



Intervention



Interventions in walking methods in political geography

Olivia Mason^{a,*}, Jasnea Sarma^b, James D. Sidaway^c, Alastair Bonnett^d, Phil Hubbard^e, Ghazala Jamil^f, Jennie Middleton^g, Maggie O'Neill^h, James Riding^d, Morag Roseⁱ

^a Newcastle University, United Kingdom

^b University of Zurich, Switzerland

^c National University of Singapore, Singapore

^d Newcastle University, United Kingdom

^e King's College London, United Kingdom

^f Jawaharlal Nehru University, India

^g University of Oxford, United Kingdom

^h University College Cork, Ireland

ⁱ University of Liverpool, United Kingdom

1. Introduction

1.1. Olivia Mason, Jasnea Sarma and James D. Sidaway

These *Interventions in walking methods in political geography* recognise that it is timely to enrich political geography by attending to our methods. We suggest in this introduction that consideration of walking as method, its possibilities, limitations and attention to the theorizations and practises of walking under the label of 'psycho geography' offer productive ways to address broader questions in political geography surrounding power, scale, mobility, embodiment, and knowledge production. Our prompt for assembling these interventions emerged from our work on walking and landscape geopolitics (Mason, 2020; Sidaway, 2002, 2009), the political geographies of walking in Jordan (Mason, 2021; Mason, 2023), walking in Asian and African post-colonial cities (Paasche & Sidaway, 2021; Sarma & Sidaway, 2020), along Myanmar's borderlands (Sarma, 2020, 2021), and mapping 'psycho geography's trajectories, connections and affinities' through decolonial frameworks (Sidaway, 2022, p. 549).

A panel during the Royal Geographical Society-Institute of British Geographers Annual International Conference held in Newcastle in September 2022 expanded these discussions, whilst reflecting on the relatively limited explicit reflection within political geography on methodologies. A key acknowledgement of this was made by Megoran (2006) through his advocacy of ethnography to narrate borderlands. Megoran's paper, the title of which begins with a bold injunction, "For

ethnography in political geography", has gone on to be highly cited. Yet despite the wide range of quantitative and qualitative methods drawn on in the sub-discipline, reflected in the methodological breadth of papers in *Political Geography* (O'Loughlin, 2018), this journal and the wider sub-discipline feature relatively few *explicitly* methodological reflections. Whilst international relations and political science arguably have featured more debates about methods, Youatt (2022) notes that walking has been largely absent from these "sedentary" disciplines. Elements of walking and mobility therefore remain separate from much modern political thought, despite the important ways walking is frequently entangled with politics, property and sovereignty, and associated with protests and conflict as well as restrictions including efforts to sedentarise the nomadic. Yet, despite the ways that critical discussion on methods, such as walking, could enrich political geography, explicit reflection on method in the subdiscipline has developed relatively slowly since Megoran's (2006) intervention, via, for example, reflections on discourse analysis (Müller, 2008) and assemblage theory (Ghoddousi & Page, 2020). Perhaps this inattention to wider methodological discussion can be connected to the relatively limited uptake of feminist and postcolonial/decolonial scholarship by political geographers. Yet it is feminist geopolitics that has further encouraged ways of knowledge production beyond textual analysis to ethnographic research and attention to the diversity of practices and sites deemed political (Dowler & Sharp, 2001). Indeed, Amore (2020) asks how critical studies of space and politics could be possible without theories of embodiment, corporeality, and partiality. The consideration of terms central to

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: Olivia.mason2@ncl.ac.uk (O. Mason), jasnea.sarma@geo.uzh.ch (J. Sarma), geojds@nus.edu.sg (J.D. Sidaway), alastair.bonnett@ncl.ac.uk (A. Bonnett), philip.hubbard@kcl.ac.uk (P. Hubbard), ghazalajamil@jnu.ac.in (G. Jamil), jennie.middleton@ouce.ox.ac.uk (J. Middleton), maggie.oneill@ucc.ie (M. O'Neill), james.riding@newcastle.ac.uk (J. Riding), morag.rose@liverpool.ac.uk (M. Rose).

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political geography, such as territory, has been enriched by postcolonial and feminist scholarship and allied embodied methodologies (see Jackman et al., 2020; Smith, 2012; Squire, 2016).

We posit that the embodied aspects of walking can enable a creative and critical relationship with nature, place, politics and space, re-engaging key concepts in political geography such as territory, borders, and the state, establishing bridges to concepts more commonly featured by cultural geographers, notably landscape (see Mason, 2021; Peters, 2021; Squire, 2021) and negotiating the concentration of wealth and landownership that more often features in economic geographies (such as Christophers, 2019) and allied political economy.

Critical attention to walking in political geography thus draws on these cross-disciplinary accounts and reconsiders what counts as political, who walks, and how walking may investigate political geographies of place. Walking has the potential to unpack public and private politics, engaging with place and local knowledge and terrain. Ingold (2004: 329) argues that there has long been a 'detachment of persons from the ground' and suggests that a more grounded approach to movement centring footwork can open new understandings of landscape formation, environmental perception, and human evolution. Moving beyond unified and singular accounts of landscape histories to understand overlapping and interwoven histories is central to Mathews' (2018) concept of "throughscapes". Notably, it is via landscape walking and consequent noticing and paying attention to colour, shape, and form that these overlapping histories of landscape emerge.

Walking is also 'seeing,' 'sensing,' and 'hearing,' where public space, art, ideology, and discourse are woven into the negotiated fabrics of 'private' speech, property, and commerce. Walking incorporates textual methods, where visual cues while walking, such as graffiti, posters, murals, protest stickers and political propaganda come to voice our ethnographic analysis (see Awcock, 2021). Taking books for a walk through the creation of a Walking Library was used by Heddon and Myers (2014: 651) to illustrate how books became not objects of knowing; rather 'the book, as much as the landscape, forms on the move because reading, as much as writing – and walking – is a creative and performative process'. A focus on the relationship between walking, embodiment and sociability embeds walking in engagements between self and environment so that a 'multi-sensory' understanding emerges (Lee & Ingold, 2006). The complexities of the surface of the earth, Ingold (2010) suggests, can perhaps be better understood and reconceptualised through the body of the walker. Walking disrupts and complicates assumptions about scale and temporality, where the debris of time, history, architecture and lived environment are entangled with everyday life.

Walking can be a means to transect nature, power and territory across scales and reflect on 'how the local can articulate the universal' (Sidaway, 2022, p. 566). Alongside the ability for walking to articulate local and global connections, an emerging research agenda in political geography concerns the history of walking trails and rights of access as articulating localized political geographies of land, power, sovereignty, and citizenship. For example, new threats to public passage over 'private' land, called rights of way, across England and Wales are used by Thorogood, Hastie, and Hill-Butler (2022) to reconsider social and spatial inequalities. By exploring the im/material histories of walking trails across the Middle East and North Africa, Mason (2023: no PN) demonstrates how 'an innocuous-looking site can enrich understandings of infrastructure and the mobilities and temporalities of colonialism'. Walking has also been used as a narrative tool to examine place, identity, belonging, and borders and asylum in Brexit Britain at a variety of scales (Hubbard, 2022; O'Neill & Hubbard, 2010).

Nevertheless, political geographers have neglected walking methods, with relatively few exceptions (Mason, 2020, 2021, 2023; Murphy, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c; Paasche & Sidaway, 2010; Paasche & Sidaway, 2015; Riding, 2020; Sarma & Sidaway, 2020; Sidaway, 2002, 2009, 2022; Sidaway et al., 2014). As a result, walking has tended to become more associated with social and cultural geographical explorations of

landscape (Edensor, 2000; Wylie, 2005; Ingold 2004; 2010; Lee & Ingold, 2006; Lorimer, 2011), or urban geographical accounts of cities (Morris, 2004; Evans & Jones, 2011; Pierce & Lawhon, 2015; Middleton, 2022). More so, geography's engagement with walking is one in which the mode of engagement and narrative strategy have historically been criticised for not attending to politics. In Wylie's (2005a: 235) oft cited account of a day on the South West Coast Path in England, walking becomes a means to engage with landscape, subjectivity and corporality in ways that are 'irreducibly multiple and complex'. In a spirited exchange, Blacksell (2005: 518) critiqued Wylie's paper for its lack of consideration of the 'real-politik of walking' and that the focus 'seems overly self-centred and introspective'. Picking up on this debate, a few years later Sidaway's (2009) walk on an urban section of the same path weaves a narrative that combines the historical, political and military hauntings that produce the landscape with the contemporary practice of walking. Such work has informed subsequent studies on transects as a method to produce a diverse and contextual approach to security (Paasche & Sidaway, 2021).

