement - is ‘foundational to being a body’ (Sheets- Johnstone 1999, 494).

Ethnographers, as we have noted elsewhere (Lee and Ingold 2006), are accustomed to carrying out much of their work on foot. But while living with a group of people usually means walking around with them, it is rare to find ethnography that reflects on walking itself, least of all from the kind of comparative perspective that we offer in this book. No doubt the topic of walking figures often enough in ethnographers’ fieldnotes. Once they come to write up their results, however, it tends to be sidelined in favour of ‘what really matters’, such as the destinations towards which people were bound or the conversations that happened en route. Even multi-sited fieldwork (Marcus 1998) focuses on the sites themselves, as though life were lived at a scatter of fixed locales rather than along the highways and byways upon which they lie. But *how* people go along on foot (as the vast majority of human beings have done, throughout history) is important. How do they prepare and set out, and how do they carry on through places in which, for any number of reasons, it may be difficult to walk? How do they arrive? Drawing on a phenomenological tradition (Jackson 1996), we aim to embed our ideas of the social and the symbolic within the immediate day-to-day activities that bind practice and representation, doing, thinking and talking, and to show that everything takes place, in one way or the other, on the move. In describing their own trails or those of the people in many lands with whom they have walked, the contributors to this book - though they come from a variety of disciplines and represent more than one theoretical perspective - share an ambition to pay attention to experiences of tactile, feet-first, engagement with the world. By way of introduction we will go around to meet them, eventually returning, as befits a tour, to where we began.

Setting out

As we embark on our walk, our eyes are not upon a distant horizon. The first steps we take are tentative, even experimental, and time passes slowly as we attempt them. As yet unsure of our bearing or direction, each step feels like our first: a one-off that may lead to a second, a third, and so on, but that may just as well come to nothing. We do not, in other words, *start* to walk as the athlete starts to run, at the shot of a pistol, springing into action at the instant. For it is only after quite a few steps, when the feet have found their rhythm and the body its momentum, that we discover - without having been aware of any moment of commencement - that we are already walking. In this respect setting out recapitulates, albeit in a highly abbreviated form, what happens in infancy. The infant’s attention, too, is on the close- at-hand. Seeking to reach it by whatever means possible, he or she will improvise a mode of locomotion that mixes steps and tumbles - quaintly known as ‘toddling’ - until, after what seems like an age, it matures into a fully-fledged walk. Rarely, of course, do infants walk alone, as parents or older siblings give a helping hand. Between whiles, they may be carried, and it is surely while sitting astride or behind the shoulders of a grown-up that the infant first experiences walking as a rhythmic activity in which the eyes can set their sights on more expansive vistas while leaving the feet to look after themselves. Before that, of course, the unborn baby will have experienced something of the same rhythmic movement while carried in the womb.

Even when they have found their feet, small children’s focus on the near-at- hand and their boundless curiosity in everything in the vicinity - which they want to reach out and touch as well as look at - can continually thwart the intentions of the adults with whom they walk. Nowhere is this more so than in a modern Western city where rules of orderliness and proper conduct on the street combine with real risks from passing traffic or of becoming separated in the throng. Tightly held hands can mediate something approaching a tug-of-war in which the adult, due to superior strength and stature, invariably wins out while the child has to put one foot before the other simply to avoid falling flat on the face. For younger children, of course, the ultimate penalty for insubordination is to be forcibly strapped into a push-chair, wheeled with steely determination by the victorious adult. Older children are dragged along behind. Sociologist Michael Wolff has described how city parents treat under-sevens like baggage to be pulled like a suitcase on wheels (Wolff 1973). While the adult looks ahead, negotiating a path through eye-to-eye contact with oncomers, the child’s eyes are resolutely downcast. By the time the child has reached school age, he or she is supposed to have been trained by such discipline, and already to ‘know’ how to walk.