We suggest that understanding how geography has previously engaged with walking methods and how it continues to do so is to move beyond the relationship between walking and 'real-politik'. A more expansive account of walking methods in political geography critically considers mobility politics, access to resources, embodiment, and different histories of walking in the discipline beyond Eurocentric knowledges, and across sub-disciplines, engaging Black, social and cultural, urban, and feminist geographies. The interventions below explore a range of scales and sites of the political, investigating how walking can be an act of political protest, a creative encounter with belonging, borderlands, genocide and exile, as well as something that is forced, endured or that may become limiting or exclusionary.

1.2. Mobility politics of walking

Attending to the politics of walking is to consider who moves, how movement is narrated, and the intersections between movement and key aspects of political geography such as borders, geopolitics, nature, power, scale, security, territory, and the body. Feminist and postcolonial scholarship on scale, embodiment and the privileges and gazes tied to certain mobile practices is central. Sheller (2018) has argued that accounts of mobilities should reflect 'historical time horizons drawing on global indigenous, non-western, and postcolonial experiences' (Sheller, 2018, p. 21). Scholarship on walking within geography has engaged with mobility politics in terms of class, dis(ability), ethnicity, gender, race and sexuality (Bharadwaj & Mahanta, 2022; Middleton, 2010; Rose, 2020; Stanley, 2020). This responds to Middleton's (2010: 91) critique that a fixation on walking methods often neglects critical engagements with 'how' and 'why' (or why not) people walk which include the 'material, embodied, affectual, political, and social dimensions of moving on foot'. Lee and Ingold (2006: 67) caution, 'We cannot simply walk into other people's worlds and expect therefore to participate with them', while Lorimer (2011) reminds us that the experience of a walk varies with the context. Walking methods, Macpherson (2016) warns, do not simply 'uncover' relationships with landscape and open relational accounts but can close them down too when we do not account for complex interplays between people and landscape. Vital work has thus detailed how cities and disabilities are co-constituted and how (dis)abilities shape 'urban politics, epistemologies and everyday life' (Jaffe, 2021: no PN).

Emerging here is a tension between walking as a method and walking as a practice to be explored. This takes us to psychogeography and arguably its bridging role as both a method and formulation of thought. Sidaway (2022) considers how psychogeography attends to the multiplicity of engagements with place. He reflects upon how its experiential and literary methods offer resources to examine and critique unequal relations of capital, class, race, gender, and empire, whilst noting how London became a key and privileged locus for such engagements.

Elsewhere, Phelan and Philo (2021: 169) have argued that exploring relationships between academic's psychoanalytic and 'new walking studies' might help to 'world' psychoanalysis as the body and mind, and emotion and cognition are 'both shaped and disclosed as the walking body makes its way into and through the world'. Exploring the relationship between walking as both method and practice is also to critically consider how the mobility politics and differing experiences of walking alter its role as method. Keinänen and Beck (2017) discuss, for instance, how walking in public spaces is often limited for those with specific conditions, and for women due to fear of violence and harassment. In many contexts, there are specific, identity, gendered, confessional, health or caste-based aspects to walking, added to the fact that it is nearly impossible, or very hazardous to walk in many motor-heavy environments designed to keep pedestrians away from motorized public space. In turn, struggles against motorization and for safe walking by 'persistent pedestrians: those who continued to walk in a world substantially rebuilt to serve drivers' (Norton, 2021, p. 289) merit scrutiny.

In critically engaging the trajectory of the idea of an 'Islamic city', Abu-Lughod (1987: 167) considers ways that gender-based segregation was constructed 'not only to prevent physical contact but to protect visual privacy.' Kaya (2009: 259) expanding on this within the northern Jordanian city of Irbid, argues, 'Irbidi pedestrians must behave within a specific set of gendered rules or risk destroying their reputations within their community.' It is not always possible to walk. As such, walking becomes deeply embodied and connected to questions of who walks, where, when, why, and with whom, all of which matters.

If political geographers are to engage more with walking methods, they must, too, contend with such emplaced and embodied inequalities and inaccessibilities. This includes women's minimised histories as walking researchers/psychogeographers, as well as how disabled and LGBT communities in different places may experience spaces differently. Moreover, the alternative feminist image of the *flâneuse* in the writings of Janet Wolff (1985), Rebecca Solnit (2001), and Lauren Elkin (2017) – while more radically reflecting upon women's experiences – nonetheless speaks from relative geographical and racial privileges. Women were frequently not included in *flânerie* as they were the 'spectacle' for the well-endowed *flâneur* to observe, resulting in the *flâneuse* becoming non-existent or an unacceptable figure (Wolff, 1985).

When walking and thinking are connected to intellectual thought in crucial ways, gender, race and privilege interacts with these processes in crucial ways. Keinänen and Beck's (2017: 527) mapping of 'a future research agenda on gender, walking, and thinking' identifies 'three themes: walking away from others' gaze, walking away from restlessness and domestic responsibility, and walking away as belonging'. The use of the verb 'walking' within the expression 'walking away' exemplifies how walking can also be about self-removal from a difficult situation, or also the flipside, for the walking researcher, removing oneself from a difficult space, or even from a fieldsite whilst ones interlocutors must stay behind. Walking as a method in political geography has the potential to consider these gendered approaches to walking, to unpack public and private politics, and to build on slow experiences and local knowledges. We think there is much value in unhurried walking that entails investment into place-specific, 'situated,' and linguistic skills and a resistance to dashing in and out of fieldwork. Self-questioning, slow and engaged research with those we walk for and with, and whose lives we intersect may guide the walking geographer. These themes are taken up in several of the interventions that follow.

1.3. Critical histories of walking

An important politics emerges when we centre other bodies and a politics of place within explorations of walking, including conceptualising walking within situated politics and culture (Edensor, 2022) or as a historical practise and source (Readman, 2022). In Sidaway's (2022: 554) discussion of psychogeography, the 'socio-spatial reconfiguration of the UK polity and its cities' offers a crucial

background to understanding the use of the term. In her research on walking in Jordan, Mason (2021) argues that the Eurocentricism of explorations of walking frequently ignore the situated cultural politics of walking and the connections between walking, gender, race, and colonialism. She considers hierarchies of movement and 'what walking means in different locations, under different political conditions, and for different individuals' (Mason, 2021, pp. 1–2). A body of work within geography, landscape studies, and popular culture has therefore sought to explore alternative histories of landscape, walking, and race. Tolia-Kelly (2007), for instance, writes that the English Lake District has been culturally embodied as a memorial to a site of Englishness which alienates and excludes its multicultural history. She responds to this through research design with a landscape artist with the political intention 'to record multiple cultures of engagement of individuals and groups who are fearful, frail and feel endangered by the concept of even just walking the lakeside pathways of Windermere' (Tolia-Kelly, 2007, p. 337).

In popular culture, the play *Black Men Walking* written by the producer, rapper and singer, known as Testament (Andy Brooks, who grew up in London and Zimbabwe and now lives outside Huddersfield, England), begins with the words: 'We walk. Though we are written into the landscape you don't see us. We walked England before the English' (Testament, 2018, p. 3). The play is based on a Black walking group in Sheffield established by Maxwell Ayamba (who grew up in Ghana before moving to the UK for university) and contrasts modern-day attitudes to the sight of Black men walking in the Yorkshire Dales with histories of black British history in the countryside that are largely unwritten Ayamba (ny). These unwritten histories, for Ayamba (ny) are connected to barriers to access for Black and lower-income communities but also highlight variable concepts of nature.

Histories of walking emerging in different contexts vary. Falah (2012) describes how walking was central to his family life in a Palestinian village as it enabled him to attend school and for his family to continue farming and trading in the context of Israeli domination. Shehadeh (2008) writes of the importance of walking for continuing traditional livelihoods in Palestine, and for connecting with historically Arab sites and pathways. Youatt (2022: 1) argues that while walking can be understood as a universal activity, it is also 'part of a mobile field of power and agency that generates, stabilizes, and unsettles internationality in equal parts.' This draws attention to the privileging of the individual walk within Euro-American traditions and reveals how a shift in focus to collective walks intentionally chosen, such as protest marches, or forced marches, offers ways to think about the direct and indirect relationships of political power and walking. Such historical, experiential, and embodied accounts of walking have much to offer geographical theorisations of landscape and the city. This includes expanding accounts of relationships between urban and rural walking and how the differing politics of mobility, histories of nature, and place connect with walking. As Lee and Ingold (2006: 78) note, in rural areas walking routes become embedded in the landscape in a way that is usually not possible in urban areas. Walking can be individual and collective, endured or enjoyed, and connected to differing political histories and these tensions are at the heart of the interventions that follow.

In the first piece that follows, Alastair Bonnett considers the relationships between individual and group experiences of walking in the context of a genre of (mostly British) popular accounts of 'green' walks that celebrate nature and topography. Also writing about landscapes in Britain, specifically the county of Kent that now 'borders' the EU, Phil Hubbard reflects on 'scaling-up' of psychogeographic methods from the urban to the national, using walking to reflect on nationalism, exclusion and identity. Writing on and from New Delhi, Ghazala Jamil mobilizes psychogeography to a feminist and postcolonial consideration of Indian sovereign struggles, juxtaposing contemporary research walking with walking as a means for political protests in the context of the Indian freedom struggle. Jennie Middleton provides a note of caution on what

she refers to as ‘differentiated nature of experiences on foot’, arguing that walking as something to endure receives less attention than more celebratory accounts of walking from popular authors and scholars. In their interventions, both Maggie O’Neill and James Riding consider such relations of force and agency in walking, bearing witness from Bosnia and Greece’s fraught Aegean littoral. Morag Rose returns us to the UK to recount experiences of walking and reflections on psychogeography, which she describes ‘as joining invisible dots across time and place, and as we make our links, we need to be aware of absence as well as presences.’ Walking and psychogeography pose multiple challenges relating to power, representation and translations. Nevertheless, we hope that the interventions that follow will inspire more political geographers to draw on and develop walking methods.

2. Individual and group green walking: solitary steps and the multitude

2.1. Alastair Bonnett

The last few decades have seen the development of a new genre of literary non-fiction based on popular authors’ walks. Such ‘green walks’ have environmental and political intent and include best-selling, nostalgic forays, such as the lost tracks trodden by Robert Macfarlane (2012) and the collages of urban encounter tracked by Iain Sinclair (2002). This genre includes a growing range of works by artists, writers, and activists (for example, Qualmann & Hind, 2015). The pathways taken and imagined across this field map a diverse set of environmentalist anxieties and fantasies. However, these walks are, for the most part, personal endeavours. They provide space for idiosyncratic rumination and for individual chartings of place and memory. In this way, they sustain the idea and the image of the walker as a solitary figure.

This form of green rambling can be contrasted with group-based excursions. In this category we can place nature rambles organised by local groups as well as more politically charged events, such as acts of group trespass and protest marches, including those organised in the name of Extinction Rebellion (see Johnston & Holland Bonnett, 2023). It may be useful, then, to consider how individuals and groups walk differently. However, before we do this it is necessary to draw out the anthropocentric assumption upon which this distinction is based. Humans are not the only actors in motion. More specifically, group and collective voices are, in fact, very much present in literary and performance-based green walking. They do not register living, human presences but ghostly ones, as well as the enchanted, magical possibilities of the landscape and, most importantly, the multitudes of nature.

Scarp: In search of London’s outer limits, by Nick Papadimitriou (2012), is a hard-won and often dream-like depiction of a set of 30 walks around north-west London. Papadimitriou’s walks are neither pleasant nor pastoral: trying to navigate on foot a landscape designed for cars and commerce is a bewildering and horrible experience and, for Papadimitriou, it frequently ends in failure. ‘How did we end up with a city where walking is so hard, where the land is so hostile?’ he asks (187). However, Papadimitriou is *not* alone:

A blackbird chuckled somewhere close by and I felt myself merge with the deep peacefulness of the mauve woodlands and the rumbling of the distant M25 ... Scarp absorbed me into its first station. (48)

Slip, Motorway, round my ankles if you must; drag me into your petroleum future. You will pass too, ending crocheted by red leaves of herb Robert, stars of cow thistle. (49)

The land and its many lives are not passive objects in *Scarp*. They are connected and networked: an urgent presence that is down-trodden but, somehow – someday – carries all before it. Papadimitriou seeks to attend to and release these many voices. In this sense *Scarp* reminds us of more literal attempts to find and witness nature emerging in and against the

city’s concrete. In her essay ‘Five walks to save the world: how “psycho-geography” can help you confront the climate crisis’, Holloway (2022), like Papadimitriou, frames urban weeds and animals as a thriving and multifarious force. For Holloway nature erupts and reclaims: ‘Two sycamore saplings poke out of a roadside drain’. Her tone, unlike Papadimitriou’s shamanic sensuousness, is instructional. ‘[L]ook for wildlife thriving in unusual places’, she tells us.

such as flowers in the cracks between paving stones and trees or shrubs growing out of bricks or guttering. Take time to consider how these observations make you feel, and why. What could you do to improve the area for the benefit of wildlife?

Whatever its tenor and style, it seems that green walking is not as solitary as it might, at first, appear. And there are other presences. Papadimitriou’s *Scarp* is a haunted land in which the signs and symbols of magic, ancient and modern, can be found in the least prepossessing spots. Another account of green walking that attends to such spells is Gareth Rees’ (2013) *Marshland: Dreams and nightmares on the edge of London*. For Rees, magic symbolism is found everywhere, in the patterns taken by litter on grass and in the shapes and shadows of pylons. His ghosts flood this damaged, ceremonial space: they rise up from abandoned buildings and post-industrial wastes, angry spectres that seem to be wanting to speak of discarded lives and who are now demanding recognition and revenge.

These threads have been woven many times and in many landscapes. Recently, artists, (especially performance artists), have been at the forefront of creating and documenting walks where the walker works in collaboration with nature, enchantment, and memory. In the UK, the performance artist Phil Smith has been central to this new scene. In *Anywhere: A Mythogeography of South Devon and How to Walk It*, Smith (writing under the name Cecile Oak, 2017), stitches together myth, legend, and local history with an insurgent openness to the possibilities of the natural world. Performance-based excursions are often undertaken in pairs or small groups yet the resulting accounts strive towards a personal and singular voice (see for example, Schott et al., 2019; Kloetzel & Smith, 2021; Qualmann & Hind, 2015; Bissell & Overend, 2021 and Fife Psycho-geographical Collective, 2015). The result is a coalition and coalescing of sources and actors, both human and non-human.

The distinction between individual and group walking is, if not overturned, at least being troubled by the non-anthropocentric agendas that guide these examples of green walking. This should not lead us, however, to conflate the two. There are important differences between how individuals and groups encounter the landscape. For those who run human geography fieldtrips, which increasingly have a component in which groups of students are sent off to ‘do’ psycho-geography, it is worth reflecting on this distinction. The solitary walker has access to the quiet headspace, autonomy and time, that enables them to encounter landscapes in ways that are often unavailable amid the self-conscious sociability and/or explicit political intent of group walks. The centrality of reverie, magic, and spontaneity in so many examples of green walking might suggest the group walk is a more rational and prosaic form (even the words ‘group walk’ may evoke memories of half-heard instructions and wondering when it will be over).

Yet, as I have shown, the urgent value of the many, whether human or not, is near the surface of even the most solitary green walk. Moreover, group dynamics are not fixed but fluid and they allow for distinct and distinctly fertile layers of connection, diversity, and encounter. How the different subject positions of the walkers – differences of gender, ‘race’, or disability for example – are acknowledged is unpredictable: group dynamics may work to efface them but groups can also be sites of empowerment and reclamation of space. There is, moreover, an intrinsic and physically felt sense of acting together found within walking groups: even when the participants barely know – and perhaps even dislike – each other, group walks enact and encourage convivial sympathy. They have their own kind of magic. They can also forge new routes in the

landscape and re-establish public presence and control. Moreover, they make visible political forces that may go unnoticed by single travellers. Indeed, green protest walks often and literally bring out the police, creating dynamics of enforcement and transgression which, for a certain period, reshape the routes and routines of the city.

Both individual and group green walks are framed by many voices. Green perspectives offer different methods for walking, but can also make legible and encourage us to rethink what we imagine to be the meaning, limits, and capacities of ‘group’ and ‘individual’.

3. Walking the White cliffs: borderscapes, nationalism and the lie of the land

3.1. Phil Hubbard

The dark art of psychogeography was famously fomented in 1950s Paris, since which time it has evolved, or degraded, depending on one’s viewpoint, via the work of disparate urban perambulators, poets and pranksters. In this intervention, however, I want to reflect on the ‘scaling-up’ of psychogeographic methods from the urban to the national, exploring how walking methods can reveal the affective politics of nationalism and identity. Here, I draw on my five-day, 110-mile walk along the Kent coast at the moment of Brexit (see Hubbard, 2022). In undertaking this walk, I was particularly interested in thinking about how ideas of British national identity are encountered in the landscape, and how they subsequently become reproduced in mundane rituals of belonging, following Closs Stephens’ (2016) assertion that we cannot understand national feelings as emanating from single sovereign source but rather originating from multiple sites as part of a nebulous, diffuse atmosphere.