Meet Elizabeth Curtis (Chapter 10), as she escorts classes of primary schoolchildren by foot along the streets of the city of Aberdeen, in north-east Scotland. The purpose of these educational outings is to enhance children’s awareness of the architectural heritage of the city. They follow a pre-planned trail linking a series of sites of special interest. At each successive site they stop to make and record their observations. These may be auditory and tactile as well as visual, such as the sound of running water in a concealed gully or the texture of cut stone. So far as their teachers are concerned, however, walking itself is not understood as a practice of observation, nor do the trail booklets they use make any reference to it. Observations are to be made from a stationary position, not on the move. Walking, then, is considered simply as a means to get from one site to the next. During walks, children are expected to behave sensibly and to follow the rules of road safety. Ideally, they should march two abreast in a neat line, a formation traditionally known as the ‘crocodile’. Though instructed to look and listen, attention is to be focused on traffic and passers-by, in order to avoid accident, rather than on such things as the wind, rain or sunshine, the flight of birds and the barking of dogs, puddles and autumn leaves, and the myriad trifles from snails to conkers, and from dropped coins to telltale litter, that make every street a place of such absorbing interest to the miniature detective whose eyes are still close to the ground. For every child is such a detective, especially as - unsupervised - they make their way on foot to school and back, absorbing as they do the sights, sounds, feel, and smells of their surroundings through varying weather and changing seasons.

Learning the way

Conclusion 一 collecting cultures

In this chapter’s four pairings of summit-oriented social practice we have tried to respond to two connected questions posed at the outset: namely, how does collecting happen whilst people walk, and how, exactly, is it embodied? As an inquiry into the optics and mechanics of collecting in the open air, we have been mindful of the suggestion of Driver and Martins (2002) that greater efforts be made to ‘restore the eye to the body’. Consequently, we have focused on modalities of seeing, feeling and moving that occur as people collect mountain summits during passage on foot. By way of conclusion, three more general points can be sketched out. The first is concerned with the inseparability of the practices of walking and looking; the second, with the continuing social life of collections, and the third with the novelty of spatial formations revealed through ‘The Munros’ as a specific, sited culture of walking-cum-collecting.

First, while it is difficult to individualize the crowded summit scene, it *is* possible to ground experience and to situate particular versions of seeing geographically. Observant kinds of participation, founded in ethnographic method, are a significant advance here, especially in the light of existing scholarship in geography and cognate disciplines. For very different sorts of intra-disciplinary and epistemic reasons, cognitive mapping (see Laurier and Brown 2005; Laurier and Brown 2008) and feminist critique (Rose 1993) prised practising human subjects apart from theories of seeing. Through close-up observations of praxis, mountain collecting is revealed as an expression of elevated looking, but one always earthed by the walker. Consequently, we argue that perception is attained in a series of correspondences between different sets of eyes and feet. Quite emphatically, neither the ability to look, nor any way of seeing, is detached.

Second, the inherent malleability of a collection like the Munros should alert us to the limitations of treating collecting as a narrowly goal-oriented practice. Acquisition is far from the be all and end all. As we have outlined, at different stages of a mountain walk a personal collection can hove in and out of view. It can reduce to vague aspiration, only to re-merge with far greater urgency than previously anticipated. The very nature of a collection is provisional. It will be recomposed by continued (re)collecting. Collecting cannot be stripped down or rendered passive, left as a backdrop against which social action continually unfolds. But nor is collecting a transcendent, ordering mechanism for walking, always prevailing, determining placement, of one foot in front of the other. Nevertheless, we would readily concede that collecting seems a most British sort of preoccupation, and wonder how it might compare with other European traditions of movement through landscape on foot.

Our third concluding point concerns the recent work of theorists of ‘the social’ in search of new conceptual motifs for the irrepressible and immanent spatialities currently constituted through assemblages of human and non-human agents, new communication technologies and diverse sorts of auto-mobility (Urry 2001; Thrift 2007). The most ambitious and avant-garde (exploring the properties of fire, smoke, gel or fluid) identify topological figures and complex forms understood to better capture social worlds always in the making, where relations are emergent through conditions of co-presence and the collapse of conventional scales or dimensions (Law and Mol 2001; Law 2004). What we have considered in this chapter will seem, at least in some respects, more steadily paced, sure of foot and positively pedestrian. At least we hope so. While new spatial formations shaping life have their moments, older variants need not be disregarded. The social worlds emerging from walking - that most ordinary and ancient form of movement - produce comparably complex forms of spatial arrangement. Among those recreational hill-walkers who are preoccupied with Scotland’s mountains there are a multitude of geometries, cartographies and lifelines to be mapped out across the country’s highest points. We might figure these as cartographies of collection which remain dependent on traditional forms of topographical knowledge and well grounded modes of connection, association and attachment.

1. Figures listed indicate those with captions in the text. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)