Here, I want to suggest that walking methods promote an attentiveness to the construction of national identities by encouraging an embodied encounter with the affective forces that congeal around the sites and bodies that constitute the ‘borderscape’ (see Moze & Spiegel, 2022, on the aesthetics of the border). The contemporary political borders of the UK are of course both everywhere and nowhere, existing in an electronic space of flows but also at airports, train stations and ferry terminals (both in the UK and overseas). But imaginatively and cognitively, the UK’s border with continental Europe is often equated with the Kent coast, separated from France by the narrow, shallow strip of the English Channel. It is this borderland that bears the imprint of different periods where Europe has been drawn towards, or pushed away from, the UK. This island-imaginary serves to reproduce particular myths of Britishness, with the idealisation of the ‘island-nation’ (see also Davis, 2020) promoting an exclusionary English identity over a more inclusive UK. Brexit was, as multiple commentators have noted, essentially made in England, with Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish voters showing much less enthusiasm for leaving the European Union (Henderson et al., 2017).

The conjuncture of Brexit border delays and the rise in asylum seekers arriving by boat – not to mention the rise of the COVID-19 Kent (Alpha) variant (B1.1.1.7) in the spring of 2021 – has led to the Kent coast taking on new symbolism in recent debates about national identity. Tellingly, on ‘Brexit Day’ (31st January 2020), the white cliffs of Dover appeared on the front of the *Daily Mail*’s Brexit ‘souvenir edition’ hailing ‘A New Dawn for Britain’. Later that day, Dover’s Tory MP Natalie Elphicke shared Twitter footage of a celebratory fireworks party on the cliffs that she claimed would be visible from Calais. In this sense, the Kent coast has been celebrated as the bulwark shore that has long held off ‘foreign invaders’ of different types, with Brussels bureaucracy being bracketed with all-number of existential threats to the ‘Garden of England’ ranging from military invasion through to zoonosis (e.g. see also Darian-Smith, 1999, on rabies and the anti-Channel Tunnel discourses of the 1980s).

The Kent coast is one full of contradiction: important in shaping myths of nationhood, and abutting a rural landscape of apparent

abundance, but also somehow on the margins. It is a strange coastline. Physically, it incorporates muddy estuarine environments, soaring chalk uplands, sandy coves, and pebble beaches, all punctuated by the unworldly, arid headland at Dungeness. Socially, it boasts affluent retirement towns as well as some of the cheapest housing areas in the South East; economically, it incorporates faded tourist towns next to hipster hangouts full of DFLs (‘Down from Londons’). I attempted to make sense of this borderscape using a technique of reading and writing landscape that perhaps grandiosely, I thought of as *deep topography* (see too Papadimitriou, 2012). As distinct from, but related to psycho-geographical methods that explore the subconscious impact of environment on behaviour, deep topography involves explorations of the landscape with an eye to longer histories and the impact of ‘deep’ geologic time. Walking remains central here as a mode of becoming knowledgeable about the landscape, with accompanying practices of notetaking and photography important for disclosing traces of defunct temporalities and technologies. In that sense, walking can also reveal present absences: certain things that could be there but are not, ‘other’ narratives subsumed within landscapes that glibly celebrate histories of colonialism and imperialism.

Borderland was then a coastal driftwork, an exploration of exclusionary nationalism via a coastal perambulation drawing on recent traditions of psychogeographically-inflected nature writing (e.g. Hubbard & Wilkinson, 2019 on Carol Donaldson’s *On The Marshes*) as well as more established cultural geographical traditions of reading, and writing, the landscape (see Davis, 2020). Throughout my walk I encountered relict forms emphasising Britain’s geological, political, economic and cultural separation from continental Europe: Tudor castles, Napoleonic-era sea forts, Martello Towers, World War Two tank traps, hidden pill boxes and abandoned airfields. But I also found the persistent traces of connection. As well as ferry terminals at Dover and Ramsgate, and the now-defunct, weed-enveloped hoverport at Pegwell Bay, I stumbled upon the infrastructures that brought a *transmanche* region into being during the period of EU membership. Most important here is the Eurotunnel, and the vast 350-acre terminal for passengers and vehicles located near Folkestone (Fig. 1), but also the high-voltage electricity convertor stations constructed at Sellindge (1986) and Cheriton (2020), and numerous undersea connections that transmit power and knowledge across the seabed.

Yet sometimes my awareness of the connections between Kent and continental Europe went deeper to a reflection on the land itself: its ecology, morphology and geology. For example, signs sometimes indicated the presence of protected landscapes, designated for the conservation of native species, hinting at the ways a distinctive English identity is constructed via acts that draw boundaries around so-called ‘natural areas’ reproducing nationalist discourses about what belongs where (Antonsich, 2021). Conversely, bird reserves and Sites of Special



Fig. 1. Le Shuttle terminal, from Castle Hill, Folkestone. Photo: Hubbard.

Scientific Interest (SSSIs) are also marked out in the landscape, highlighting the value of particular habitats for overwintering birds, the seasonal migrants of the natural world (Davis, 2020).

But walking also alerted me to the materiality of the land itself, via the transition from crumbling clay cliffs to pebbled headlands, from the low-lying estuarine fringes of the Thames to the soaring headlands of the white cliffs. Where the North Downs meet the sea, for example, I became persistently aware of the chalk that historically linked Britain to the continent. Suggesting the first foot travellers to Britain crossed over on chalk, Robert Macfarlane (2019) refers to ‘chalky mysticism’ – a mythology which links English identity, architecture and imagination to the cycles of geological time, but also reminds us that the divide between Europe and Britain is relatively recent.

There was no moment of profound revelation, or magical glimpses of the transformational, on the walk, rather a quiet unfolding of landscape over five days, albeit one where there were sometimes quite sudden ruptures in the landscape where the process of bordering came into view via various technologies – legal, political, and architectural. The ruptures did not break the continuum of the borderscape but constituted it, the rupture being folded into the continuum, and the border’s lawscape being sublimated in the landscape (see Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, 2014). Indeed, recent coastguard stations, lookouts and defensive structures are effectively assimilated into a border landscape that appears older than England itself, as if recent gestures of separation are the natural corollary of the physical and geological divide that created the island-nation.

The Kent coast is not a microcosm of England, a bellwether that reveals national political sentiment and the feelings that led to Brexit. To the contrary, it is a border environment where acts of bordering past and present have constructed a particular atmosphere of national identity and separatism, much of this anchored around the memorialisation of military defence and ‘wartime consciousness’. Walking the Kent coast, war haunts every footstep. Nonetheless, walking also revealed points of contestation in the contemporary political imagination of the UK as an island nation. One key motif here was the fragility of the land itself, threatened as it is with sea level change, rising temperatures and environmental change that knows of no border. Significantly, the English coastal path, opened between Ramsgate and Dungeness as recently as 2016, has had to be re-routed because the white cliffs themselves are retreating as fast as 20 cm a year in places (Fig. 2). For me, the act of moving through different coastal landscapes rather than dwelling or lingering in specific coastal communities was vital for grasping the nature of the frayed edge of England, ultimately challenging the idea that the island nation should ever be taken for granted either as a physical or political entity.



Fig. 2. Kingsdown, Kent. Photo: Hubbard.

4. Postcolonial psychogeography: walking methods and national imaginaries

4.1. Ghazala Jamil

I came to think of walking as a ‘method’ through my doctoral fieldwork in New Delhi while studying residential segregation based on religious identity (Jamil, 2017). The interactions with participants during my research brought up numerous historical and personal accounts of shifting homes within the city, migration and exodus induced by economic processes, sectarian violence or retributive state actions. However, some of my informants suggested taking me to specific sites to evidence socio-spatial relationships with history and politics. Even as my training had led me to think of research as a largely narrative exercise which relied upon forms of talking, my experiences of walking in the field showed that the bodily negotiation of spaces yielded alternative pathways to study the spatiality of identity. I found that walking in the field also allowed for a more equitable researcher-subject power dynamic because the interviewee could ‘edit’ my ethnographic experience through their ‘curation’ of the field. I framed walking with others in the field as ‘walking interviews’ (Jamil, 2016) to highlight it as a way of altering the research script with regards to which underlying codes or characters are privileged in a spatial narrative.

As a feminist researcher, for me, research was a project in co-creating situated knowledge for emancipation, and I construed walking in the field alone or with others as a conscious act of resistance to the usual narratives about geographies of discrimination. As a Muslim woman researcher, I was also acutely aware of how moving through (and not just residing in) the city was mediated by identity. This was affected through the labeling of Muslim segregated neighbourhoods in India as ‘mini-Pakistan’ to signal a discursive exclusion from the ‘national’ space. Further, writing about walking as a method in my thesis reminded me that walking first struck me as an exceptionally performative rather than only an instinctive activity, when as a child I witnessed thousands of pilgrims in Faizabad walking to Ayodhya, in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. The walking pilgrims at the site of one of the most defining disputes in Indian politics appear to be a fitting motif of the re-imagining of the ‘national’ wherein cultural nationalism aids oppressive majoritarian place-making.

At the same time, it is also known that this spatial-political transformation of the nation has been resisted in India by a political culture rooted in the history of anti-colonial movement (Masselos, 2007). In this intervention I am focusing on walking as a method of performing politics in India – whether as a moral protest, as a collective performance of civic nationalism, or even as a method of investigation with which we can study the contours of the postcolonial imagination of India.

When psychogeography was first named and theorized in Europe, its proponents framed it as a practice in reimagining space, but the vocabulary was predominantly about reclaiming desire manipulated by forces of capitalism (Sidaway, 2022). In post-colonial India, it was mostly political scientists and historians who critically engaged with the spatial notions of the Indian nation and state (along with their cultural, temporal and political dimensions). Geography, on the other hand, largely positioned itself as a discipline harnessed to India’s state-led national development (Kapur, 2004). This intervention suggests that psychogeography can provide another critical spatio-psychological lens to scrutinize the effects of colonization and the modes of resistance deployed in the formerly colonized societies. This has multiple implications for postcolonial studies which has largely focused on the one hand on the recovery of national histories of resistance by the subaltern, and on the other on issues of representation of native or national communities, especially in literature and media.

Worldwide, national narratives frequently involve originary accounts in which arduous journeys were made by pioneers who ‘founded’ a nation – defining it at crucial landmark moments. Arguably, the Dandi March undertaken by Gandhi in 1930 in India is one such narrative.

Combining a long march with civil disobedience, the Dandi March ostensibly protested a British salt tax; however, it is commonly recognized that Gandhi was further developing *Satyagraha* ('Insisting upon truth') as an anti-colonial method by invoking walking as a nationalist pilgrimage (Suchitra, 1995; Suhrod, 2005) in which extreme physical exertion infused a sense of spirituality.

This usage is interesting because pilgrimage and travel in the pre-colonial world were usually framed as epistemophilic exercises to know self and the other, and were distinguished from conquests. The territorial impulse of colonization mediated rapid development of transport technology (Seton-Watson [1977], 2020) making it a conduit of capture and extraction. While Said (1993) uses a literary method to investigate the transformations of the cultural, social and political geography of the colony due to the imperial territorial capture, a psychogeographic lens draws our attention to Gandhi's walking protest as a material and corporeal critique of colonial repression and extraction, which also extended to a moral critique of European modernity and its trappings such as speedy and mass transport (Hendrick, 1956). In a long and subversive pamphlet called *Hind-Swaraj* (Indian self-rule) which was banned by the colonial state, Gandhi remarked, "Railways, machineries and the corresponding increase of indulgent habits are the true badge of slavery of the Indian people, as they are of Europeans" (Gandhi, 1915). Here, Gandhi introduces into the anti-colonial movement a moral distrust of technology (specifically of rapid mass transport) as an inalienable appendage of colonial rationality. Thus, walking was a logical protest against this rationality and not just a rejection of colonial rule.

In this usage, walking becomes a practice (like Gandhi's sartorial choices) which was part of 'a new regime of conduct' (Chatterjee, 1993) through which nationalist self-fashioning occurred. In a bold move, during the 'long march', Gandhi called for civil disobedience as a moral duty against a state that failed the morality test, and not just because it was not 'native'. The important insight of this connection between walking and anti-colonialism is that the form of nationalism most popular and dominant in the Indian anti-colonial movement was civic *as much as it was* moral-spiritual. It clearly distinguished itself from a 'blood and soil' cultural or majoritarian nationalism.

This is the reason why this framing continues to resonate with protesting public imaginations of relationships with the state, and influences choices of protest tactics in Independent India. 'Show of strength' protest tactics like massive rallies or motorized roadshows are usually employed by the politically powerful groups, signaling cultural nationalism (or sub-nationalisms). But 'walking methods' continue to exude a civic nationalism that reserves a right to critique a political regime or government seen as bereft of moral authority.

This intervention intended to explore and hopefully demonstrate how psychogeography can position itself not only as a counter to amnesia on the impact of colonization, but also must adapt a *longue durée* approach to postcoloniality. For scholars like me who are trained in and writing from academic spaces in South Asia, psychogeography's relevance is heightened by its potential to contend with the history of the post-colonial state formation, largely majoritarian 'nation-building' by these states, and the post-colonial state's continued use of repressive colonial rationality.

5. Romancing the Roam

5.1. Jennie Middleton

In early 2022, BBC News interviewed a Nigerian medical student, Jessica Orakpo, as she fled Ukraine following the Russian invasion. She was among hundreds of thousands of people attempting to leave the country. The interview focuses on instances of racism and discrimination encountered by Black people at the borders. Yet Jessica's account also describes in detail the significance of walking to her traumatic experiences of leaving Ukraine. Walking is central to Jessica's narrative of

her journey to the Polish border and subsequent detour to Hungary. As she describes walking for hours and hours to reach the border only to be turned away, she explains how 'the term walking is traumatising me'. Jessica recounts how when trying to board a bus she was told, 'If you are Black, you should walk', and how when she tried to take a nap: 'I still feel like I am still walking. Like I haven't crossed over.' In contrast, the dominant discourse when walking is considered as an artistic practice, as a mode of transport, or as a research method is its 'potential'. Understandings of walking that align with experiences such as Jessica's remain on the margins.

The positive virtues of walking are extolled across the spheres of academia, policy, and practice. The emancipatory and democratic possibilities of walking have a long history in academic writings spanning the arts, humanities, and social sciences. Meanwhile, the Covid-19 pandemic has seen walking (and cycling) become much more central to discussions about how many cities are imagined and planned. Walking as an artistic practice also has a long history, particularly in performance art. Work on walking is rich, varied, and multi-dimensional yet a common theme is the assumption that walking is something to enjoy, a practice that has 'endless possibilities', or one to which all people enjoy unequivocal access. The universalising tendencies of how walking is frequently considered neglect the differentiated nature of experiences on foot. As such, walking as something to endure rather than enjoy receives far less attention. This brief intervention suggests the adoption of walking methods to interrogate the assumptions embedded within dominant narratives on walking but also cautions against romanticising such methods. In particular, greater account of the 'demands of the method' (Warren, 2017) whilst adopting an 'ethics of care' (Middleton & Samanani, 2021) are significant considerations for approaches drawing upon walking methods. I argue for a broader engagement with critical walking methodologies as a necessary turn to interrogate the often taken-for-grantedness of both walking and walking methods.

In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is through the promotion of active travel (see Cook et al., 2022) where much of the emphasis on walking takes place. Yet whilst the dialogue around active travel occurring in urban and transport policy arenas are entrenched within various, often competing, political agendas (see for example, the discussions in the UK about 'Low Traffic Neighbourhoods'), understandings of the practice of walking itself are often depoliticised with little focus on the differentiated nature of pedestrian experiences. Such policy agendas are frequently informed by data derived from particular types of methods, including surveys, GIS, and data visualisations, which can be argued to account for much of this inattention. It is thus important to expand the methodological toolkit in the context of active travel and engage in much more depth with the lived experiences of walking. Walking methods have much to offer here but, as I will now discuss, the adoption of such methods is not without its challenges.

Walking methods are frequently positioned as generating data that gives a richer and deeper engagement with the topic under investigation. While examples are wide and varied, such methods have most commonly been used to research people's experiences with space and place (see for example Anderson, 2004; Bates & Rhys-Taylor, 2017; O'Neill & Roberts, 2019; Ricketts-Hein et al., 2008; Silver et al., 2020). However, to date, the focus is still very much on the 'potential' these methods afford. Furthermore, bar some notable exceptions (see Edwards & Maxwell, 2023; Feldman et al., 2020; Parent, 2016; Macpherson, 2016; Rose, 2020; Warren, 2017), there is seldom attention to the 'demands' of the method for research participants. As such, there is a pressing need for a widespread orientation towards an 'ethics of care' with closer attention to the experiences of both researchers and research participants when adopting walking methods (see also, Middleton & Byles, 2019). I argue here that critical walking methodologies provide the necessary tools for considering these issues. In recent years, critical walking studies has interrogated the taken-for-grantedness of walking. The work of Springgay and Truman (2018, 2019; 2022) has been

instrumental in developing this agenda, which involves complicating and accounting for where research takes place and how one moves through space. They highlight, 'Beyond simple pedestrianism or the movement of going from one point to another, critical walking methodologies are accountable to the different ways that different bodies and people move, and sociopolitical and geological inheritances and affects of the places where one walks' (Springgay & Truman, 2022, p. 17).

A rich body of work is emerging in this interdisciplinary subfield that challenges the neutral imaginings of walking as a method and everyday practice (Martinez & Gois, 2022). In particular, the significance of gender, race, class, disability, and ageing has been made central to not only how walking is experienced daily but the consequences of these intersections for processes of knowledge construction (e.g. Rose, 2020 and their essay, this intervention).

Some might suggest that negative walking experiences such as Jessica's are exceptional due to them emerging during the Russian/Ukrainian conflict. Yet our everyday lives are full of instances of walking being something to endure rather than enjoy (e.g. Middleton, 2022). In the promotion of active travel, negative experiences of walking are either overlooked or associated with a well-rehearsed set of issues concerning safety, crime, air pollution etc. Yet engagements that centre the lived experiences of everyday walking and its associated politics are far less prominent. In their paper on disabled people's socio-spatial encounters with urban un/safety, Edwards and Maxwell (2023: 1) suggest that 'there is a need to advance interdisciplinary social science scholarship which troubles ambulant research and writes social and bodily difference into mobility studies and mobile methods'. I would take inspiration here and extend this even further in terms of social and bodily difference being written into policy spheres too. Critical walking methodologies provide the conceptual and methodological tools for these spheres to advance understandings that recognise the significance of the lived experiences of walking. Equally, being more sensitive to how the politics of social and bodily difference emerge in walking practices provides opportunities for more comprehensive and nuanced engagements with walking methods.

6. Walking as ethnographic praxis: borders, risk and belonging

6.1. Maggie O'Neill

In this intervention, I connect with political geographies of walking and in particular the relationship between micro-social lived lives and geopolitical, cultural worlds (and scales), by discussing walking as an ethnographic practice for researching borders, risk and belonging.

'Walking Borders Risk and Belonging' (<https://www.walkingborder.com/>) was a Leverhulme funded fellowship that explored, through extended conversations with co-walkers (artists, academics, citizens), the experiences, meanings, and understandings of borders, risk and belonging connected to the places and territories chosen by them. Using biographical, visual/digital and walking methods, the intention was to interrogate the concepts of borders, risk and belonging, through creative applications of the 'Walking Interview as Biographical Method' (WIBM). Brian Roberts and I developed the WIBM (O'Neill & Roberts, 2019) as a relational, sensory and phenomenological biographical practice that examines in co-productive and collaborative ways the relationships between biography, history and culture, to make sense of our social worlds connected to place/space/territory. The method is underpinned by the symbolic interactionism and phenomenological approach of the Chicago School, feminist critical theory and postcolonial scholarship. This intervention demonstrates the benefits and challenges of walking as a biographical interview method for political geography through one example, a WIBM with photographer John Perivolaris in Chios, Greece, and makes three key points.

First, theoretically and methodologically, walking as a participatory and convivial method can unsettle the 'hierarchies of both knowledge production' and the situated politics of class and culture related to

'mobilities.' Here I want to stress the importance of working in the present and through the past using biographical walking interviews to reinforce the value to political, cultural and urban geography. Second, the methodological process of working biographically in collaboration with co-walkers using arts-based methods speaks to doing theory and methods in ways that seek to flatten normative research hierarchies and open spaces for experiences of individuals, groups and also marginalised peoples to speak for themselves, in their own ways and on their own terms. Finally, walking with the collaborators facilitates dialogue, paying attention (Ingold, 2023), listening as understanding, and the potential for solidarity as part of an ethics of listening, that transcends the local, connecting us with broader structures, territories and in this case, to political understandings of nationalism.

Walking ethnographically engages with people in the social, relational, political and material relations between body, space, place, the senses, and time. This embodied understanding is highlighted in Fig. 3, for, as evidenced by Mason (2020:1), walking enables 'embodied and intimate accounts of territory to emerge.' Centring this scale allows bigger questions to emerge, which are linked to race, class, gender, and locally situated political conditions and knowledge systems that both underpin 'concepts of territory' (Mason, 2020, p. 2) and which trouble normative understandings. This is evidenced, in part, in the following section.

6.2. Unsettling hierarchies of knowledge production through WIBM

Photographer John Perivolaris said he wanted to undertake the WIBM because Chios was a significant place for him in relation to personal and family history. The method thus allowed him 'the opportunity to think about certain memories he inherited from my family about Chios ... as well as my new impressions of Chios'. For John, this current time/temporal period 2015/2016 was an important moment in history for Greece, her relationship with Turkey, and the refugee crisis. John began by reading the opening page of Irish journalist Bruce Clark's (2006) book:

Whether we like it or not, those of us who live in Europe or in places influenced by European ideas remain the children of Lausanne; that is to say, of the convention signed on a Swiss Lakeside after the First World War which decreed a massive, forced population movement between Turkey and Greece (Clark, 2006: xi).

John mapped out and led the walk that took place over a number of days focusing upon landmarks, places and spaces connected to his biography.

6.3. Walking as collaborative and co-productive. A conversation between three generations: inter-generational displacement and diaspora

The walk with John (Perivolaris and O'Neill, 2016) starts with a route from his family's flat on the sea front, during which he shares a story told by his Father about his grandfather:

When he was a little boy he used to stroll in the evenings with his grandfather, my great-grandfather, along the town's coastal promenade. This faces Turkey and is situated underneath our current flat. My father had a very close relationship with his grandfather, even closer than the one between himself and his father. They used to have long conversations on these walks. My dad must have been around ten ... During these walks ... there was always one point along the walk where my great-grandfather would go completely silent and they would sit on the low wall that runs alongside the pavement. My great-grandfather would suddenly be lost for words. He'd just gaze out across the water to Çesme, the Turkish town opposite ...

On a couple of occasions, my father saw tears in his grandfather's eyes, silent tears. That image of tears got me thinking ... I have this image in my mind of an old gentleman who had come to Chios as part



Fig. 3. No borders, No nation – Stop deportation. Photo: O'Neill.

of the exchange of populations in 1922. He was a rich merchant in Smyrna who lost almost everything and came to Chios, where he'd never lived before. A typical experience shared by those who were exiled from their previous lives in Asia Minor. Suddenly finding themselves Greek citizens, they had to adapt to a country they didn't know, after having lived in Asia Minor alongside Armenians, Turks, Jews, and others as part of the Ottoman world.

I have always been haunted by the image of my great-grandfather looking back across the water with a sense of loss and longing.

Walking further along the coastline towards the hotel, that housed tourists, aid workers and border security staff, we stopped at a bronze statue of General Nikolaos Plastiras, a former 'distinguished general and politician' and hero of the Greco-Turkish War of 1919–1922, which faces across the sea to Çesme on the Turkish coast. John added that, 'on the other side of the sea, in Çesme the statue of Plastiras is matched by an equestrian statue of Kemal Ataturk in Cumhuriyet Square ... sword drawn'. And, 'since 2009 ... a 132-foot relief sculpture on the scale of Mount Rushmore of Kemal Ataturk's head and bust'. For John, this drawing of borders is part of the history of nationalism that resulted in the founding of modern Turkey and Greece (see also [Perivolaris, 2017](#)).

6.4. Walking and listening as 'paying attention'

In the context of John's recounting the past, and especially his grandfather's experiences, refracted through the present, the geospatial (which places emphasis on the space/spatial dimension of topography and history embedded in that space/and place) and political layers of the past in the present can be identified in the landscape. For example, as we approach the harbour and walls of the town we see Souda refugee camp: a contemporary United Nations camp situated in the very same place as the refugee camp to which John's grandfather arrived from Çesme, Turkey in the 1920s as part of the population exchanges:

Post-1922, it was largely occupied by Greek refugees from Asia Minor, including the maternal side of my family. The current refugee camp, next to the walls of the medieval citadel, is another chapter of the refugee experience on an island of refugees.

Our walk continued over a few days and drifted around the places and spaces John knew and with which he became re-acquainted: the former house of his grandfather, the square and streets, and the marketplace. We also walked in Souda refugee camp. The image in [Fig. 4](#) delineates the route to Souda from the town and registration centre.

The WIBM with John held space for conversations about John's biography, his cultural history and familial experiences of the population

exchanges and the long, turbulent history of refugee and forced migration to/from Greece and Turkey – all told along the walk. The current humanitarian and refugee crisis, austerity politics and experiences of Greek citizens are writ large along the walk. For example, the map on the side of an aid organisations' tent ([Fig. 5](#)) helps orient new arrivals to Chios, and to the geospatial-territorial relationship with her neighbours. Hence, the relationships between biography, history, culture and place were made real along the walk, through John's biographical remembering's of the intimate geographies of borders, risk and belonging and the affective relationships and memories the places and landmarks evoked. Through the walking interview as biographical method, John's past was made real in the present. His poignant memories of time with his grandfather and father were evoked and shared in place through the landmarks and layers of history in the broader temporal context of the current refugee crisis. The walk enabled dialogue, listening as understanding and potentially solidarity as part of a broader ethic of listening when dealing with the scale of loss and human suffering involved in forced migration.

Our walk brings into sharp focus the particular relationship between micro-social lived lives, meaning-making and geopolitical, cultural worlds, and scales through time and place. In this way, biographical research (the investigation of individuals' daily life experiences and their past and future perspectives, using a variety of interpretive approaches including narrative, life history, oral history and in this case the WIBM) might serve to re-ethicise social research by responding to the social and political conditions of human suffering. Such approaches would also bring into visibility and recognition ways of knowing (WIBM) that demand critical reflection by engaging the walking, performing and sensing body, and by acknowledging the connections between these small stories and wider geopolitical stories, forces, structures and materialities, in participatory and co-productive ways,



Fig. 4. Route to Souda. Photo: O'Neill.

through walking as a biographical and ethnographic praxis.

7. Walking to remember: counteracting genocide denial through mobile engagements with landscape after genocide

7.1. James Riding

This intervention explores the mobilities of genocide through marching with others as a form of walking to remember, and stands against introspective methods of walking alone in the countryside. It turns attention to a death march out of Srebrenica fleeing genocide, in July 1995, reclaimed by survivors as a march of peace. The need for such alternative accounts of walking in landscape that engage landscape beyond a narrow gaze has long been debated in human geography (Blacksell, 2005; Tolia-Kelly, 2007). Alternative landscape mobilities have more recently been taken forward through grounded fieldwork in Palestine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Jordan (Falah, 2012; Mason, 2021; Riding, 2015). Walking is ‘contingent, contested, and performative’ and ‘striated by gender, race, ethnicity, class, colour, nationality, age, sexuality, disability, etc., which are all in fact experienced as effects of uneven mobilities’ (Sheller, 2018, p. 10).

I spent three days walking along a 63-mile trail through densely wooded hills and undulating grassy landscapes from a starting point in Nezuk to Potočari, where the Srebrenica Genocide Memorial Cemetery is located (Riding, 2020). A column of walkers arrived in Srebrenica a day before the annual mass funeral for victims who have been located in mass graves and pieced together so as they can finally be buried in a marked grave. The 63-mile walk to the cemetery retraced in reverse an attempt to escape the genocide in Srebrenica. Sensing the disaster that was about to take place, on 11 July 1995 a column of people assembled. They then began the long walk over mountains and through forests in

the hope of escaping. Five days and six nights passed before the first survivors of the death march arrived in safe territory, when it became apparent that thousands had been killed during the journey.

The ambulatory journeys I have taken through Bosnia and Herzegovina remain, as Gearoid Ó Tuathail (1996) writes in the immediate aftermath of genocide, torn between anger and academia (Riding, 2019). I wrote the words that I include in this intervention in what was the Holiday Inn in Sarajevo, a day after watching a lorry carrying the remains of 50 victims of genocide travel to their final resting place, the Srebrenica–Potočari Memorial and Cemetery for the Victims of the 1995 Genocide. I intervene in this walking retrospective by showing a layering of wartime and post-war mobilities in the landscape of eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina: a journey of ‘survivors’, a journey of the bodies of ‘victims’, and a journey of ‘mourners’.

Why walk to remember? Genocide denial is widespread. So much so that a new law in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which criminalizes the denial of genocide, was argued to be reigniting a conflict that remains acutely present in memory. It was over a quarter of a century ago now when the war in Bosnia was brought to an end with the signing of the Dayton Agreement. Yet, the Dayton Agreement ‘was more an armistice agreement than the blueprint for a sustainable state’ (Toal & Dahlman, 2011, p. 308) — what David Campbell (1999) terms ‘apartheid cartography’ — meaning ethnic division is the result of the international community’s efforts at the Dayton Peace Accords in Dayton, Ohio, and the past remains enfolded in the present.

To have any hope of a just future after genocide, denial must be confronted and counteracted with grounded engagements in landscapes to reveal the facts of a systematic murder of 8372 people in the space of a few days. Mourners today travel through this landscape on foot, replicating the route of the death march, but in reverse. The march of peace joins together mass graves dotted throughout the landscape, remembering the attempts of perpetrators to cover up war crimes by moving the remains of victims from primary, to secondary and tertiary mass graves. This movement of victims was so prevalent that the remains of a single human have been found in multiple mass grave sites. Only through DNA analysis and showing variations in soil and pollen has it been possible to fully reveal this clandestine and sinister act (Nettlefield & Wagner, 2014).

Mortal remains travel across the inter-entity border of Bosnia and Herzegovina for preparation and testing until bodies are pieced together. The hope for many families is to be reunited with even a single piece of a loved one so that they may have a grave at which to grieve. Yet the search for the disappeared continues to be misused for political ends in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, bodily remains are exhumed, counted, re-associated, managed and consecrated as *ethnic* remains. This is done through what Damir Arsenijević (2011a: 194) calls an uncouth alliance between the scientist, the bureaucrat and the priest:

Now I ask you: when would you decide to name a set of mortal remains — a femur, a rib, a tooth, part of a skull — as a body, with a full identity and history? What is the bare minimum you would identify as a body, would call a body?. What different praxis could deactivate the reification of bones as ethnic victims?. What is the politics that will enable us to be hopeful subjects in relation to these bones?

Walking, here, begins ‘at the edge of a ditch, at the opening of a mass grave’, and bears witness to the fragility and precariousness of life through remembering the immobility of those who still reside in the yet to be located mass grave (Arsenijević, 2011b, p. 166). I remember standing beside mass grave CR13, dug into the earth, hidden under a mass of soil. A photograph was present of a white United Nations truck, a white tarpaulin, a jumble of bodies, a watch, scraps of clothing, thigh-bones, a pelvis, skulls in churned up mud. We sat and ate a packed lunch beside a pockmarked structure and a mass grave — the expression of a complete system for the reduction to identity (Nancy, 2000).

The *Marš Mira* (March of Peace) demonstrates the power of commemorating genocide through a marching performance of



Fig. 5. ‘You are Here’. Photo: O’Neill.

landscape, and is, walking to remember. Back in Sarajevo, I take a *fildžan* — a coffee cup with no handle — from a box and place it onto a shelving unit that resembles forensic archives. This small act a way of building a nomadic monument, 8372 placed carefully, to ask, *Što te nema* — Where have you been? Why are you not here? I remember, to end, a story I was told in Sarajevo. The story of a woman from Srebrenica who months after its fall, was looking into the coffee grounds of a *fildžan* to learn the fate of her loved ones. She wondered if any of her family had survived the death march in the landscapes we walked. Landscapes, still today, scattered with mass graves, and the bodies of loved ones, yet to be found.

8. Reflections on Wandering through psychogeography

8.1. Morag Rose

My walking has always been political, but not always academic. Thus, I greatly appreciated the invitation to join the panel at the RGS-IGB conference in Newcastle where these interventions were first presented. I used it as an opportunity to reflect on my own experiences as a psychogeographer and walking artist-activist-academic. Those aspects are symbiotic and focus shifts depending on circumstances. Sometimes there is conflict, congruence or disconnect between them.

In 2006, I co-founded the psychogeographical collective The LRM (Loiterers Resistance Movement) in Manchester, UK. Our manifesto says:

We can't agree on what psychogeography means but we all like plants growing out of the side of buildings, looking at things from new angles, radical history, drinking tea and getting lost; having fun and feeling like a tourist in your home town. Gentrification, advertising and blandness make us sad. We believe there is magick in the manucian rain. Our city is wonderful and made for more than shopping. The streets belong to everyone and we want to reclaim them for play and revolutionary fun (*The LRM Manifesto* (ny))

Whatever psychogeography is, I believe it must be linked to a praxis that includes engaged, attentive movement. Key to The LRM is our monthly First Sunday wander, which is a public, communal walk of some kind. It offers 'creative mischief' and respite from the everyday and is open to anyone who wishes to join us. Membership has always been fluid and our events have always been free in a spirit of mutual aid. The pace and direction is determined by participants and we have always aimed to be as inclusive as possible. It was significant that we chose not to use the word psychogeography in our name as we felt this would be alienating. I still remain slightly ambivalent about the term due to some of its connotations but have decided to reframe and reclaim rather than argue semantics.

The LRM were initially influenced by radical political theory, including that of Guy Debord and the Situationist International, although we were not uncritical of them. We emerged from the milieu of an anarchist social centre which provided a physical space for engagement and experiments with theory in practice. Richardson (2015) includes a discussion of this and a critical overview of contemporary psychogeography in the UK. Psychogeography has to be a verb, not just an idea, and I believed the street to be the best site for inclusive action. We could all feel the chilling impact of neoliberal policies of privatisation, securitisation and the financialization of space. I didn't expect to still be wandering with these ideas 16 years later. I naively felt we had more chance of overthrowing capitalism than sustaining our collective explorations.

Since our first expeditions, The LRM have evolved, but much remains the same. Our most recent walk followed the River Medlock in Manchester and specifically focused on the paradox of the latest apartment block developments, which create new paths whilst privatising public space. As we followed the watercourse rather than our whims, this was perhaps not a *dérive* for purists! Other recent wanders used a variety of prompts and stimuli, from playing cards and spinning tops to visions of

the future. This year, we also revisited Mayfield Railway Station. Previously, we disingenuously trespassed through an open gate onto the abandoned platforms. This time we were invited back to witness a place on the cusp of major transformation. While these walks have not changed the material reality of the city, they have added layers of narrative and engaged in a critical conversation about who and what Manchester is for. They also build solidarities between those who walk together. Perhaps this is the most important contribution: breaking down some personal barriers, fighting alienation and bringing people together. There is confidence as well as comradeship walking as a group, which allows us to sometimes focus on places members do not want to explore alone.

There remain challenges for all psychogeographers, not least amongst them are depoliticisation and recuperation. We are all enmeshed in the capitalist spectacle, which Debord's followers sought to smash (see Knabb, 2006 for English translations of key texts, Plant, 1992 and Wark, 2011 for more context.). Indeed, developments in technology and media mean we are constantly surrounded by advertising, propaganda, and multi-sensory phantasmagorias. These destabilise, commodify, blur and distort ever contested notions such as 'truth', 'reality' 'authenticity' and 'desire'. Meanwhile, psychogeography is now a tool beloved (or at least used by) un-radicals of many kinds, including top-down place-makers, developers, and estate agents. There is also always the danger of nostalgia creeping in, especially when we revisit places we know, and I admit sometimes I am enchanted by ghosts. However, I hope this is mitigated during LRM events by an embodied focus on the present and future. Each walk has a catalyst or theme which is interpreted collectively, keeping our feet firmly grounded in the now and the next.

Material forces also limit where we can roam. I've found myself embroiled in a number of campaigns fighting for the right to walk and loiter, and The LRM community has amplified and supported these struggles. Most recently, this energy has focused on preventing a towpath along the River Irwell being diverted through a hotel lobby (Pidd, 2023) Other examples include working with Disabled Peoples Organisations to fix Jeremy Deller's inaccessible Peterloo Memorial (Pring, 2021) and challenging Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) and other policy initiatives, which work to exclude or criminalise homeless people from the city centre (Greater Manchester Law Centre, 2020). My PhD research explored feminist psychogeographies, seeking to understand where and when women feel safe to walk from an intersectional perspective. The thread which links these struggles is a desire to challenge restrictions on the right for everyone to be able to move freely, and feel a respected part of, our city. These struggles underline the reality that these streets do not yet belong to everyone.

My own interests have evolved over the years but I remain committed to walking as a method and a practice. As I entered academia I have wrestled with the paradox of the research *dérive*. I have used psychogeography as a pedagogical method and constructed spectacles from giant cake maps to games of CCTV Bingo. I've also connected with wider bodies of walking art and The *Walking Artists Network* (ny), which has helped sustain and inspire ongoing work. The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted both the value, and limits, to walking as in so many ways it exacerbated inequality, too. For some, quiet streets represented a regained freedom; for others, they represented danger. Access to walking – in terms of time, energy, environment and safety – was not and never is evenly distributed. As ever, attention should always be paid to who and what is absent.

I was part of a research team *Walking Publics/Walking Art* (2022), which explored creative walking during the pandemic (<https://w alkcreate.gla.ac.uk>). We were led by Dee Heddon of the University of Glasgow, and my co-investigators were Clare Qualmann, Maggie O'Neill, and Harry Wilson. "Creative walking" incorporates a wider range of activities than psychogeography, but I would argue the *dérive* is clearly an example of creative walking. We conducted a public survey and worked with a diverse range of walking artists. Many of the

activities and ways of walking that people shared resonated, even if not explicitly psychogeographic. They highlighted how breaking established ways of walking can spark imagination, inspire feelings of connection and personal epiphanies. This helped them by offering a tool to better cope with the strain of the pandemic. For example, one anonymous survey respondent from an urban area in the North of England expressed to us:

Most of the time when I'm walking I do try to cultivate a sensibility of being curious, opening to noticing things, attuning my senses, being open to being affected by the play of the world and sometimes I play games with this e.g. I listen out for birdsong and let my route be dictated by the birds' flight. I find this practice to be hugely beneficial for my mental wellbeing; even if I'm walking 'alone', I'm not really alone because I'm plugged into relations via my senses with all of the other human and non-human happenings which is a really positive feeling and also gives rise to many small joys.

Many of the artists with whom we walked had a strongly embodied politics of place and movement which transcends or resists labels. For example, Shonagh Short creates work which engages with issues of class and gender, asking us to consider what counts as 'A walk'. 'To the moon and back' focuses on the school run, a walk of profound care and deep resonances too often dismissed as merely an everyday chore. Sheffield Environmental Movement (SEM) support Black people and People of Colour to access the countryside. Founder Maxwell Ayumba told us, 'We're walking to reclaim the land our ancestors have walked for centuries, but yet have not been written into that landscape. We see it as our right to walk for freedom, to walk and talk and discuss issues affecting us as Black people' (Rose et al., 2022, p. 44).

While neither Shonagh nor Maxwell discuss psychogeography, both give psychogeographers much to think about. The (re)enchantment and radical potential of the *dérive* can only be accessed if prerequisites are in place. These include issues of physical access, land ownership and lack of oppression and harassment. To practice psychogeography at its most vital, psychogeographers, regardless of their particular contexts, should be aiming to make space, hold space and care as we take steps to more equitable, just and fantastical futures. Movement animates, produces, shapes and bring meanings to space, so it follows choices about how, where, and why we walk will have an impact however ephemeral. Using the streets as place for non-commercial, non-profitable loitering potentially helps to expand future possibilities and at the very least makes it more interesting if only for a moment. I often describe psychogeography as joining invisible dots across time and place. As we make our links, we need to be aware of absence as well as presences.

The strength of psychogeography is its mutability and multiplicity. I don't think it is helpful to take a purist approach (e.g. Rose, 2021; Rose & The Modernist Heroines, 2022). There is never one overarching, occult secret essence of place but rather tangled threads and multidimensional strands cutting across and through time and place. It's the everydayness of walking that makes it open to adaptation, and the limits of a specific *dérive* that break open potential new imaginaries. There remains value in the power of bodies moving through space, especially when challenging how specific bodies are stigmatised, othered or excluded, or how places become restricted and over-prescribed. Whether or not drifting is framed as an overt act of resistance, new layers are added to the palimpsest of the pavement, and wider stories are written in space. There are also pleasures, convivial and embodied, in walking together, and these should not be underestimated.

My experiment is still ongoing. An online call for the collective noun for a group of psychogeographers demonstrates the contradictions. This is just an extract, as the full 'walk-in-progress' poem covers several pages: 'A Self, An Arse, An exploration? An excursion? A promenade, A reclaiming, A wander, a wonder, a complex, a confusion, a confluence, a defiance, a detour a desire line.' As I drift on, I welcome any and all readers to walk with me.

Declaration of competing interest

None.

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